

TURKISH NATIONALISM AND TURKISH IDENTITY
IN TURKISH HISTORICAL ADVENTURE FILMS
OF THE 1960s AND THE 1970s

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Thesis Abstract

Aseha Kutlu Kayhan, “Turkish Nationalism and Turkish Identity in Turkish
Historical Adventure Films of the 1960s and the 1970s”

This study examines Turkish nationalism and Turkish identity through the Turkish historical adventure films produced in the 1960s and the 1970s, a time also known as the Golden Age of Yeşilçam. Turkish historical adventure films were among the most popular genres in Yeşilçam during these years that saw much political, economic, social and cultural turmoil and activity in Turkey and Yeşilçam produced many films from this genre. Even though close to fifty years has passed since their production, the genre’s most well-received heroes –Karaođlan, Tarkan, Malkoçođlu, Kara Murat and Battal Gazi-, are still able to find themselves a place in popular culture which suggests they have a special relationship with the Turkish audience.

The historical adventure films reflect on the white screen the present-day anxieties and fears of the society, as well as their nostalgia for the past, and like all genre movies they offer their audience simple solutions to their conflicts, reassuring them. These films, which use historical narratives already present in the society to create their own historical narratives, create nationalist myths where Turkish nationalism is reproduced and Turkish identity is constructed and maintained. This thesis examines how historical adventure films construct Turkish identity and reproduce nationalist discourse through the concepts of the Turkish hero, the Other, the women and the motherland.

Tez Özeti

Asena Kutlu Kayhan, “1960 ve 1970’lerin Türk Kostüme Aventür Filmlerinde Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Türk Kimliği”

Bu çalışma Yeşilçam’ın altın yılları da olarak bilinen 1960 ve 1970 yıllarında çekilen Türk kostüme aventür filmler üzerinden bir Türk milliyetçiliği ve Türk kimliği okuması yapmaktadır. Türkiye’de politik, ekonomik, sosyal ve kültürel bakımdan bir sürü çalkantının ve hareketliliğin yaşandığı bu yıllarda kostüme aventür filmler Yeşilçam’ın en popüler türlerinden biriydi ve Yeşilçam bu türde bir sürü filme imza attı. Yapımlarının üzerinden 50 yıla yakın zaman geçmiş olmasına rağmen bu türün en sevilen kahramanlarının -Karaoğlan, Tarkan, Malkoçoğlu, Kara Murat ve Battal Gazi- hala popüler kültürde kendine yer bulması kendilerinin Türk izleyicisinin gözünde ayrı bir yeri olduğuna işaret etmektedir.

Kostüme aventür filmler toplumun güne dair korku ve endişelerini, ve geçmişe dair özlemini beyaz perdeye yansıtır ve janr filmlerinin bir özelliği olarak bunlara basit çözümler getirerek toplumu rahatlatır. Toplumdaki tarihi anlatıları alıp kendi yeni tarihi anlatılarını kuran bu filmler, Türk milliyetçiliğinin tekrar türetildiği ve Türk kimliğinin kurgulanıp idame edildiği milliyetçi mitoslar yaratmaktadırlar. Bu tezde kostüme aventür filmlerinin Türk kimliğini nasıl kurguladığı ve Türk milliyetçiliğinin söylemlerinin nasıl tekrar üretildiği Türk kahraman, Öteki, kadınlar ve anavatan kavramları altında incelenmektedir.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

On 11 December 2010, trailers for a new TV series, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (The Magnificent Century), which depicts the life of Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, started to air on television. Before the TV series premiered on 5 January 2011 there were already a record number of complaints sent to Radyo ve Televizyon Üst Kurumu (Radio and Television Supreme Council, RTÜK) against it, demanding the series not be allowed to air. What little bit of the premiere episode people had seen in the trailer had made them very sensitive to the depiction of their “ancestors”, and to the possibility that a man who is regarded as one of the greatest Ottoman Sultans ever would be shown drinking alcohol, greatly enjoying the company of women and very much involved in Harem life. By 6 January 2011, the number of complaints sent in regarding the TV show had reached 74,911. The number equaled 93% of all the complaints within the time frame and was more than the number of overall complaints RTÜK received in the year 2009 and also in 2010, setting a record. The complaint messages demanded that, because the series had scenes that had nothing to do with “reality” and “history” and depicted the Ottoman Sultans in the wrong way –such as people who focused on women-, the series should be penalized, and even pulled off the air.¹

¹ NTVMSNBC. 06 January 2011. 'Muhteşem Yüzyıl'a mahkeme yolu. Available[online]: <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25168726/> [7 January 2011].

After the TV show aired, there were demonstrations outside the TV channels headquarters and Bülent Arınç, the deputy to Turkish prime minister, promised the protestors that as the government, which shared their concerns and discomfort, they would do everything within their power to take action against the TV series.² On January 12, the TV series got a warning from RTÜK for not showing enough care for how it handled the private life of a historic figure. A repeat offense could see the series being penalized by not being allowed to air for a couple weeks.³ The warning and the public uproar to the series meant in later episodes the producers would start self-censoring and cut back on love scenes in an effort not to upset the public anymore.

The uproar a historical TV series caused where everyone from the regular citizen to the country's leading politicians would comment on it and demand it to be banned is a good indication of how Turkish history and its depiction in media is a sensitive and important subject in Turkey. For the following weeks *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* had a disclaimer in both its opening and ending sequences, reminding people that the story it told, although based on real historical characters and events, is a work of fiction and so does not claim to be the truth, but that has made little difference. The people knew it never claimed to be a documentary but just a TV series; it is not something the public is unaware of. The protests were not a result of a misunderstanding of what genre the TV series belonged to. The series got protested because some people require that the depiction of historical events and characters - no matter what the purpose is- fit whatever idealized, glorified version of them they

² CNNTurk. 06 January 2011. "*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*" Arınç'ı kızdırdı!. Available[online]: <http://www.cnnurk.com/2011/turkiye/01/06/muhtesem.yuzyl.arinci.kizdiridi/602285.0/> [7 January 2011].

³ Hürriyet. 12 January 2011. *RTÜK'ten Muhteşem Yüzyıl'a uyarı cezası*. Available[online]: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/magazin/televizyon/16744569.asp?gid=373> [13 January 2011].

believe in and are used to being presented with. Anything that goes against the norms is met with much resistance, even aggression.

The accepted historical depictions of Turkishness and Turkish history can also be found in old historical adventure films like *Karaoğlan*, *Malkoçoğlu*, *Kara Murat*, *Tarkan* and *Battal Gazi*. These films, though mocked for their lack of artistic value and “one hero kills an entire army” type exaggerations, are still generally well received and were never seen as a smudge on the glorious Turkish history. These films were never accused of attacking historical figures, shaming our ancestors, trying to give the Turks a bad name. The male heroes’ characteristics, manners and actions, their treatment of females, the role women were made to play all fit with the general consensus of how Turks were, still are, and should be.

The Turkish historical adventure films are given various names by various authors on cinema. Some call them “historical film”, some refer to them as “costumed historical film” some refer to them as historical adventure⁴ or historical action films.⁵ Yeşilçam’s own name for these films was “kostüme aventür” which, despite sounding like a foreign name, is actually not one. It was a unique name Yeşilçam has made up⁶ for the films of these heroes who are still carved into our social memory.⁷ Even though almost half a century has passed since their production,

⁴ Rukiye Karadoğan, “Tarihi Çizgi Romanların Yeşilçam Serüveni: Kostüme Avantür Filmler,” *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu – Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed. Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 66.

⁵ T. Emre Yıldırım, “Tarihi Kostüme Avantür Sinemasında Kahraman Tiplemesinin Psikolojik Analizi,” *Türk ve Dünya Sineması Üzerine Sentezler*, ed. by Serpil Kirel (İstanbul: Parşömen Yayıncılık, 2011), p. 71.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ For the purpose of this thesis I’ll be using the term “historical adventure” to define these films as the name makes the connection between these films and the historical genre films more clear.

they are still regularly on air and children still grow up watching them. Famous lines from them are memorized and uttered in friendly conversations as jokes. The image of Cüneyt Arkın –who was one of the most, if not the most, popular actors of the historical adventure genre- beating a legion of Byzantine soldiers on his lonesome is something familiar to everyone. Malkoçoğlu, Kara Murat, Battal Gazi are all names still recognized as great heroes of Turkish cinema. Kara Murat is even going to be revived soon, as announced by its creator, in a project that aims to first shoot a film and then continue the story for the following three years as a TV series.⁸ There are also news that a new Battal Gazi film will be made.⁹ These heroes of cinema are still very much relevant to the times.

Cinema has a unique place among forms of arts. In its ability to record both sound and images in real motion, it reproduces life on white screen in a way no other art form can. The ease with which it can be distributed and served to masses gives cinema another unique edge as an art form and makes it most socially influential. What one sees in a film is not always “real” and the audiences are well aware of this fact, but that does not change the fact that films can and are used to affect the views of masses, their perceptions of themselves and of others. As such, cinema is an art form that both reflects and shapes the social reality of which it is a creation.¹⁰

⁸ It was stated by Rahmi Turan, the creator of Kara Murat and also a veteran journalist, in the programme 2. *Sayfa* in Kanaltürk channel on 27 January 2011. The film will be produced by No:9 Productions. In their website, <http://no9film.com/tr/index.html>, it is announced that the film *Kara Murat: Mora'nın Ateşi* (Kara Murat: The fire of Mora) is set to be released on 04 December 2011 with a trailer made available. The news have been repeated by him in his column in *Hürriyet* newspaper on 16 May 2011. Turan, Rahmi. 16 May 2011. *Kara Murat efsanesi geri dönüyor*. Available[online]: http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/17795881_p.asp [17 May 2011].

⁹ Sabah. 25 May 2011. *Yeni Battal Gazi Araniyor!*. Available[online]: http://www.sabah.com.tr/kultur_sanat/sinema/2011/05/25/yeni-battal-gazi-araniyor [15 August 2011].

¹⁰ Ömer Naci Soykan, *Sanat Sosyolojisi* (İstanbul: Dönence Basım ve Yayın Hizmetleri, 2009), pp 171-187.

Popular culture, with its ability to reach masses much rapidly and easily than any other means, plays an important function in the creation and reproduction of various power relations and ideologies including national and ethnic relations and official nationalist ideology. On the other hand, popular culture is also the area of everyday nationalism which is the unofficial nationalism where the claims of official nationalist ideology are contested.¹¹ Hence, popular culture, and as part of it, cinema is a unique place where both the naturalization of official nationalist discourse and its contention take place. It is this aspect of cinema that makes analysis of films valuable to understanding nationalism.

Using historical narratives already existing within the society, cinema creates its own historical narratives. In doing so, it becomes one of the mediums through which national history is narrated and perceived.¹² According to Zeynep Tül Akbal Süalp, a nation's history of cinema cannot be thought of separately from its history of nation-state building, construction of a national identity and culture, and the process of reconstruction and rearticulation of dominant ideologies.¹³ Cinema, written, shot, acted out by and for the people living within the same nation, within the same geography, culture, history¹⁴ would carry within its stories what it means to be them, what their experiences are, what their characteristics are, what their worldview is...

¹¹ Umut Özkırımlı, "Türkiye'de Gayriresmi ve Popüler Milliyetçilik," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 710.

¹² Zeynep Tül Akbal Süalp, "Bir Deneyimin Tarihi; Tarih Deneyimleri ve Deneyim Tarihi," *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 5*, ed. Deniz Bayraktar, (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2006), p. 45.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ayla Kanbur, "Sinemada Temsil ve Tarihimiz," *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 5*, ed. Deniz Bayraktar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2006), p. 48.

At the same time, cinema engages in social engineering.¹⁵ Through the stories it tells, the images it presents, the symbols it uses cinema is able to shape the perceptions of its audience and remains one of the most powerful mediums of identity construction and maintenance.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will be analyzing Turkish historical adventure films which feature heroes such as Karaođlan, Malkoçođlu, Kara Murat, Tarkan and Battal Gazi. The Turkish historical adventure films, although regarded as kitsch films and often ridiculed, were of great popularity from the 1960s to the mid 1970s, in an era in which Turkish Cinema Industry, *Yeşilçam*, was also experiencing a golden age in productivity.¹⁶ In total there were five Malkoçođlu films from 1966 to 1971, seven Kara Murat films from 1972 to 1978, eight films featuring Karaođlan from 1962 to 1969, four Tarkan films from 1969 to 1972,¹⁷ and five Battal Gazi films the first one in 1955, and then the remaining four, this time (Cüneyt Arkın as the lead) from 1966 to 1974, meaning during this time *Yeşilçam* was producing at least one Turkish historical epic film per year. The ones that are noted here and will be used for analysis are, of course, just the most popular and successful examples of Turkish historical adventure films of the time, featuring big name stars, which, even after close to half a century, still find themselves a place on TV and in the public's memory. Although the reign of these films was quite short in that they were produced during a twelve year interval, their lifespan has been quite long.

¹⁵ Deniz Bayrakdar, "Türk Sineması: Kimlik Olgunlaş(tır)ma Enstitüsü," *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 5*, ed. Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2006), p. 275.

¹⁶ Whereas there were only around 80 films produced in 1960, by 1965 there were over 200 films being produced. Source: Okan Ormanlı, *Türk Sinemasında Eleştiri* (İstanbul: Bileşim Yayınevi, 2005), p. 60.

¹⁷ Giovanni Scognamillo, *Türk Sinema Tarihi* (İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2005), p. 358.

The popularity and perseverance of the Turkish historical adventure films is the point of interest and departure for my thesis. Often disregarded in film studies for not having much “art” value, these films were, nevertheless, popular films that managed to appeal to masses since the 1960s and form themselves a special place in public memory. If Cüneyt Arkın is still fondly remembered as Malkoçoğlu, if a parody of these films, *Kahpe Bizans (1999)* ends up among the most successful Turkish films of all time -staying in view for thirty eight weeks and viewed by 2.472.162¹⁸ people, and if one still comes across these films on TV all the time, there is little denying they are still relevant.

For my thesis, I intend to analyze the “Turkish super-hero” as depicted in these films and the role it plays in construction and maintaining of Turkish identity. In the classical definition, a super-hero is someone endowed with great strength and great abilities, who does great deeds. A person gets to be a super-hero only to the extent he/she is recognized as one by the others. This means that even though the concept “super-hero” (or hero) is a universal one, who is recognized and honored as a hero in any given society or by any group of people is subject to change according to the shared codes¹⁹, values and beliefs²⁰ uphold by them. The hero is thus bound tightly to the society it comes from. The hero acts as a positive role model, setting an example of what moral code to adhere to and what personality traits to value only for

¹⁸ Sinematürk.com. *Kahpe Bizans (1999)*. Available[online]: http://www.sinematurk.com/film_genel/1023/Kahpe-Bizans [7 January 2011].

¹⁹ According to Stuart Hall, how a particular message is produced, circulated, received and understood all has to do with these social codes. Source: Stuart Hall, “Encoding and Decoding,” *The Cultural Studies Reader* 2nd ed, ed. Simon During (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 507-517.

²⁰ Shared codes help us understand a certain message that is conveyed, but its acceptance has to do with shared beliefs, according to James Carey. Source: James. W. Carey, *Communication as culture: Essays on media and society* (Winchester: Unwin Hyman, 1989), pp. 13-36.

the society where he is regarded as a hero. The heroes in Turkish historical adventure films were of Turkish creation –as opposed to imitation heroes from Hollywood- and are thus uniquely Turkish.

Apart from the depiction of the Turkish super-hero as an amalgam of the ideal Turkish citizen, I am also interested in analyzing what these films have to show us regarding the times they were shot in and Turkish nationalism, in the form of the conflicts the hero faces and the dominant discourses used in the film. As cinema is a mirror of real life, one can find traces of the social conflicts and the Turkish nationalist discourse in these films. How these conflicts were laid about and how they were solved, what themes of nationalist discourse were regularly used in these films will all serve to give us a better understanding of social background of the era and how people reacted to them. I am, of course, not disregarding the fact that these films were made for financial gain and the audience's entertainment was the main goal, but it is my opinion that these films also served a function in creation and maintenance of Turkish identity and give us an opportunity to examine the social conflicts of the time as well as the predominant themes of nationalist discourse –such as the“other”, the arch-nemesis of the hero that is really a representation of those the society sees and fears as being different, and being its other, is therefore its enemy.

In his book *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, John Storey quotes Edward Said's concept of Orientalism to demonstrate how Hollywood made Vietnam films is an example of Orientalism. “Hollywood has ‘invented’ Vietnam as a ‘contrasting image’ and a ‘surrogate and ... underground self’ of America. In this way Hollywood has succeeded in producing a very powerful discourse in Vietnam: telling America and the world- thorough a series of ‘rituals of

truth' – that what happened there, happened because Vietnam is like that".²¹ In a similar fashion, I believe, Yeşilçam invents Byzantium -and through it the West- in the these films of historical Turkish heroes as the arch-nemesis of the Turkish hero. None of these films are historically accurate films, nor do they claim or try to be. As Storey points out, from a Foucauldian perspective the narratives of these kind of films tell us more about "the desires and anxieties of the culture" they are a part of rather than the culture of the "other" they try to depict. The "other" is there to define who "we" are, to act as a binary contrast to all that is "us" and "ours". These films tell us stories about who 'we' are, what 'our' conflicts are, what 'our' values and believes are, and as such they are important sources for social analysis. These films, being modern myths, tell us what being 'Turkish' means.

According to Storey, Barthes's concept of myth means "ideology understood as a body of ideas and practices which defend the prevailing structure of power by actively promoting the values and interests of the dominant groups in society".²² The ideas, practices, believes and values that were promoted in Turkish creation Turkish super-hero films were the reflective of the prevailing social structure. The films in their setting, characters, themes and stories provided its viewers with an all-around idea of what being Turkish meant and the Turkish hero set an example of what the values and beliefs to uphold and the actions to take are.²³ The social context in which the film is created may change, as well as the context in which the fictional story takes place, but it seems the basic characteristics of the "Turkishness" do not

²¹ John Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. 99.

²² Ibid., p. 83.

²³ This stereotypical "Turkish hero" still persists in the form of Polat Alemdar in Kurtlar Vadisi.

chance and it is this aspect of the films which makes Turkish historical adventure films valuable for social analysis.

The popularity of Turkish historical adventure films during the 1960s and the 1970s meant there was a great amount of films available to use for analysis. I decided to restrict myself to films that still often appear on TV and continue to be a part of the everyday popular culture of our times. Furthermore, as these films were, unlike many other “single” historical adventure films, serialized and featured some of the big stars of Turkish cinema at the time I think it can be taken as a given that they received much public appreciation and demand also back in the 1960s and were among the most popular and successful examples of their genre. The films I look into in this study are films from the Karaoğlan, Malkoçoğlu, Tarkan, Kara Murat and Battal Gazi series. The choice of these films which have managed to retain their popularity from the 1960s to the 2010s will also be useful to see what aspects of them have managed to keep them still relevant and in demand.

Even though I limited myself to films of these five historical heroes, I still had a large number of films to analyze as the producers often produced one or two of these films a year during the height of the genre in the mid-60s to mid-70s. In total I analyzed twenty seven historical adventure films.²⁴ When analyzing films I was looking into the use of genre specific features such as use of maps and a narrator. I also paid attention to costumes, sound, the settings and objects used in the film to see if there were repetitive patterns that could be considered as Turkish historical adventure films’ own iconography. Dialogues were of particular concern to me as, at

²⁴ The full list of films analyzed with their production dates can be found in Appendix A at the end of this thesis.

times, these films could get even a bit didactic in how the dialogues were written, giving great insight to the world view presented in these films.

Apart from the twenty seven films used for this study, I watched a few more historical films to confirm that the themes and features one ran into in these films could also be found in other films. I especially made a point of watching films that referred to heroes used in these films, but that were not officially part of these series, - such as *Akbulut Malkoçoğlu ve Karaoğlan'a Karşı* (1967) and *Malkoçoğlu: Kurt Bey* (1972) -to see if there were important changes and saw that there weren't.

During my research and analysis of these films my main concern was to note the use of nationalistic discourse in regard to these films. Were there particular reactions to the depictions of the hero, the women, the others or the landscape in the films? Were they seen accurately enough? In what aspects did these films get praise or criticism in the media? What made them popular among the public? What did these films reflect about the audience they were produced for? What does their still being relevant after fifty years point at? These are some of the questions I had in mind when I started working on my thesis.

In the second chapter of my thesis, I will give a brief history of Turkish Cinema until the 1980s. In doing so I hope to give a general idea about the social, cultural, political and economic conditions of the period in which these films were made. I also aim to show how cinema was a form of entertainment and art that was foreign and western to the Turkish people and how this foreignness has affected Yeşilçam and discussions on Turkish cinema. A particular focus will be given to the intellectual discussions on Turkish cinema at the time.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I will examine the concept of national cinema and its relation to “nationalism” and “national identity”. This part will be dealing with explaining the inner workings of the cinema industry, explaining how and why Hollywood came to dominate the world cinema market. In doing so, I want to explain what Hollywood’s dominance of the cinema market means for a “national cinema” like Yeşilçam. My aim is not to come up with a definition for national cinema but to show what factors “nationalize” a particular cinema, and what influence a domestic cinema industry has on creation and maintenance of a national identity within its society.

The fourth chapter of the thesis will focus on genres films and how films can be mythmaking tools. Hollywood’s domination of the cinema market means it is the industry that sets filmmaking standards and styles that other national cinemas mostly adopt or imitate, and so an analysis of the Turkish historical adventure genre requires an understanding of the Hollywood genres. Drawing special attention to the ritual approach to genre criticism that underlines the reciprocal relation between the audiences and genres, this part will contain an explanation of how genres are created and evolve over time, and how they serve as cultural conflict solving operations. This chapter will emphasize the idea that genre film filmmaking is a contemporary way of mythmaking. I will also look into the Hollywood historical genre as they are the genre Turkish historical adventure films imitate.

Finally, the fifth chapter will take a general look into the Turkish historical adventure films, analyzing its generic features and common themes that appear in this film. The generic features of the films include inaccuracy of history, the use of the narrator and maps, the importance given to the “stars” cast in the hero role. The

main focus of the chapter will be the analysis of common themes in these films and what these themes mean in terms of Turkish identity and Turkish nationalism. This will be done under four main headings: The Turkish Hero, The Others, The Women and The Landscape.

CHAPTER 2

TURKISH CINEMA

Before I start my analysis of Turkish historical adventure films in the 1960s and the 1970s, I want to first look into Turkish Cinema and its general and period specific conditions and conflicts to shed more light on the social, cultural, political and economic atmosphere in which the Turkish historical adventure films were produced. The chapter will mostly look into the conditions of Turkish Cinema in the 1960s and the 1970s as it is the time during which Turkish Cinema was experiencing its Golden Age and the historical adventure films were produced. A special focus in this chapter will be the main intellectual discussions on Turkish cinema that took place in the 1960s and the 1970s as they are quite reflective of the political and social conditions at the time. But, I believe, before a more focused look into Turkish Cinema in the 1960s, a short look into its history is necessary to get a better understanding of Turkish Cinema and its problems in general.

Short History of Turkish Cinema Until the 1960s

The beginning of cinema is usually dated back to 28 December 1895 when the cinematograph made its first official introduction in an exhibition in Paris. Based on memoirs of people like Ayşe Osmanoğlu, the daughter of the Ottoman Sultan II.

Abdülhamit, one can date the introduction of cinematograph in the Ottoman Palace as early as the end of 1896, beginning of 1897.²⁵ Although it did not take long for cinema to reach the lands that is now known as Turkey, its contact with the general Turkish public and the formation of a Turkish Cinema was to take some more time.

1908 marked the year when the first ‘constant’ film theaters emerged in Turkey, though cinema was still accessible only to a minor part of the general public - for a long time film theaters were situated only in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul, a district which was well-known for its western life style.²⁶ The majority of the film audience consisted of Beyoğlu’s population of foreign descent²⁷ and non-muslim minorities²⁸, as did the owners of cinema theaters. The pamphlets for the shows were published in a variety of languages such as French, Armenian, German, Greek but Turkish was not among these languages, further underlining the lack of a Turkish cinema audience at the time.²⁹ The pioneer of cinema in Turkey was Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew of Romanian nationality, who would go into history accomplishing many firsts such as opening the first cinema theater in Turkey, shooting the first film in Turkey, being the first director of the Bureau of Central Army Cinema. All in all, cinema was a foreign and “western” art and entertainment form for the Turkish public and its beginning years saw that much of the perceptions on cinema were “constructed in western terms”, as noted by Nezih Erdoğan.³⁰ It was

²⁵ Scognamillo (2005), p. 15.

²⁶ Nezih Erdoğan, “Narratives of Resistance: National Identity and Ambivalence in the Turkish Melodrama Between 1965 and 1975,” *Screen*, 39:3(Autumn 1998), p. 260.

²⁷ Scognamillo (2005), p. 17.

²⁸ Erdoğan (1998), p 260.

²⁹ Scognamillo (2005), p. 17.

on these foundations the first Turkish filmmakers would emerge and Turkish public would slowly start to take more interest in cinema.

As the number of cinema theaters and shows increased, cinema theaters spread to other cities –like İzmir and Selanik-, and the Turkish public started to become more accustomed to cinema. The increase in Turkish audience resulted in the shows having more of a national touch to them but until 1914 there was still no “Turkish” cinema to talk of, as there were still no Turkish films made - the films produced, distributed and exhibited within Turkey belonged to French, German and American firms.³¹ During this time, Western cinema was already enjoying a golden period with filmmakers like Charlie Chaplin in America, and high productivity like Italian film industry producing 417 films among which were masterpieces like *Cabiria*...³² The First Turkish film came in 14 November 1914 -it was a short documentary by Fuat Uzkınay depicting the destruction of the Russian monument in Ayestefanos. Uzkınay would also go down in history as the first Turk using a camera.³³

In 1922 Muhsin Ertuğrul enters Turkish cinema, shooting films until 1953.³⁴ For close to two decades Turkish cinema was in his total control. Ertuğrul was not a

³⁰ Erdoğan (1998), p. 260.

³¹ Ali Murat Akser, “Ulusallık Arayışında Bir Yaratıcı: Metin Erksan’ın *Sevmek Zamanı* (1965),” *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 1*, ed. Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2001), p. 96.

³² Scognamillo (2005), p. 21.

³³ Like many things about the early era of Turkish cinema, there is much uncertainty and disputes over the shooting of this small film and Uzkınay’s role in it as the film has long been lost and undisputable documentation is hard to come by. But for long it has been considered as the first Turkish film made, and is still believed to be so.

³⁴ Scognamillo (2005), p. 40.

real filmmaker. He was of theater-origin, saw cinema as a secondary job³⁵ and would use his actors from the theater and theater esthetic's and techniques to shoot films, "caring little to create a uniquely cinematographic language".³⁶ He is often criticized for hampering cinema's growth in Turkey in its early years and causing lasting damage on Turkish cinema as he infected it with theatre codes³⁷ creating a distorted understanding and taste of cinema among actors, technicians and the audience. Come 1951 Turkish cinema started to benefit from the improved infrastructure of Turkey that saw electricity reaching more houses, the government's tax reductions aimed to help the local filmmakers, as well as the immigration from villages to cities as it slowly became an important venue for the entertainment of the masses.³⁸ It was also during this time (the end of the 1940s, the beginning of the 1950s) Turkish cinema would enter the era of "true filmmakers". These filmmakers understood cinema to be a different art form than theater which had its own rules and codes³⁹ and would successfully use cinematic language in their work.⁴⁰ Between 1914-1949 Turkey would experience two World Wars and the destruction of Ottoman Empire and foundation of the Turkish Republic and during this chaotic era production was low in Turkish cinema, with only 67 films produced in total.⁴¹ That year alone saw 61 films

³⁵ Ibid., p.41.

³⁶ Atilla Dorsay, "An Overview of Turkish Cinema from its Origins to the Present Day," *Turkish Cinema: an Introduction*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London: University of London SOAS Turkish Area Study Group Publications, 1989), p. 27.

³⁷ Ibid., p.24.

³⁸ Akser (2001), p. 96.

³⁹ Dorsay (1989), p. 25.

⁴⁰ Esin Coşkun, *Türk Sinemasında Akım Araştırması* (Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2009), p.26.

⁴¹ Akser (2001), p. 96.

produced⁴² -an indicator of things starting to change on the production part of Turkish cinema.

Turkish Cinema from the 1960s to the 1980s

From the 60s to the 80s there was much political and social activity and change in Turkey. 27 May 1960 saw the first coup d'état, which was followed by elections held on 10 October 1965. 12 March 1971 witnessed the transitional regime, on 14 October 1973 there were elections again while on 20 July 1974 the Cyprus War started and on 12 September 1980 the second coup d'état took place. Celebrated by as the most democratic era of Turkish republic that also saw the highest level of political participation and engagement, it was also an era marked with coup d'états, murders, executions, labor and student protests that were handled violently and serious censorship in cinema.⁴³ Still, during this turbulent political and social setting the Turkish cinema industry grew and enjoyed its Golden Era. The growth in productivity saw the emergence of many "booms" (*furya*) in Turkish cinema as certain genres quickly became popular and were then those genre's films were mass produced to meet public demand. During this time Turkish cinema would also start to produce quality, artistic films, some of which met international acclaim and even won awards. Foundations aiming to improve and spread Turkish cinema were opened. There were lots of intellectual discussions and arguments taking place within

⁴² Ibid., 96-7.

⁴³ Hakkı Başgüney, "SINEMATEK (Türk Sinematek Derneği): 1965-1980 Arasında Sinema ve Politik Tartışma," *Türk ve Dünya Sineması Üzerine Sentezler*, ed.Serpil Kirel (Istanbul: Parşömen Yayıncılık, 2011), p. 58.

the Turkish cinema society on what cinema is and what Turkish cinema should be. Colored films were introduced⁴⁴ and filmmakers would try their hand in various genres. But all this new activity and increased production in cinema also brought its own problems. Although the number of films increased dramatically –in 1960 there were a total of 68 films shot, in 1961 the number rose to 116 films and throughout the Golden Era Yeşilçam would enjoy high production, at times even reaching close to 300 films a year,^{45 46} the same level of increase could not be seen in the number of work force and budgets for the films.⁴⁷

The 1960s saw Turkish filmmakers experience with quite a number of genres. Among the “booms” in the 60s were a range of films featuring tomboy heroes, kid heroes, religious films, crime films, all kinds of adventure films, westerns, sexual films, comedies etc, as well as foreign film adaptations⁴⁸ and adaptations from popular Turkish novels.⁴⁹ When a film was successful, producers tended to produce similar films in great numbers to profit from audience’s current fondness of the genre, but as very few of these films were able to meet the standard and quality of the original, they would fail to keep the audience interested in that particular genre for long. The result was this onslaught of “booms” in Turkish cinema as certain types of films became popular and then faded away just as quickly to be replaced by a new

⁴⁴ Scognamillo (2005), p.159.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.160.

⁴⁶ Till 1980 the number of films never falls down below 100s. 1980-1984 less than 100 films are produced each year, which Scognamillo attributes to the social and political climate of the time.

⁴⁷ Scognamillo (2005), p 161.

⁴⁸ In 1968 half of the 250 films produced that year have been “adaptations –plagiarisms, to be more precise - of foreign box-office successes”. Erdoğan (1998), p 260.

⁴⁹ Scognamillo (2005), p. 162.

one. The film “booms” reflected the audience’s wishes and needs at that point and could reflect the cultural and social changes during that time, says Giovanni Scognamillo, but such commercial films could not really shape a nation’s cinema as they were not original and had very short life-spans.⁵⁰

According to Scognamillo, between the 1960s and the 70s fairytales, superhero films, historical adventure films and sex and arabesque films were among the genres that Turkish cinema depended on to reach masses and stay afloat. Finding new subjects, new original stories to tell, was a big problem in Turkish cinema –a problem that meant a lot of the films produced would be remakes of successful films and foreign adaptations.⁵¹ Searching for new subjects, the Turkish cinema looked into history and legends to create its national heroes, as well as American comics and various western and eastern fairytales.⁵² Most of these “fantasy” films were low budget films from small production firms and did not make it into big cities or huge distribution cycles. Rather they were B type films shown in small theatres and one could classify them as “ghetto cinema”.⁵³ This, of course, didn’t mean there were not some higher budget films featuring stars made that attracted mass audiences everywhere, like the Malkoçoğlu, Karaoğlan, Kara Murat, Tarkan, Battal Gazi series this thesis looks into.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Scognamillo (2005), p. 172.

⁵² Giovanni Scognamillo and Metin Demirhan, *Fantastik Türk Sineması* (İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2005), p. 8.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 8-9.

Savaş Arslan claims any talk of genres in Yeşilçam starts with melodramas⁵⁴, that there is a trace of the melodrama in all films.⁵⁵ Turkish melodramas featured class conflicts, as well as eastern/western and rural/urban conflicts where lower class and rural lifestyle meant eastern /local culture and high classes and urban life was synonymous with being western and belonging to a foreign culture.⁵⁶ The upper class, who had western attributes, was shown to be morally corrupt. The lower class, on the other hand, was virtuous, showing “simplicity, loyalty, correctness and chastity”⁵⁷, according to Nezih Erdoğan. The melodramas mostly ended with the “upper class” learning its lesson, learning to appreciate the “virtue” and qualities of the “lower class” and falling in love with its representative, who had in the meantime become rich through hard work and reached “upper class” status herself/himself, though of course minus the moral corruption the original upper class suffered from. Often, the conflicts between the low class/high class couple were solved and their reunion was established by an authoritarian father figure who would side with the moral eastern part of the couple and help her/him out to achieve her/his desires.⁵⁸ According to Erdoğan, the message of these films was that “the upper class will be able to survive only if the lower class helps” and these films reflected “the audience’s desire for, and wish to be desired by, the upper class”⁵⁹ and in its form, the West.

⁵⁴ Savaş Arslan, “Kara Sevda: Melodram ve Modernleşme,” *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 4*, ed. Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2004), p. 171.

⁵⁵ Arslan (2004), p. 172.

⁵⁶ Erdoğan (1998), 265.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Erdoğan (1998), p 266.

There is a split identity in Turkish nationalism, in that, on the one hand Turkish nationalism sets Western culture as a goal to be attained, while on the other hand, it defines itself through victories won against the West⁶⁰ claims Nezh Erdoğan. So its “enemy” is the West, yet it also seeks to be like the West. This dual identity found its reflections in Yeşilçam and naturally, in its melodramas. “Split identities have always been convincing for, and appealing to, the audience” states Erdoğan. In melodramas, unlike real life, it did not take much for the uneducated, poor, village girl to turn into a “sophisticated lady of manners”⁶¹, for the two split selves to become one. This splitting also reveals “Yeşilçam’s own conception of national identity” according to Erdoğan. Yeşilçam melodramas impose “the cultural values attached to national identity as necessary and temporal deviations. One must conform to them now so as to acquire the norm (that is the West) in the future.”⁶²

Underlying melodramas and action films, both of which were very popular among Turkish audiences, is a glorification of manhood, which is done by the blessing of the family-father-government triad, says Rıza Kıracı.⁶³ When the male audiences sought power and might, they found it in the male actors; when they required beauty and eroticism, they found it in the female actresses. The male characters of Yeşilçam are thus a mirror to the social changes happening within the

⁶⁰ Nezh Erdoğan, “Üç Seyirci: Popüler Eğlence Biçimlerinin Alınlanması Üzerine Notlar,” *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 2*, ed. Deniz Bayraktar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2001), p. 223.

⁶¹ Erdoğan (1998), p. 266.

⁶² Ibid., p. 271.

⁶³ Rıza Kıracı, *Film İcabı: Türkiye Sinemasına İdeolojik Bir Bakış* (Ankara: De Ki Basım Yayım Ltd., 2008), p.32.

society as a reflective face of it.⁶⁴ The changing characteristics of the lead roles in films reflected the changing values, wishes and characteristics of the society.

According to Atila Dorsay, by the end of the 60s, the public was starting to lose interest in Turkish cinema, having become bored of seeing the same stories, plots and faces over and over.⁶⁵ As Turkish cinema was “without real capital, without an infrastructure, without a system of studios or modern laboratories”, it was a cinema that survived purely based on public’s interest so it had to do everything to hold onto it. That is why, in the end of the 60s, Turkish cinema converted to color films rapidly. But this caused another problem: rising expenses. Shooting films in color was too costly and saw the budgets quadruple, but colored films were also more interesting to the public. The rise of the costs due to color films meant film producers could no longer dare to take any “risks” when choosing which films to shoot and rather opted to make films that were formulaic, in genres that were already tried and found successful, using the same plots, same popular actors...⁶⁶

Although Yeşilçam was not a huge industry like Hollywood, and consisted mostly of small and medium sized production companies which operated with low budgets, it was nevertheless not really possible to shoot films outside Yeşilçam in Turkey (especially during its Golden Age), as the few films produced outside of Yeşilçam faced major problems in distribution and exhibition, explains Esin Çoşkun. Yeşilçam, like Hollywood film industry, did not allow “different” approaches to

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 32-33.

⁶⁵ Dorsay (1989), p. 27.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

emerge in Turkish cinema.⁶⁷ Furthermore, some non-Yeşilçam independent productions would meet public hostility when they failed to meet public expectation and did not obey to the norms –to the point of theatres being burned down in some extreme cases.⁶⁸ There were attempts by some filmmakers to shoot independent films but most were short-lived as they could not survive outside the system and they returned back to Yeşilçam.⁶⁹ The financial burden of colored films meant it was now even more difficult for filmmakers to produce films outside of Yeşilçam.

Low budgets and restricted time frames were among the major problems directors faced at this time. Even though new genres were being tried out, the directors simply did not have the budget or time it took to properly adapt to these films. Scognamillo argues that everything from Bond style adventure films to sex films were rushed imitations of Western films, at times not even necessarily abiding by “rules” of cinema –as their circumstances just did not permit it.⁷⁰ In some cases, the directors would cut and paste certain scenes from Hollywood films into their films as they simply lacked the means to create scenes of such grand scale, as was the case in *Kara Murat Denizler Hakimi (1977)* where the sea battle scenes were clearly taken from a Western film. Some films had no scripts, or had scripts written on-set.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Coşkun (2009), p. 13.

⁶⁸ One interesting example of the audience showing extreme reaction to a film is *Yılanların Öcü*, which first was prevented from being released due to censorship, then was allowed to be shown by the government’s intervention where both the parliament and the president Cemal Gürsel gave it permission to be released, but then saw about 60 film theatres attacked and damaged, an eleven burned by angry mobs of extreme religious believes as the public divided up over it. The film belonged to the Social Realism trend at time. Ibid., p. 41.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 14.

⁷⁰ Scognamillo (2005), p. 160.

⁷¹ Yıldırım (2011),p. 71.

Expansion of television in Turkey in the 1970s threw Turkish cinema into a second crisis, which worsened by 1975 due to an embargo of major American films. The embargo on American films combined with the economic crisis in Turkey made it harder to import foreign films in general, which resulted in a shortage of films for film theaters to show. As producers turned to low quality films and sex films to make up for the gap they started to lose their primary audience- the families.^{72 73} According to Scognamillo censorship, political conflicts, foreign exchange crisis, indecisions in production all contributed to the ensuing crisis in Turkish cinema at the end of the 70s. The situation was so bad that in 1976 the filmmakers took to the streets in protest. İlhan Selçuk ironically commented on the incident in an article, noting the second National Front government must be congratulated for its achievement as anyone can make the cheese prices go up, cause the devaluation of Turkish money by 40%, close the parliament, leave cities without electricity but it was only the second National Front government that had the ability to make filmmakers go to streets in protests.⁷⁴ The comment gives quite an insight into the social, economical and political atmosphere at the time, as well as the cynical opinion some intellectuals had towards Yeşilçam apolitical filmmakers. The political chaos and prevailing violence prior to the second coup d'état in 12 September 1980 were also another reason for Turkish audience to avoid film theatres.⁷⁵

⁷² Dorsay (1989), p 31.

⁷³ According to Asuman Suner the primary audiences of Yeşilçam in the 60s and the 70s were lower-middle class and families. Source: Asuman Suner, *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p.10.

⁷⁴ Scognamillo (2005), p. 179.

⁷⁵ Erdoğan (2001), p. 223.

Crisis was a word all-too-familiar for Turkish cinema, states Dorsay and the crisis was not only an economic one. Until the 1940s Turkish cinema had to face the problem of lacking significant local production or qualified –or rather, any- film producers. It was unable to match the flood of foreign films in quality. With the 1950s, with some government endorsed films, it saw a rise in quality and number of audience and production, which lead to the golden era in the 1960s but the efforts were short-lived and a “rationalization of the film industry and film production” never took place during this time.⁷⁶ In addition to the various problems Turkish cinema had to suffer in different eras, it also had a number of - what Dorsay calls- “chronic” problems, such as the state never really seeming to understand “the importance of film as a major contemporary art form” and so not backing it up properly and strict censorship which was applied to films both in the screenwriting phase and at the end of the production. The low quality of the equipment in the film theatres, the decreasing number of film theatres, the refusal of intellectuals to take part in solving Turkish cinema’s problems and helping produce better films and, lastly, Turkey’s difficulties in distributing and exhibiting its films both domestically and internationally were also chronic problems of Turkish cinema.⁷⁷

Yeşilçam had its own technical and stylistic devices, according to Nezi̇h Erdoğan, such as “lighting, colour, dubbing, dialogue, shooting practices, point-of-view shots and editing create a very cinematic discourse in even the most faithful of adaptations”.⁷⁸ Budget and time constraints had great effect in how Yeşilçam films were shot. Production in Yeşilçam was done in great haste and “shot/reverse shot and

⁷⁶ Dorsay (1989), p. 31.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 32.

⁷⁸ Erdoğan (1998), p 266.

other point of view shots” were generally avoided in favor of “front shots” that were economical both in terms of finance and time. So, the Yeşilçam characters would usually perform their films facing the camera at all times, not turning their backs. Erdoğan describes the difference this made in his following example: “When a Hollywood film shows a box, it says ‘This is a box’. Yeşilçam, on the other hand, attempted to achieve the same statement but could not help saying ‘This is supposed to be a box, but actually it is only an image which represents a box’. Yeşilçam was thus a hybrid cinema, says Erdoğan, as it produced a cinematic discourse blending Hollywood –style realism with an unintentional Brechtian alienation effect.⁷⁹

From the 1960s onward, Turkish cinema saw the articulation of various concepts and views regarding “Turkish” cinema. These debates and various cinematic styles reflected the period’s social, political and economic conditions.⁸⁰ According to Esin Çoşkun, they were “trends” which were especially created by the political atmosphere at the time and moved along with it, never quite managing to turn into “movements” as they did in Western cinemas. Çoşkun attributes this inability to turn cinematic trends into serious, long-life movements to the general chaos Turkey experienced culturally, economically, socially and politically.⁸¹ One major problem was the constant state of being stuck between Eastern and Western cultures.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Coşkun (2009), p. 11.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁸² Ibid.

Turkish Cinema Trends from the 1960s to the 1980s

As Turkish cinema reached a Golden Age in production during the 1960s, it also witnessed lots of debates on Turkish cinema's quality⁸³ and "the national identity in Turkish Cinema".⁸⁴ Hakkı Başgüney claims this was a period in Turkish history when intellectuals and the youth defined themselves within their relationship with the country's political, economical and social problems⁸⁵ and so, he believes, the Cinémathèque Foundation/New Cinema (Sinematek Derneği/Yeni Sinema) and other cinematic groups at the time reflected and provided insight into the political and intellectual atmosphere of the mid 1960s and 1970s in Turkey.⁸⁶

The films made between the 1950s and the 1960s were done in an environment where there was an overall serious lack of freedom of speech. These films carried with them an optimism that betrayed escapism. American influence on cultural and artistic venues –as a result of its dominion in economic and political areas- could be felt in this era.⁸⁷ Come the 1960s, with the Coup d'état and the new regime and constitution, things started to change. There was a great feeling of freedom of speech. Subjects that were once considered forbidden and taboo could now be worked on. This led to a "realistic" approach to cinema as some leading

⁸³ Dilek Kaya Mutlu, "Türk Sineması Ne? Türk Seyircisi Kim? – Altmışlı Yılların Türk Sineması Üzerine Düşüncelerine/Kavgalarına Bir Bakış," *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 2*, ed. Deniz Bayraktar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2001), p 201.

⁸⁴ Erdoğan (1998), p. 261.

⁸⁵ Başgüney (2011), p. 55.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

filmmakers such as Metin Erksan, Halit Refiğ, Atıf Yılmaz, Ertem Güreç, Duygu Sağıroğlu decided to use film as a means to show the Turkish public as it was, taking a social realist approach to film making...⁸⁸ Many films now carried within them a social criticism.⁸⁹ “Social realism”, was one of the many cinematic trends to come in this atmosphere of freedom and creativity. Another major factor in creation of cinematic trends during this time was the influence of Western cinema and its movements on Turkish cinema. According to Başgüney, at the time, Turkish intellectuals and artists were also heavily influenced by the Soviets and the Chinese Cultural Revolution⁹⁰ and Esin Çoşkun notes that many films shot in the 60s and the 70s revealed influences of European and Hollywood films overall and at times even copied them.⁹¹

The 1960s saw intellectuals who have been raised by values of Kemalist modernism embrace them but also time criticize them to improve on them⁹², notes Başgüney. According to Aslı Daldal, social realist filmmakers were taking “active part in social engineering that followed the progressive coup”⁹³ of 1960 which had created an atmosphere of general freedom in Turkey. These filmmakers came from “urban, well-educated families with humble financial resources” and wanted to contribute to the “democratization and reform in Turkey” that seemed to have been

⁸⁸ Scognamillo (2005), p. 159.

⁸⁹ Coşkun (2009), p. 34-5.

⁹⁰ Başgüney (2011), p. 57.

⁹¹ Coşkun (2009), p. 49.

⁹² Başgüney (2011), p. 59.

⁹³ Aslı Daldal, *Art, Politics and Society: Social Realism in Italian and Turkish Cinemas* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2003), p. 176.

started with the new constitution, through their films. In their films, they would try to bring forth the problems of the Turkish public and they would also try to produce high quality films. In 1963 Metin Erksan won the first international prize of Turkish cinema with his film “Susuz Yaz” in Berlin Festival.⁹⁴ On 25 August 1965⁹⁵, Sinematek was found by young intellectuals who were mostly educated in France⁹⁶ with the goal to raise the quality in Turkish cinema and turn it into an artistic one. Among its founders were valuable Turkish intellectuals such as: Onat Kutlar, Şakir Eczacıbaşı, Hüseyin Baş, Aziz Albek, Semih Tuğrul, Tunç Yalman, Tuncan Okan, Sabahattin Eyüpoğlu, Cevat Çapan, Macit Gökberk, Nijat Özen and Muhsin Ertuğrul (Avcı, 2006). Its members showed quite a variety as they included the likes of Aziz Nesin, Yaşar Kemal, Yılmaz Güney, Aliye Rona, Atıf Yılmaz, Ali Özgentürk, Selim İleri, Doğan Hızlan, Gencay Gürsoy, Dora Karabey, Yavuz Özkan, Umur Bugay, Atilla Dorsay, İlkay Demir and Zeynep Oral among others. Its screenings were joined by intellectuals such as: Azra Erhat, Kuzgun Acar, Prof. Dr. Cavit Orhan Tütengil, Oğuz Atay, Hasan Ali Ediz... In short, Sinematek was, in its founding years “the” meeting place for Turkish intellectuals and artists from different areas, of different ages. In the following years, especially after 1968, it would split into two as the revolutionary students and first generation had differing views.⁹⁷

The freedom and success social realist filmmakers experienced after the first coup d'état would not last for long. When the Justice Party won the 1965 elections it was a blow to the social realist filmmakers as well as other “progressive segments of

⁹⁴ Scognamillo (2005), p. 165.

⁹⁵ Başgüney (2011), p. 56.

⁹⁶ Daldal (2003), p. 201.

⁹⁷ Başgüney (2011), p. 62.

the society”⁹⁸ says Daldal. Fearing, and indeed facing, more censorship from the new, more conservative, government⁹⁹ the social realist filmmakers tried to engage in “new theoretical searches that would fit the changed parameters of the political atmosphere” in order to ensure they remained employed and escaped political persecution.¹⁰⁰ It is in this atmosphere, with Halit Refiğ as their spokesperson, they would come up with and embrace the concepts of Popular Cinema (Halk Sineması) and later National Cinema (Ulusal Sinema).¹⁰¹

In 1965 Halit Refiğ came up with the “Popular Cinema” approach, which he would later revise and turn into a National Cinema approach. According to Refiğ, the Turkish cinema was born of a need of the Turkish public to watch films, and worked not on capital but pure labor and was funded directly by its audience, so it was a “Cinema of the People”, a “Popular Cinema”.¹⁰² Refiğ was referring to the Yeşilçam bono system where the local distributors would pay producers the cost of a film before it was even produced, letting them know, in the process, what types of films the audience demanded in their area. Thus the films were produced with the idea they were ordered by the public, as they were pre-ordered specifically to meet the audience’s demands.¹⁰³ Another important aspect of the concept of “popular cinema” was that it claimed to represent the public’s artistic wishes and feelings, deriving

⁹⁸ Daldal (2003), p. 196.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁰¹ It is important to note first Karaoğlan film was produced in 1965, while first Malkoçoğlu was produced in 1966. The historical adventure genre was about to become very popular among the Turkish public which was experiencing rising nationalism.

¹⁰² Coşkun (2009), p. 50.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 51.

them from Turkish folk art.¹⁰⁴ Asking himself questions like “what makes Turkish people different from others?” Refiğ further build on his concept of “popular cinema” and to come at an idea of a National Cinema.¹⁰⁵

Hollywood was a cinema running on mass capital, while Western European cinema was a cinema benefitting from government backing. Turkish cinema, on the other hand, had neither, said National Cinema supporters. Turkish cinema was a cinema industry that had low capital with cheap labor and mostly dependent on its audience for its survival and exploitation of its cheap labor. According to National Cinema view, if Turkish cinema was to be able to retain its connection to its audience, the Turkish public, it needed to refrain from imitating Hollywood films or European art films and rather look into its own traditional Turkish arts and stories for subjects.¹⁰⁶ What mattered was that a film was “Turkish” in its core, in its meaning, in its message¹⁰⁷ and if that was the case, one could overlook use of “Western” formats of the films.¹⁰⁸ Most films that were made by directors following the “National Cinema” approach were indeed made using Western formats, for which they were criticized heavily.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁰⁶ Akser (2001), p. 99.

¹⁰⁷ Çoşkun (2009), p. 61.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 71.

Observing the answers leading figures in Turkish cinema from both Cinémathèque and National Cinema front, as well as others, gave to Ant Magazine¹¹⁰ in 1968 regarding their views on Turkish Cinema and the concept of Turkish National Cinema. Dilek Kaya Mutlu points out that although all agreed that Turkish Cinema had to reflect Turkish society's realities, what they considered "national" and "reality" differed.¹¹¹ For some, any film produced by Turkish directors was national, others considered only films showing social realities of Turkish public to be national while some others defined national cinema as the one telling Turkish stories. Likewise, although most of them agreed Turkish audience were "conditioned", they had different views on how this conditioning happened. For example, while for some it was local filmmakers, acting on a "this is what the public demands" motto who played a major part in this conditioning, the others believed it was foreign –mainly Western- films that created this conditioning.¹¹² Mutlu claims the answers do not only reveal the many differing views among filmmakers but their generality and vagueness also suggests that the filmmakers themselves did not really have a solid grasp of what "Turkish national cinema" was and should be and were rather following the trends of the time in their "views".¹¹³ She also points out that, although Yeşilçam commercial films were generally disregarded by these directors as not really being "national" and failing to reflect the "realities" of Turkish public, it is important to ask ourselves why, if that was the case, the Turkish audience embraced

¹¹⁰ Mutlu notes that the selection was made to contain people representing all the various cinematic views present at the time, though, one can't claim the selection reflected Turkish cinema atmosphere of 1968 completely as she is not of the opinion commercial filmmakers were given enough voice. Mutlu (2001), p. 213.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 206.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 211.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 216.

these films so much.¹¹⁴ These popular low quality, sometimes even kitsch, films were, after all, embraced by Turkish public as “their” films even if the intellectuals refused to accept them as “national”.

Unlike followers of the National Cinema trend, who wanted to work within Yeşilçam and reform it by producing quality films; Cinémathèque front was against Yeşilçam altogether. For them Yeşilçam was “associated with worn-out formulas, plagiarism, escapism, and exploitation” and so could not produce national films of international success.¹¹⁵ Their aim was to create an artistic cinema in Turkey, that would free itself from Hollywood’s influence and for this purpose their first step of action was to tackle Yeşilçam, says Nezi̇h Erdoğan.¹¹⁶

While Yeşilçam was domestic, New Cinema’s vision’s for Turkish Cinema was western. While Yeşilçam was a popular cinema modeled after Hollywood, New Cinema aimed to form an art cinema that was modeled after European art cinema. Yeşilçam focused on production, used the star system to draw in audiences and followed the classic production-distribution-exhibition pattern. New Cinema’s vision for Turkish Cinema, on the other hand, focused on creation, would use auteur policy and make use of alternative modes of production, depending mainly on festivals and competitions to showcase its creations.¹¹⁷ New Cinema would use European art cinema’s point of view and “produce representations of Turkey either as an

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 215.

¹¹⁵ Erdoğan (1998), p. 261.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 262.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

‘impenetrable other’ or as a fantastic western country”.¹¹⁸ Referring to Elsaesser, Erdoğan notes that Turkish art cinema needed to be “‘endorsed, confirmed, and benevolently looked at’ by someone else” and adds that despite Cinémathèque’s efforts, Turkish art cinema experienced very few recognition.¹¹⁹ As such, Cinémathèque never managed to make its vision of Turkish Cinema become a reality.

Refiğ and his friends found Cinémathèque’s approach too elitist and western-focused, at times even calling them “existentialist” and “Marxist”¹²⁰, and were of the opinion the Turkish public could not be reached by western means.¹²¹ In 1967, they declared they refused to collaborate with the Turkish Cinémathèque due to its hostility towards Turkish cinema and themselves.¹²² Cinémathèque accused the filmmakers of “cowardice” and “ignorance”¹²³ while filmmakers were of the opinion Cinémathèque members were CIA agents sent to divide the Turkish left. The feud between the two groups, which was the most important feud of Turkish cinema¹²⁴, lead to social realist filmmakers getting closer to the Turkish right, according to Refiğ, as quoted by Daldal,¹²⁵ which may have contributed to his formation of a National Cinema theory.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 263.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Başgüney (2011), p. 63.

¹²¹ Erdoğan (1998), p. 262.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Daldal (2003), p. 202.

¹²⁴ Başgüney (2011), p. 62.

¹²⁵ Daldal (2003), p. 202.

End of the 1960s also saw the rise of another cinematic trend, the Nationalist Cinema, which found followers in directors such as Yücel Çakmaklı, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Ahmet Güner, Üstün İnanç. This view was emerging at a time when “nationalism” was increasing within Turkey. The Nationalist Cinema films had a more religious content, used the Seljuk and Ottoman culture as a reference point¹²⁶ and reflected the increasing radical right views.¹²⁷ During the same period, another trend in Turkish cinema was one of Young Filmmakers (Genç Sinemacılar) led, who were influenced by the revolutionaries in South America and tried to make a revolutionist cinema.¹²⁸ Young Filmmakers’ beginning could be traced back to the foundation of Cinémathèque as they consisted of young Cinémathèque members who were under the influence of 68 Movement and had different views than the founding, older Cinémathèque group which they criticized for being too passive and elitist.¹²⁹ This Young Filmmakers were aiming to create a revolutionary and national cinema in Turkey outside of Yeşilçam.¹³⁰ Their definition of “public” was “laborers” and they intended to educate them, reflect their problems on screen and create an independent, revolutionary cinema that was for the people.¹³¹ The most famous and successful director within this group was Yılmaz Güney¹³² but even his films failed

¹²⁶ Coşkun (2009), p. 78.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 77.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

¹²⁹ Başgüney (2011), p. 63.

¹³⁰ Coşkun (2009), p. 81.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 82.

¹³² Ibid., p. 80.

to be really classified as revolutionary.¹³³ Both cinematic views reflect the left/right view gap appearing within the society.

“Apart from the changed political context after 1965, which definitely had a determining impact on the fate of the social realist movement, the critic’s lack of tolerance and the filmmakers’ ‘weak’ capacity of resistance to adverse social conditions, brought the end of the first organized efforts of modernization in Turkish cinema” says Daldal, as leading cinema groups found themselves in a major feud over their differing views.¹³⁴ As the Turkish cinema’s golden Age ended and the sex films boom took over, many of the directors belonging to national cinema/social realism front either stopped making films, started teaching in universities or turned to unimportant commercial films.¹³⁵ By the end of the 1970s, Metin Erksan, who had gone into Turkish Cinema History as the first director to win an international award, would stop making films altogether¹³⁶, in a way marking the end of the Golden Age of Yeşilçam.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 83.

¹³⁴ Daldal (2003), p. 202.

¹³⁵ Akser (2001), p 101.

¹³⁶ Daldal (2003), p. 202.

CHAPTER 3

NATIONAL CINEMA, NATIONALISM & IDENTITY

In the previous chapter I provided a short history of Turkish cinema and some background information on Yeşilçam to serve as an insight to the back-drop against which the historical adventure films were created. The discussions on Yeşilçam and a national Turkish cinema were of particular importance as they shed light to the cultural and political atmosphere at the time. In this chapter I will look into the concept of “national” cinema and explain how Hollywood’s influence has effected the national cinemas. To do so, I will look into the inner workings of the film industry and the important role economics play in creation of films. The second part of the chapter will deal with the connection between a nation and films. A special focus will be the relationship between the audience and the films, underlying how films both reflect the wishes and views of their audience, and also shape them. In doing so, I aim to explain how films, which mirror the society they are created in, are important analysis tools for their society- they give an insight to the dominant discourses and conflicts within and are also a means to create national identity and discourses, themselves.

The notion of a *national cinema* is an interesting phenomenon of film studies. While films produced in a certain nation are identified universally by that nation’s name, such as Turkish film, Iranian film, Italian film, American film etc., when it comes down to identifying *national cinemas*, there seems to be much ambiguity as to

what exactly that term means and much resistance to classify any nation's cinema as a proper "national cinema". While Turkish cinema never seems to be able to qualify as a proper national cinema (even among Turkish film critics), some others, like French cinema, will be told to have now lost its "national cinema" status due to trading much of its "Frenchness" for the "American way" to achieve success.¹³⁷ On the other hand, some will praise Bollywood as an example of proper national cinema¹³⁸, while others cite American cinema as the 'genuine national cinema'¹³⁹, where as, yet some others, actually refer to Hollywood as the main "Other" for all national cinemas.¹⁴⁰ And in some cases different nations' domestic film industries will be combined under a more general roof like "Latin American Cinema", which will then be examined and criticized as a regular national cinema, just like Fernando Birri does when he criticizes "old" Latin American Cinema for failing to reflect how "so rich, so complex, so contradictory, so coarse, so exalrant"¹⁴¹ the continent was in the images it produced. For Birri, as he states in his article "For a Nationalist, Realist, Critical and Popular Cinema", it is the "new" Latin American Cinema which is not a mere utopia but truly is "the only cinema that expresses a continent in all the

¹³⁷ Darrell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (New York: Columbia University Press), 1996, p. 13.

¹³⁸ Jyotika Viridi, *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (London; New Jersey; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 7

¹³⁹ Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking and the Studio System* (New York: Random House, 1981), p. 261.

¹⁴⁰ Davis (1996), p. 13.

¹⁴¹ Fernando Birri, "For a Nationalist, Realist, Critical and Popular Cinema," *Screen* vol.26, May-August 1985: pp. 89-92, p. 89.

diversity of its cultural-historical connotations”.¹⁴² Which all begs the question, what exactly is a national cinema?

There is no simple answer to what “national cinema” is, as there is “not a single universally accepted discourse of national cinema”, Andrew Higson points out in his article “The Concept of National Cinema”.¹⁴³ Some prefer to define national cinema in *economic terms*. In this approach national cinema is the equivalent of “domestic film industry”¹⁴⁴ and among its defining features are who owns and controls the production, distribution and exhibition of films. Then there is a *text-based approach* to national cinema where the main question becomes “how they engaged in ‘exploring, questioning, and constructing a notion of nationhood in the films themselves and in the consciousness of the viewer’?” quotes Higson from Susan Barrowclough. For the text-based approach the defining feature of national cinema is the content of the films, the world view that is uniformly presented in them. The *exhibition-led, or consumption based, approach* to national cinema, on the other hand, concerns itself with the audience’s consumption habits. This approach, Higson marks, is the one that leads to an “anxiety about cultural imperialism”¹⁴⁵ as the number of foreign films in the nation-state’s film market is a concern. It is this concern that leads some people to consider Hollywood as the “Other” for all national cinemas due to its dominance of the world’s cinema market. Finally, Higson cites a *critical approach* to national cinema, which tends to disregard popular –especially kitsch- films and considers only “quality art cinema”, as the only one eligible to be

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 90.

¹⁴³ Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema,” *Screen* 30 (4) (1989), , p. 36.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 37.

categorized as “national cinema”. One can say that all these different approaches look at national cinema from a particular point of view, while disregarding the rest.

What I am interested in, for the purposes of my thesis, is not “national cinema” *per se*, but rather the “national” in cinema. I am looking for the “Turkish” in Turkish cinema. What I inquire after is the relationship between films and the nation of which they are a product. For my purposes, what matters is not the quality of the film, or whether it is accepted as part of an elitist view of “national cinema”, but rather the film’s popularity, its success in appealing to the masses. Thus, I am not interested in Turkish films that Sinematek or Turkish National Cinema group would approve of. On the contrary, I am interested in the kind of films that intellectuals would look down on but were, and are, nevertheless popular by the Turkish public. As many studies indicate that popular films are, for the most part, genre films, I will be looking into genre films, and specifically films which fall under the historical genre, too see what their specific characteristics are and what they reveal about the society they are a part of and how they function as mythmaking tools, all which I will do in the next chapter. But, I believe, to understand the importance of genre films in film analysis, we first need to have a more conceptually grounded understanding of films and the film industry, and this, I will try to explain in the rest of this chapter.

The Question of National Cinema

In my opinion, much of the debate and ambiguity on what a national cinema is in part due to Hollywood’s total dominance of cinema. Hollywood’s dominance is not limited to third world countries- it dominated and continues to dominate the world market of the cinema industry. “When one talks of cinema, one talks of American

cinema. The influence of cinema is the influence of American cinema, which is the most aggressive and widespread aspect of American culture throughout the world... For this reason, every discussion of cinema made outside Hollywood must begin with Hollywood,” says Glauber Rocha.¹⁴⁶ Although it produces only a fraction of the films produced in a year (in 1970, of the 4000 or so films made, only 8 percent were Hollywood products¹⁴⁷), Hollywood gains 75 percent or more of the profits made from cinema.¹⁴⁸ But it would be misleading to think Hollywood’s dominance of the cinema market is just about how much profit its films make in relation to films produced by other nations. Hollywood does not just produce a high number of films that people in different societies enjoy, and make lots of profits due to this popularity, it dominates the cinema market on all aspects, to the point, for example, 98 percent of German film funds raised by tax shelters went to Hollywood instead of German film industry in 2000.¹⁴⁹ This is why, even when one is talking about “national” cinemas, the main point of reference remains Hollywood - it dominates the cinema market, sets the standards and trends that others follow and is the Goliath they need to fight against to be able to exist, even in their own domestic market. Hollywood is very much “inside” all nations already, forcing the national cinemas to operate under the circumstances it sets.

In order to better understand the role of Hollywood in shaping “national cinema”, it is important to look at the question: what is a film? According to Jean-

¹⁴⁶ Roy Armes, *Third World Film Making and The West*, (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), p. 35.

¹⁴⁷ Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2003), p. 710.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 706.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Louis Comolli & Jean Narboni, a film has two distinct features: it is a commodity that is produced, distributed and consumed within a given system of economic relations but it is also an ideological product.¹⁵⁰ First I will explain how a film is a commodity and how this has affected “national cinema”s. Then I will explain how films are ideological products.

A film is created in an all-encompassing system that even ‘independent’ film makers are a part of. All filmmakers require labour and capital to produce their films and need to distribute and sell them.¹⁵¹ As such, economics always played an important role in cinema.

This “mechanical reproducibility” of films is the source of profit from them.¹⁵² Although the production of a film can be costly, once it is produced, making a replica of it is easy and cheap. Any copy of a film sold to another country returns as almost pure profit. A silent film, particularly, is very much the “ideal capitalist product” argues Roy Armes, as it is infinitely reproducible for very low costs and has the whole world as its market due to its universal appeal.¹⁵³ The universality of silent films contributed a lot to the early domination of the cinema market by Hollywood, says Albert Moran, as it was entering foreign markets at very low costs thanks to the mechanical productivity of the films, and was then able to set prices in these market. This allowed Hollywood to not only to pay off its “development and production

¹⁵⁰ Jean-Louis Comolli & Jean Narboni, “Cinema/Ideology/Criticism 1,” Reprinted in translation in *Screen Reader 1* (London, SEFT, 1977), p. 3.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Armes (1987), p. 37.

¹⁵³ Roy Armes, “Twelve Propositions on the Inaccessibility of Third World Cinema,” *Turkish Cinema: an Introduction*, ed. Christine Woodhead,(London: University of London SOAS Turkish Area Study Group Publications, 1989), pp. 4-5.

costs”¹⁵⁴ but also to make high profits. At this period, the third world was merely a market to be exploited first by the West¹⁵⁵, says Armes.

The fact that film is “a commodity to be bought and sold”¹⁵⁶ defines the structure of film industries. The film industry consists of three parts: production, distribution and exhibition and distribution is the most crucial one of all.¹⁵⁷ Production and exhibition are geographically bound as one needs studios for production and film theaters for exhibition but distribution has no boundaries - a distribution company can be based on anywhere in the world.¹⁵⁸ Distributors hold the power within the industry as the producers are forced to sell their rights to the films to distributors in order to make money, while the exhibitors need to hire the films from the distributors in order to exhibit them in their theaters. Distributors determine the prices and so control the film market in other countries.¹⁵⁹ The power in the film industry lies in the distribution company, and as most distribution companies are either US-based or US-controlled¹⁶⁰, Hollywood becomes the industry that controls the cinema market even today.

By 1908, large-scale industrialization of cinema had started, reaching its high point in Hollywood studio system. The major Hollywood companies, which held the

¹⁵⁴ Moran (1996), p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Armes (1989), p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Albert Moran, “Terms for a Reader: Film, Hollywood, National Cinema, Cultural Identity and Film Policy,” *Film policy: international, national, and regional perspectives*, ed. Albert Moran (New York: Routledge, 1996), p.1

¹⁵⁸ Armes (1989), p.4

¹⁵⁹ Armes (1987), p. 37.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

power to produce, distribute and exhibit films, attained monopoly control over the film market, working together especially to exclude “outsiders” from the US domestic market.¹⁶¹ By the 1920s, which was the era of silent films, 60-80 percent of films shown anywhere in the world were Hollywood films. With the demise of the Hollywood studio system by the end of the 1960s as television took over, and the 1950s anti-trust laws in United States¹⁶², the production companies had to give up control of all three aspects of film making –production, distribution, exhibition- and instead concentrated on the key stage that was the most profitable (distribution) and so they became “huge mass entertainment and leisure service conglomerates”.¹⁶³

Despite hindrances such as the television, the Great Depression, World War II and the introduction of sound films –which gave local film makers an advantage over Hollywood -, Hollywood’s dominance continued to increase in time –between the 1930s to the 1960s Hollywood films occupied 70 to 90 percent of the international film market.¹⁶⁴ Hollywood owes its perseverance to the fact it has preserved the ability to redefine film and reorganize both its production and distribution as the times necessitated. By doing so, it has always kept its own interests ahead of all other competitors.¹⁶⁵ To this day this dominance persists as other nations’ culture ministers and film executives keep searching for ways to beat it¹⁶⁶ and try different strategies

¹⁶¹ Armes (1987), p. 36.

¹⁶² Moran (1996), p. 3.

¹⁶³ Armes (1987), p. 36.

¹⁶⁴ Schatz (1981), p. 6.

¹⁶⁵ Armes (1987), p. 36.

¹⁶⁶ EUBusiness. 15 August 2006. *Cannes: Internet seen as key to beating Hollywood dominance in Europe*. Available[online]: <http://www.eubusiness.com/europe/france/050517172909.jjmo7oc0/> [3 May 2011].

ranging from funding production to training filmmakers, developing projects, expanding distribution, financing coproduction...¹⁶⁷ Due to Hollywood's uncontested role as the standard and trend setter of the medium, all nations' domestic film industries suffer from a certain foreignness to cinema –it seems to be first and foremost an American product.

When talking about films, it is important to make a distinction between silent films and sound films. Silent films were the norm in cinema until the late 1920s. The lack of spoken language and reliance on pure bodily action meant these films had a much greater universality. Hollywood, in its goal to maximize profit, was trying to offer films that would appeal to the audiences universally, even if the main market in mind was the domestic US market¹⁶⁸, and so silent films were made to be related to and be appreciated by any audience anywhere.¹⁶⁹ A Charlie Chaplin film was understood and laughed at not only by a university professor in United States but also by a peasant in Cuba. Just like the fall of Latin to be replaced by vernacular languages was a crucial step in formation of a nation-states¹⁷⁰, the end of the silent film era with the introduction of sound into the films was a crucial step in films gaining a much more national feature –with the introduction of sound a film “was enmeshed in vernacular languages and nascent nationalism”.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Thompson and Bordwell (2003), p. 710.

¹⁶⁸ Arnes (1987), p. 38.

¹⁶⁹ Arnes (1989), pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 18-19.

¹⁷¹ Arnes (1989), p. 6.

The sound films were a chance for other nations' film industries to make a claim to a place for themselves at least in the local market. Unlike foreign films, they would be producing films in the audience's very own language which would be a unique product that Hollywood could not offer them and was likely to capture the attention of the audience better and appeal to them more. This saw the rise of the commercial local cinema that was "destined only for the local populace (and a few neighboring countries sharing the same language)".¹⁷² So, it could be said, "sound films" were a turning point for national film industries as well as "national cinema" as with the introduction of sound local filmmakers were able to tell their own stories to their own audience in their own language – this locality was a special attribute they had that Hollywood films could not provide to their audiences, their one advantage over Hollywood, the one "national" part of a product that was otherwise still very much imported from Hollywood/Western world as far as its standards, organization, distribution and equipment etc. were concerned.

Introduction of sound into the films did not bring an end to Hollywood's dominance of the international film market as it still held the distribution force in its hands. Hollywood continued to try to appeal to a worldwide audience in order to keep its dominance over the world market¹⁷³ and succeeded. What sells in the world market is mostly Hollywood films. Neither the Hollywood studio bosses of the 1930s nor the multi-national corporations of now, who hold the power of distribution have an interest in developing rival film production industries anywhere, says Armes.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, many of the non-US-based distribution companies are also more

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Armes (1987), p. 38.

¹⁷⁴ Armes (1989), p. 4.

interested in importing American films than encouraging local film production as they make their decisions based primarily on their concern for making more profit.¹⁷⁵ As long as Hollywood films offered the fast, secure and easy way to make a lot of profit, no distribution company, regardless of origin, was likely to be interested in local film production companies. The sound films gave “national” cinemas an advantage over Hollywood but it was a local advantage. As the world’s biggest market, United States, generally resists non-English language films¹⁷⁶, and so the national cinemas were still very much confined to their borders and maybe a few neighbouring nations. And within this market they still had the strong Hollywood presence to contend with as the local distributors chose to fill their screens with imported Hollywood films which were less costly for them.¹⁷⁷ US market being mostly closed to cinema of Others and dominating the world market meant a national cinema, like Yeşilçam, would rely on “national” subsidies, regional funding and private investment to survive and would mostly remain within “national” borders.¹⁷⁸

As Albert Moran says: “No cinema has escaped its [Hollywood’s] force field and historically Hollywood has to a large extent defined the range of options for other cinemas in both economic and cultural terms”.¹⁷⁹ I have so far explained the economic force of Hollywood over other nations’ cinemas and how national cinemas try to survive in such conditions. Another problem that local film makers of non-western nations, like Yeşilçam, faced was that cinema was a form of communication

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Thompson and Bordwell (2003), p. 711.

¹⁷⁷ Arnes (1989), p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ Thompson and Bordwell (2003), p. 711.

¹⁷⁹ Moran (1996), p. 6.

that was foreign to them. Cinema was a “product of only a limited number of western countries at a particular point of their historical development”¹⁸⁰ and as such for the non-Western nations it was an “imported form of communication”.¹⁸¹ A film maker from a non-western country was forced to use a Western technology and Western filmic narrative to tell stories of his own culture, of his own society.¹⁸² This meant the foreign film makers would use standards set by Hollywood, such as genres, to create their own films. As they lacked the funds and power of the Hollywood industry, their films often came off as pale even ridiculous imitations of the Hollywood films and were thus rendered incompatible with them in the international market. With their audience pressuring them to produce “entertainment of the imported kind” and them having only a fraction of the budget Hollywood had to produce the same kind of films, their use of Hollywood formulas and attempts to imitate Hollywood films resulted in an “under-developed cinema”, states Armes.¹⁸³ It was a vicious cycle film industries like Yeşilçam found themselves in as their attempts to imitate Hollywood made them less and less able to compete with Hollywood in an international market, constraining them to their local markets. In a way, Hollywood forced the cinema of Others to be “national”, confined to its borders and targeting its local audience and its demands only, as it was the only way it could exist.

Hollywood films’ dominance of the market as the more profitable commodities meant survival of a national film industry depended a lot on local governmental

¹⁸⁰ Armes (1989), p. 3.

¹⁸¹ Armes (1987), p. 35.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁸³ Armes (1989), p. 5.

support, especially in third world countries. Yeşilçam was at a great disadvantage where it never really enjoyed much governmental support, and suffered immensely from governmental intervention in the form of censorship. Cinema's relationship with the government is a more distant relationship than the one seen between radio and television broadcasting and the government, which means cinema retains more independence but the effect of the government's inclusion in film production is still felt¹⁸⁴, especially in the form of censorship. "Film fits awkwardly into the state's institutional priorities: it cannot be seen as a governmental achievement in modernization (like the building of a dam or industrial complex), nor is it an aspect of traditional culture to be promoted internationally along with, say, local carpet making or rural crafts", says Armes.¹⁸⁵ He claims that, on the rare occasions a third world government becomes culturally involved with film production within its boundaries, the product is a hybrid that is both western and local, no longer corresponding to local audience taste he says. I find this idea of hybridity intriguing but have a rather different take on it than Armes.

In my opinion, given Hollywood's dominant influential presence in film-making and the fact that cinema is a foreign form of communication and art for many nations, including Turkish cinema owed its foundations to foreigners, one could say almost all films produced in non-US domestic film industries are hybrid products – with or without government intervention. They are products who are part western, part local by nature as they use western technology, structures, forms, narratives to tell local stories. This hybridity may be one of the underlying reasons for the ambiguity regarding what a proper "national cinema" is, as well as the fear of

¹⁸⁴ Armes (1989), p. 6.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

Americanization of national cinema that is so often expressed. For some, like intellectuals of Sinematek, when domestic film producers used popular American formulas to make their own films, the “national” aspect of the film was lost and it was nothing but a cheap imitation. Seeing films produced in a non-US domestic film industry as hybrid products might be helpful in realizing they are not just feeble attempts at imitating popular American films for commercial success but that they also have a certain unique local touch to them. Yeşilçam filmmakers did not have the capital and resources to match American films in production quality, and yet had to somehow face-off with them in the local market for audience and thus, profits. Their one advantage over American films was their localness, in the fact that they and their films were Turkish –the films were in Turkish, had Turkish characters, and told Turkish stories... These films may have been imitating popular American films, but their settings, their characters, their stories were still distinctly domestic. There is still something “national” about such popular films even if not highly artistic or groundbreakingly original.

I have, so far, explained what it means for a film to be a commodity and how this feature of the film affects a national cinema. As stated before, Jean-Louis Comolli & Jean Narboni mention two distinct features for a film. In addition to being a commodity, the film is also an ideological product of the system.¹⁸⁶ According to Comolli and Narboni that “Cinema reproduces reality” is an ideological claim because what the camera registers as “real” is not necessarily reality in all its bare truth, but rather it is a reality that the ideology claims to be “real”. What the camera shows is “the vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought-out world of the dominant ideology. Cinema is one of the languages through which the world

¹⁸⁶ Comolli and Narboni (1977), p .3.

communicates itself to itself.”¹⁸⁷ The audience, according to their view, is also shaped by the dominant ideology that determines cinema so “what the public wants” means “what the dominant ideology wants”.¹⁸⁸

Influenced by Louis Althusser; Comolli and Narboni have an ideological approach to film industry and genres.^{189 190} According to Althusser, ideology is “a representation of the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence”.¹⁹¹ This imaginary is produced and maintained by various ideological state apparatuses located in religious, legal and cultural structures, mass media, family, and education¹⁹² and influences how individuals think and behave, including what they consider the correct way to read or see a film is.¹⁹³ For some, the film industry is one such ideological state apparatus where generic films construct realities that appear real but are, in fact, imaginary and “lure audiences into accepting deceptive non-solutions” and serve only the state’s and the industries purposes.¹⁹⁴ It is a view that sees all films as political, some –majority- endorsing and reflecting the dominant ideology while some others rejecting it. The ideological approach subscribes a rather passive role to the audience who are mostly seen as people who are shaped by the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸⁹ Ian Wojcik-Andrews, *Children’s Films: History, Ideology, Pedagogy, Theory*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), p. 124.

¹⁹⁰ Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), p. 27.

¹⁹¹ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 162.

¹⁹² Michael Freedon, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 25.

¹⁹³ Wojcik-Andrews (2000), pp. 124-5.

¹⁹⁴ Altman (1999), p. 27.

dominant ideologies. However, this view is severely contested by those who take a ritual approach to film criticism and claim there is a strong relationship between audience and that they both shape one another.

Films, Nationalism and Identity

According to the ritual approach, which leading genre theorists such as Thomas Schatz and Rick Altman both take, the audiences are the ultimate creators of genres, and as such their role in the creation of films should not be disregarded.¹⁹⁵ Without an audience to demand, watch and respond to them, films would not come into existence. The better a film manages to communicate with its audience, the more successful it will be. The role the audience plays in shaping films is crucial for genre theorists. “When a film achieves a certain success, it becomes a sociological event, and the question of its quality becomes secondary”, quotes Thomas Schatz from Francois Truffaut in his book *Hollywood Genres*.¹⁹⁶ What ultimately determines a film’s success is not whether the elite film critics deem it of high quality, but that it scores high on box-office which is indicative of its appeal to the masses. If a certain film “sells”, it means there is a certain aspect to it that attracts the masses more than other films, and this success is what the film producers are after. Economics may be the driving force behind film production, but it is clear that the “economic success” of a film largely rests on its ability to appeal to the audience, to the “common” people. Monaco also underlines the importance of “audience” in films, pointing out

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Schatz (1981), p. 262.

that despite what some may think, audiences are selective and even if they go to films for “entertainment” most do not go to just “any” film. As he says, there is “quite a lot of digits between a box-office flop and a smash hit”¹⁹⁷, which is why studying “popular” films is a means to get an understanding on the preferences and world view of the society who made them popular.

It is this relationship films have with their particular audience that gives any film produced within a nation’s own film industry its “national identity”, despite Hollywood’s dominating influence on cinema industries all over the world. French cinema’s contemporary status as a proper national cinema may be contested due to it adopting Hollywood’s style more and more, but a French film remains to be “French film” for all concerned as it is a film made for the French audience, telling them a story that they can connect with and appreciate. It is this “national identity” that a non-US made popular film maintains, that marks them as belonging to a certain nation and makes them of a special interest to their local audience. A popular film is “popular” because the audience makes a choice – they choose to watch that particular film and not some other film. From a variety of films –both domestic quality films to foreign films to numerous other “Yeşilçam films”- the Turkish public chose these particular films as its favorite. This is why I think Turkish popular films, no matter how kitschy, have something to say about the Turkish nation of which they are a product.

Films are a part of the nation that produces them. They are not merely a commodity like a pencil, they are a commodity that takes form through much interaction between its producers –film makers-, as well as its consumers – the

¹⁹⁷ Paul Monaco , *Cinema and Society: France and Germany During the Twenties* (Amsterdam; Oxford; New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, 1976), p. 76.

audience-. As John Belton notes, “films are an integral part of mass culture and are embedded within it”.¹⁹⁸ As part of a mass culture, they are both a product of that culture and one of the producers of it- they mutually determine one another. Films and filmmakers who produce them, are all inseparable from the society they exist in. “The individual transcends society, but society is also and above all *within* him. So there can be no definitive criticism of genius or talent which does not first take into consideration the social determinism, the historical combination of circumstances, and the technical background which to a large extent determine it”, Belton quotes Andre Basin.¹⁹⁹

According to Belton, films define themselves in terms of the dominant ideologies of the society, sometimes reflecting and sometimes contesting them.²⁰⁰ The dominant ideology in question is not necessarily a single dominant ideology, or common culture, that is imposed on the population by the elites or the state. Raymond Williams contests such an elitist view of a common culture, and rather points out that a common culture needs to respect and be receptive of the everyday culture of the common people, of the masses.²⁰¹ Williams’s approach to the notion of “common culture” is one that embraces and celebrates popular culture. Mike Featherstone also has a more sympathetic attitude towards popular culture which he describes as “ordered disorder”²⁰² and claims to be the true “common culture” of the

¹⁹⁸ John Belton, “Introduction,” *Films and Mass Culture*, ed. by John Belton (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

²⁰¹ Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 133.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 135.

society. The majority of the population, the masses, the “common people” do not share the elite’s high culture, rather they have their own culture in “popular culture” which reflects the diversity of the population. Popular culture may be looked down by the cultural elite as being “vulgar, primitive, superstitious and disordered”²⁰³ but it is the prevailing culture within the society.

Albert Moran claims the arguments regarding national cinema also reflect a “rerun of the mass culture/ high culture debate”. The view that considers artistic films that strike “a chord of human sensitivity” as products of true “national cinema” and champion them against Hollywood and Hollywood imitation films which are seen as “anti-culture, the antithesis of human culture”²⁰⁴ is very much a view that is championing “high culture” over “mass culture”. The high culture mass culture debate was at the center of Turkish intellectuals debates on Yeşilçam, too, where especially Sinematek’s followers would completely write Yeşilçam off as a “Turkish” cinema due to its lack of artistic value, saying “Turkish cinema in the middle of 20th century still carries no human value. Political problems aside, Turkey is still foreign to its own people”.²⁰⁵ Popular films within a nation may lack “artistic value” and may not be considered to be fit into an elitist “national cinema” classification, but they are not foreign to their own people. As products of the mass culture, and very much a part of the “nation”, of the people. They reflect the various ideologies and characteristics of the nation within them, as opposed to a particular elitist and dominant ideology. And like films do, they play a crucial role in the

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 139.

²⁰⁴ Moran (1996), p. 9.

²⁰⁵ Başgüneş (2011), p. 63.

construction of the national identity, as well as its representation/re-presentation and transmission.²⁰⁶

Popular films are a “dreamlike reflection of the shared concern of the audience”²⁰⁷ says Monaco. He uses the term “group mind” to refer to the concerns shared by large numbers of the people who formed the national, mass audience. According to him, these are “received ideas and notions” that were generally – consciously and unconsciously- accepted within a society at a certain time.²⁰⁸ These ideas, although “periodically manipulated by government or other powerful elements within society” were believed to be based on “shared experiences” originally. Thus these concerns, which create the “myths”, have certain reference points to reality.²⁰⁹ The symbolism of a popular film needs to create the basis of shared, collective psychological appeal to at least a considerable portion of the audience for it to be “popular”.²¹⁰ Monaco quotes sociologist I. C. Jarvie who says “Apart from anthropological field work, I know nothing comparable to from a point of view of getting under the skin of a society as viewing films made for the home market”.²¹¹

At any given time, a popular film serves as an insight into how the society views itself and its world. At times when nationalism is on the rise, the films become more “nationalistic” as was the case in the 1920s in Europe. In 1919, French director

²⁰⁶ Belton (1996), p. 1.

²⁰⁷ Monaco (1976), p.156

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 157.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

²¹¹ Ibid.

Jean Renoir said “I know I am French, and that I should work in a way that is absolutely national”.²¹² This nationalistic approach to cinema and “national” cinemas was a common mentality seen across Europe at the time, which Monaco calls “the epoch of the national film”. Films were expected to reflect the nation they were created in throughly in style and spirit.²¹³ According to Monaco, the rhetoric of “national” cinema in the 1920s in France and Germany reflect the economic and social realities of the local film industry at the time. To make profit, the producers had to produce something “popular”, something that would appeal to the “mass, national audience”.²¹⁴ The same could be experienced in Yeşilçam in the mid 1960s-70s. The rise of nationalism in Turkey during this time would find its reflection in Yeşilçam films.

“The nation, as an ‘imagined country’ requires the construction of a national past” and so nationalism manipulates history to create a “Great Myth of the Nation and its Origin” states M. Zafer Çetin.²¹⁵ Using this Great Myth, nationalism is able to “attract the general public” and “drive it to mass political action”.²¹⁶ One means through which this national past is created and conveyed to the public is films. The Australian case makes for an interesting and powerful example of this. In the 1960s, the commemoration of Anzac Day has declined so much that there were doubts it

²¹² Monaco (1976), p. 68.

²¹³ Ibid., p.69.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

²¹⁵ M. Zafer Çetin, “Tales of Past, Present and Future: Mythmaking and Nationalist Discourse in Turkish Politics,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol 24, No 2 (October 2004), p.354.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

would continue to be celebrated in the near future.²¹⁷ But come the 1990s, the Anzac Day made an “impressive comeback”. What was happening was that during this time Australian “new nationalism” was in effect, redefining the Australian identity.²¹⁸ The Australian national identity, which once constructed itself in likeness of being like the British and othering of the Turks²¹⁹ was now constructing it by othering the British²²⁰, instead. As Stuard Ward says, “in order to sustain the central national myth of Gallipoli”, on which the Australian identity is constructed on, “the legend itself had to be reborn”²²¹ and Australian cinema played a key role in building this myth and spreading it, thus helping the public make sense of the nation and their identity. Of particular note was the film *Gallipoli* (1981) which won many awards and was described by Philips Adams the film that “gave us back our history. This is what having a film industry is all about”.²²²

Cinema reflects the changes of the society whose stories it tells, changing in themes and characterization as the society itself changes. Globalization saw an increased number of immigrants across nations. As the demographics of the society and their experiences changed, the change reflected in the films. “The migration of the populations created a form of ‘world film’ quite far from the dreams of the U.S

²¹⁷ Stuart Ward, “‘A War Memorial In Celluloid’: The Gallipoli Legend In Australian Cinema, 1940s-1980s,” *Gallipoli: Making History*, ed. Jenny Macleod. London (New York: Frank Cass, 2004), p. 59.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²²² *Ibid.*

Majors²²³,” say Thompson and Bordwell in their book *Film History*.²²⁴ As migration became a “shared experience”, film makers started to make films telling tales of migration and a “cinema of diaspora” was born, telling tales of “dispersion and displacement”.²²⁵ Most of these films were shot by second or third-generation immigrants, who live in the “host” culture long enough to know of its customs and way of thinking but also had participated in a “mature immigration subculture”. Many times, the immigrant film-makers access to their “roots” is through popular culture, especially cinema too. Gurinda Chandha, for example, lived in Britain with her family and her understanding of “India” came from the Indian films she watched, and in her films one can see the “dazzling imagery” of Bollywood romances repeated.²²⁶ The people’s experiences shape the films they produce, just as the films they watch shape their perceptions. Films and the individual are thus constantly in interaction, feeding off one another, shaping each other, sometime even subconsciously.

Conclusion

Popular geopolitics, the construction of scripts that shape common perceptions of political and social events, is the key to understanding both national identities and

²²³ Thompson and Bordwell (2003), p. 706. - “Majors” is a common phrase used to describe the seven major film distributors –Warner Bros., Universal, Paramount, Columbia, 20th Century Fox, MGM/UA, and Disney (Buena Vista).

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 715.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., pp. 715-716.

global orders, according to Jason Dittmer.²²⁷ Quoting Paasi, Dittmer states that as insitutionalized regions, nation states continuously create and maintain territorial practices and ideologies and attaching symbolic meaning to territory is a part of this process. One way through which one attaches symbolic meaning to boundaries is the “production and consumption of popular culture, which leads to the internalization of the mythic and symbolic aspects of national identities”.²²⁸

In Banal Nationalism, Billig says that “in the established nations there is a continual ‘flagging’, or reminding, of nationhood”.²²⁹ This flagging is usually subtle, having worked its way into “everyday” life, slipping from attention. Popular culture, and so, cinema, is a way of “flagging” people. It is a means through which people come to define themselves, their world and their position within that world. Films help people understand and remember their position “both within a larger collective identity and within an even broader geopolitical narrative”.²³⁰ Dittmer uses the comic hero Captain America to make his point, claiming Captain America is literally the embodiment of “American identity” and presents its readers “a hero that is both of, and for, the nation”.²³¹ He represents the “idealized American nation” and defends “the American status quo”. The same can be said of Turkish heroes one encounters in Turkish historical adventure films. Defenders of the Turkish state and people, these heroes are the embodiment of the “ideal” Turkish man and thus a “true”

²²⁷ Jason Dittmer, “Captain America’s Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture, and Post-9/11 Geopolitics,” *Annals of Association of American Geographers*, 95(3) (2005), p. 626.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications , 2005), p. 8i

²³⁰ Dittmer (2005), p. 626.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 627.

representation of Turkish identity, and are heroes born of and for their own nation. This is why the kitschy Turkish historical adventure films, often shrugged off for their low artistic quality, can still prove to be an important source for understanding Turkish nationalism and its discourses.

The theory of nationhood requires that “a people, place and state should be bound in unity”.²³² The mystic bond between the people and the homeland is a major theme in nationalistic narratives. The nation is not just an imagined community of ‘people’, it is an imagined community of ‘people’ within the same ‘homeland’.²³³ Individuals are not necessarily born with a sense of belonging to a country, to a “homeland”. They may feel a part of their immediate community which they live in and the place of that community but the wider idea of a “homeland” of the nation is something that needs to be imagined. “The imagining of a ‘country’ involves the imagining of a bounded totality beyond immediate experience of place,” says Billig. Mediums such as the radio, which broadcasts to “all” people within a “country” serve to make such imagining easier for the public as it fixes them within the ‘nation’ by alluding to a national time and space, according to Ahıska.²³⁴ Cinema serves a similar function, it not only gives its audience a sense of being “one” with the other members of the audience who are complete strangers, it also presents on screen, “the homeland” that is often referred to

National histories tell stories of “the people”, passing through time, states Billig. These people are understood to be “our” people, living “our” way of life,

²³² Billig (2005), p.77

²³³ Ibid., p. 74.

²³⁴ Meltem Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı: Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2005), pp. 21-22.

living in “our” homeland, a part of “our” culture.²³⁵ Radio, by reminding people of war news, big disasters, and “national victories” creates an “audial history” for the nation according to Meltem Ahıska.²³⁶ Cinema takes this one step ahead and creates both a visual and audial history for the people. Like television, it appeals to the sensation that is the most effective when making a person connect with reality – the visual²³⁷ and uses the “visual” as proof of the legitimacy and truth of the “reality” it creates. The visual aspect of cinema makes cinematic representations of the people, the nation, the homeland and the national history more powerful and effective than other forms of communications. The world cinema creates, which is easily accessible to all, becomes a “reality”. In fact, at times, it was too real. In the 1960s-70s there were incidents when people would beat up actors playing the bad characters in Turkish films for raping the women in the films.²³⁸ Cinema is a powerful means to generate and spread ideas.²³⁹ It not only promotes particular ways of behavior and sentiment for its audience, but it also attaches meaning to landscapes, constructs a past, a world view, a “particular way of thinking about reality”.

A study of a film made in a nation’s cinema requires a special acknowledgment of Hollywood as its dominance of the film market means it remains to be a dominating influence on all local film industries around the world. The audiences everywhere were and still are very familiar with and used to Hollywood

²³⁵ Billig (2005), p. 71.

²³⁶ Ahıska (2005), p. 16

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

²³⁸ Hüsni Çoruk, “Çizgi Romanımızda Kahramanlık Türü,” *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu – Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed. *Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 95.

²³⁹ Moran (1996), p. 4.

films which in turn shape their expectations and demands from a film. For any non-US industry to survive, these demands need to be met somehow. This puts in a difficult position especially third world film industries which not only have to cope with making films on budgets that are only a fraction of what is used on the production of films in Hollywood, but also have to imitate foreign entertainment formulas.²⁴⁰ Hollywood's dominating influence over the whole film industry meant that its isolated production techniques, narrative devices, as well as its established story types called "genres" were imprinted on the cinema industry as a whole.²⁴¹ Thus, in order to understand and analyze a popular film produced within a nation's film industry, one needs a better understanding of Hollywood genres that these films imitate.

²⁴⁰ Arnes (1989), p .5.

²⁴¹ Schatz (1981), p. 6.

CHAPTER 4

GENRE FILMS & MYTH MAKING

In the previous chapter, through the concept of national cinema, I looked into the relationship between films, nationalism and national identity. In this chapter, through the concept of genres, I will try to explain that film making is a contemporary form of myth making and helps naturalize social experiences. To do so, I will first explain what genres are, what their reciprocal relationship with the audience is and how they serve as basic cultural conflict solving operations for the society. In genre films, one finds the society and its conflicts presented on screen in a simplified manner. In this simple recreation of the world, the hero faces conflicts that are a representation of the conflicts society faces. Through the hero and his personality, actions, narratives the audience is shown how to solve these problems. At the end of the chapter, a special focus will be on historical film genre, its features and function, as well as its various examples across the world. In doing so, I want to both demonstrate the interconnectedness of genre films and national cinema, and also to ground a better understanding of the genre before I start analyzing the Turkish historical films in the following chapter.

Defining Film Genre

Between 1915 and 1930 Hollywood studios standardized the fundamentals of film production both to suit their audience's preferences –thus securing box-office success which would mean revenue- and to cut production costs. This led to the “classic” era of Hollywood (from the 1930s to the 1960s), where the studios were mass producing and mass distributing films, which earned them the name “factory production systems”.²⁴² It was in this setting that the Hollywood genres were first formed and films that would be referred to as “genre films” emerged. The genre films constituted the “vast majority of the most popular and profitable productions”, a trend that continues “even after [the studio systems] death”.²⁴³ In fact, it is not uncommon to see the terms “popular”, “generic” and “formulaic” cinema used interchangeably to refer to these types of films in film studies.²⁴⁴ Due to Hollywood's dominating influence the Hollywood genres were adapted and incorporated into other nations' cinemas. So what exactly are genres and what is behind the genre films' success and popularity?

Genres are industry standards used for films that help us “classify and define”²⁴⁵ what a certain film is about. Classifying a film into one of the genres like western, horror, science fiction, comedy, romance etc. means we have some “general

²⁴² Schatz (1981), p. 4.

²⁴³ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²⁴⁴ Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, genre and action cinema* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 55.

²⁴⁵ Stuart Voytilla, *Myth and the Films: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films*, (Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 1999), p. 1.

knowledge” about it, that we immediately know it “shares some indefinable ‘X,’”²⁴⁶ with other films from the same genre. Genres are indicators of what we can expect to find in a film. In his book titled *Genre*, John Frow refers to Rick Altman to explain how genres emerge as “industry standards” through a process called gentrification. According to Frow, genres exist only as part of the mechanisms, institutions, and communications that give them life. They are socially shared forms, “cultural conventions”,²⁴⁷ produced due to a common acceptance and understanding of their certain elements by the producers, critics, and audience alike.²⁴⁸ As a cultural convention, a genre is not a stable standard, it changes over-time.²⁴⁹

According to Rick Altman, what makes genres unique is their ability to involve every aspect of the economy of cinema. They serve as *blueprints* for the production of films; as *structures* that define an individual film’s framework; as *label* for the programming of distribution and exhibition; and as *contract* with the audience that sets their viewing position and expectations from the film.²⁵⁰ As such, genres are not simply formal patterns or textual canons but rather a system and process that regiment both the process of production and that of reception for films. “Each generic system is made up of an interconnected network of user groups and their supporting institutions, each using the genre to satisfy its own needs and desires”, he

²⁴⁶ Andrew Tudor, “Genre,” *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. by Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), p. 3.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴⁸ John Frow, *Genre* (New York; London: Routledge, 2006), p. 114.

²⁴⁹ Rick Altman, “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre,” *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), p. 29.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

says.²⁵¹ Genres serve multiple purposes for multiple groups and always remain a contested site. Its moments of stability are just moments of equilibrium of contradicting desires but in reality a genre is always in process, always reconfigured, recombined and reformulated.

Thomas Schatz is another genre theorist who claims that genres evolve over time and attributes this to the special relationship genres have with the audience- as audience reaction, expectation, desires change, so does a genre to accommodate them.²⁵² At the origins of a genre lies what was once an original idea for a film by a filmmaker. The audience likes this unique idea and wants to see it repeated in other films and the film producers, whose main goal is, profit and thus costumer/audience satisfaction, comply with this demand. As audiences continue to demand certain types of films, the film-producers continue to supply them. The repetition of similar type of films results in the formation of that specific genre's iconography as the narrative and visual codes²⁵³ for the genre and these codes start to establish themselves and take root in the audience's expectations. The success formula for a film requires creativity on the filmmaker's part, but also recognition of certain conventions and expectations of the audience. The audience is unwilling to watch the same film over and over, thus demands variation between films, but at the same time they want the maintenance of the familiar narrative experience.²⁵⁴ The power and success of genre films lie in this reciprocal relation they have with the audience, which is also the reason for their endurance over time.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 195.

²⁵² Schatz (1981), p. 36.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

Shaped according to the audiences' conventions, expectations and desires genres reflect the society they are a product of. According to Schatz, "A genre's iconography reflects the value system that defines its particular cultural community and informs the objects, events, and character types composing it. Each genre's implicit system of values and beliefs- its ideology or world view- determines its cast of characters, its problems (dramatic conflicts) and the solutions of those problems."²⁵⁵ The costumes used in a film, the casting choices, the setting, the dialogue, the soundtrack etc. all reflect the beliefs and values of the society. A character who wears white is immediately seen as one of the "good" guys, as the "hero" while the character who wears black is seen as evil and is immediately identified as the antagonist as they bring into mind such thematic values as "white civilization is good, black is evil".²⁵⁶ It is this aspect of film genres, Schatz claims, that makes it possible to regard them as problem-solving operations. Genres repeatedly "confront the ideological conflicts (opposing value systems) within a certain cultural economy"²⁵⁷ and through its heroes and main characters suggest a variety of solutions to dealing with these conflicts. Each genre deals with some sort of threat to the social order²⁵⁸ in its own way and a genre's problem-solving function constitutes its distinct and conceptual identity.²⁵⁹

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson notes that the mediation of Christian conceptions to the illiterate masses was by visual and aural creations,

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

which were always personal and particular as Christendom manifested itself to various communities as replications of themselves.²⁶⁰ Believes, values and thoughts mediate to the masses best, when they are represented to them in a fashion that they can relate to. John C Lyden, in his book *Film as Religion*, takes Clifford Geertz's claim that a "myth connects everyday (empirically real) world of social matters and 'common sense' with the mystical (ideal, or ultimately real) world of religion" and goes on to say that this is what films do, too. Just as myths portray both a world that is believed to be, but also one people would like it to be, films do the same. Like myths, films "connect the real and the imagined, the everyday and the ideal".²⁶¹

Film-making as Myth-making

The *ritual approach* to genre criticism sees genre filmmaking as similar to mythmaking. Stuart Voytilla, in his book *Myth and the Films: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films*, points out that films are similar to stories, they are produced "to entertain, to inspire and perhaps even teach us to cope with problems" and can thus "be considered the contemporary form of mythmaking, reflecting our response to ourselves and the mysteries and wonders of our existence".²⁶² Understanding how films are the contemporary form of mythmaking would help us understand the social function films play within a society and why

²⁶⁰ Anderson (1983), p.23.

²⁶¹ John C Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals and Rituals* (London; New York: New York University Press, 2003), p. 62-63.

²⁶² Voytilla (1999), p.1.

genre films are a unique source to analyze to better understand the community they are a part of.

Christopher Vogler, in his foreword for Stuart Voytilla's book, points out that "with films, we found a medium ideal to represent the fantastic world of myths".²⁶³ Combining audio and video, the films are the perfect place to recreate the imaginary world the myths took place in, but they do more than recreate myths, they become mythmaking tools. In order to explain how filmmaking is the contemporary mythmaking, one first needs to explain what myths are.

Vogler describes myths as an attempt to explain "the purpose and place of humans in the vast design" which were enhanced to "reflect the distinct conditions of their living places and experiences in the land".²⁶⁴ Thomas Schatz, who also sees filmmaking as mythmaking, quotes Malinowski to say a myth "expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency and contains practical rules for guidance of man". He then proceeds to write about how Cassier draws attention to the practical and social function of myths as they "promote a feeling of unity and harmony among the members of a society and also the whole of nature or life". He also refers to Levi-Strauss to explain that "a culture's mythology represents its society speaking to itself, developing a network of stories and images designed to animate and resolve the conflicts of everyday life".²⁶⁵ Just like genres, the myths are the society talking to itself,—the settings of the stories, the

²⁶³ Christopher Vogler, "Foreword," *Myth and the Films: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films* (Studio City: Michael Wiese Productions, 1999), p. viii.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

²⁶⁵ Schatz (1981), p. 262.

characters, and the conflicts are all a reflections of the society that produces those stories- and like genres they serve as problem-solving solutions for their society.

“In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: It abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradiction because it is without dept,”²⁶⁶ says Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*. According to him myth’s function is to naturalize social experience. Likewise, I think genre film’s serve a similar function, in their basic simple “formulaic narrative approach” the genre films also act like “social rituals” that serve to “examine and affirm” the national identity of the society that produces them with all its “rampant conflicts, contradictions and ambiguities”, establishing a “sense of continuity between our cultural past and present”.²⁶⁷ Genres, like myths, present us with a simplified world and simplified human acts to naturalize social experience.

M. Zafer Çetin, in his article “Tales of Past, Present, and Future: Mythmaking and Nationalist Discourse in Turkish Politics”, says that “life without history and memory would be problematic” so “the ruling elite created myths to fill memories of the people”.²⁶⁸ According to Judith Hess Wright, genres, defined as “pure myth”²⁶⁹, owe their survival and popularity to the function they serve – how they help the

²⁶⁶ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 143.

²⁶⁷ Schatz (1981), p. 31.

²⁶⁸ Çetin (2004), p.354.

²⁶⁹ Judith Hess Wright, “Genre Films and the Status Quo,” *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), p. 42.

ruling elite in maintaining the existing structure.²⁷⁰ Genres bear “within themselves the working out of unconscious anxieties inherent in the psychological makeup of us all”.²⁷¹ The three significant characteristics of genre films are: how they “never deal directly with present social and political problems”, are set in “nonpresent”, and how the society presented in these films is “simple” and never functions as a dramatic force, says Wright.²⁷² The society remains in the background as the few characters established take action to resolve the conflict presented in the film. The genre films thus temporarily relieve audiences of anxieties of “social and political conflicts”, producing “satisfaction”, promoting inaction, and thus maintaining the “status quo”. Genre films present the audience with a simple world, where problems are solved in “simplistic and reactionary” ways that maintain and reaffirm existing political and social structures.²⁷³

According to John Belton a national identity conceives itself according to certain myths or cultural beliefs.²⁷⁴ This identity is not static, but ever-changing and films play an important role in the formation of this changing identity. They “document who we think we are” as well as reflecting “changes in our self-image, tracing the transformation”.²⁷⁵ Films assist their audiences in adjusting to the changes in their society, in their culture, in their identity by negotiating the major changes. Films carry audiences “across difficult periods of cultural transition in such a way

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁷² Ibid., pp. 42-43.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 50.

²⁷⁴ Belton (1996), p. 3.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 2.

that a more or less coherent national identity remain in place, spanning the gaps and fissures that threaten to disrupt its movement and to expose its essential disjointedness”, he claims.²⁷⁶ A genre that deals with questions of national identity is the historical adventure genre.

The Historical Film Genre²⁷⁷

Most genre films are criticized for being done according to the same formulae and despite their commercial success, few are regarded seriously due to a lack of artistic quality. In fact, even the most kitsch genre film has a story to tell about its society. The simplified world of the genre film, its hero with his/her moral convictions, the conflicts the characters confront are all familiar to the audience as the ones they face in reality. For example, due to their historical inaccuracy and extravagance films that fall under the historical epic genre are not taken very seriously and are often met with ridicule. For Vivian Sobchack, such disregard for films of this particular genre is a mistake and there is actually a lot to be gained by their careful analysis.

Epic is a term used to identify both “large-scale films” and historical – especially ancient world settings- films. In most cases, the two trends were overlapping as the film producers took on large-scale films set in ancient time such

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Apart from Hollywood, most nations could not produce films of “epic” sizes due to budget constraints even though they used the genre’s formulae in creating their films which one can generally classify as “historical adventure films” and “historical drama films”. As James Chapman prefers to use “historical films” to generally refer to all British films set in the past and such generalizations are sometimes made by other writers too, I decided to use “historical film genre” as a general, all-encompassing title, to avoid further confusion.

as *Ben Hur* and *Spartacus*.²⁷⁸ According to Steve Neale an epic is a complicated film genre, sharing many characteristics with other genres such as comedies, musicals, westerns and war films. Historical films use “dramatic elements”, such as a great leader, and “visual elements” like the landscape and social manners of the period²⁷⁹ to tell their own story of the national history, of the “evolution of society”.²⁸⁰ “The integration of the spectacle and the drama serve as a vehicle for historical explanation and expresses the relationship among nature, society and individual,” says Leger Grindon.²⁸¹

“The Hollywood historical epic is as ‘real’ and significant as any other mode of historical interpretation that human beings symbolically constitute to make sense of a human –and social- existence”, according to Vivian Sobchack.²⁸² The historical epic film, which reaches a considerable number of people through film theaters, engages its audiences with the notion that is “history”. The “history” it presents may not be accurate and real, but it is the “history” that reaches masses and affects them, becoming a part of their knowledge. A person who is not particularly interested in Roman history is still likely to watch a historical epic depicting Roman times, and this depiction will not only shape how he views Romans, it will also affect how he relates to them. The historical epic is a “prereflective, popular and undisciplined” mode of representation of the past and it “presumes the transparency of past others”

²⁷⁸ Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 78.

²⁷⁹ Leger Grindon, “Drama and Spectacle as Historical Explanation in the Historical Fiction Film,” *Film and History*, 17:4 (Dec. 1987), p. 75.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

²⁸² Vivian Sobchack, “‘Surge and Splendor’: A Phenomenology of the Hollywood Historical Epic,” *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), pp. 298-9.

and underlined their “human sameness” as opposed to difference.²⁸³ The historical epic films subjectifies and projects *ourselves-now* as *we-then*²⁸⁴, according to Sobchack and are thus “central to our understanding of what we mean by the ‘historical’ and ‘History’”.²⁸⁵

Following Siegfried Kraucer’s notion that ‘films provided insight into the collective unconscious of their audiences’, James Chapman claims, in his book *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film*, that it is a “universally acknowledged” truth amongst historians that historical films have as much to say about the present in which they were made as they have about the past in which they are set.²⁸⁶ The theme of identity is central in the historical film genre as these films usually focus on class, gender and national identities. What the historical film offers is not simply a look back into the past, it offers a representation of that particular nation’s past. The historical film offers its “lay” audiences who “do not comprise large numbers of professional historians” a “popular version of the past that promotes dominating myths”.²⁸⁷ Since what the historical film reflects is the popular view at the moment of its production, it is not wrong to say the historical film genre is never static and changes according to a variety of social, cultural, industrial, economic, political determinants.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 300.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 299.

²⁸⁶ James Chapman, *Past & Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), p. 1.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

In the 1960s and the 70s, films that promoted nationalism were popular across nations and as a result, so were historical films. From Britain and Italy in Europe, to India, China and Taiwan in Asia, and to Egypt and Turkey in Middle East, films depicted national heroes taking on the enemies of the nation and promoting national ideals. As Taiwan was trying to settle political anxiety and reassert its claims of Chinese nationhood through historical and anti-Japanese war films²⁸⁸, Bollywood was telling stories of “Indianness” in its mythologicals^{289 290} while its action heroes were off fighting foreign aggressors.²⁹¹ In Italy, Peplums (sword and sandals films) have made a splendid come-back²⁹², while Egyptian Cinema produced “one of the most remarkable historical films of the Egyptian film history”²⁹³, *Saladin Victorious* (al-Nasir Salah al-Din). Some of the most expensive and great productions of national cinemas at the time were historical films. During this time, historical films were very popular in Turkey, too, with both single and serialized films shot in which the Turkish hero would be shown defending the sacred homeland against the invading Others –who were usually Christians.

²⁸⁸ Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 114.

²⁸⁹ Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), p. 75.

²⁹⁰ Patrick Colm Hogan, *Understanding Indian Films: Culture, Cognition, and Cinematic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), p. 10.

²⁹¹ Virdi (2003), p. 92.

²⁹² Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 99.

²⁹³ Viola Shafik, *Popular Egyptian Cinema: Gender, Class and Nation* (New York; Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2006), p. 105.

Turkish Historical Adventure Films and Myth-Making

Until their decline by the end of the 70s, historical films were among the most popular films of Turkish cinema during the 60s and the 70s²⁹⁴, so much that in 1967 one of the three categories Antalya Film Festival had for films was “National and Historical Films”.²⁹⁵ Especially historical adventure films featuring famous actors such as Cüneyt Arkin and Kartal Tibet were turned into long lasting series. Among these series was the one for the hero Malkoçoğlu, and the first film of this series was one of the runners-up for the prize in Antalya Film Festival at the time. Ahmet Gürata, points out that the height of the Turkish historical films’ popularity coincides with the rise of nationalism in Turkey, as well as increasing animosity between Greece and Turkey.²⁹⁶ The genre reflected its times.

Although one may say historical films’ popularity in Turkey is related to the world-wide surge in popularity of the genre at the time, at the foundation of the “Turkish” historical films lies Turkish comic books featuring popular heroes –such as Karaoğlan, Tarkan, Kara Murat. These comics, on their part, based their heroes on heroic legends already told over years within the geography, according to Gürata.²⁹⁷ As such, Turkish historical films are a continuation of Turkish myths in a different medium. Gürata also notes that the heroes of the historical films define themselves as

²⁹⁴ Ahmet Gürata, “Öteki’yle Üçüncü Türden Yakın İlişkiler: Tarihsel Kostüme Filmler ve İkizlik Miti”*Türk Sineması: Kimlik Olgunlaş(tır)ma Enstitüsü,* *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler* 6, ed. Deniz Bayraktar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2007), p. 43.

²⁹⁵ ABC, 9-10 June 1967

²⁹⁶ Gürata (2007), p. 44.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

not a part of an ancient tribe or a larger civilization but as if they are a part of the modern Turkish nation-state.²⁹⁸ This is not surprising as often these heroes were created with modern ideas and concerns in mind and just were put in a historical setting. In fact, in a TV programme he attended as a guest, Rahmi Turan, the creator of the popular Turkish hero Kara Murat, admitted that when creating Kara Murat, they were trying to create a modern hero in the settings of a historical past (Ottoman) as that was the era when Turkey was the most powerful.²⁹⁹ Just like it is the case in their counterparts all around the world, the Turkish historical films served and continue to serve as a window into Turkish nationalism and how it envisions the nation's past and the Turkish identity.

Quoting Svetlana Boym, Asuman Suner uses the term “restorative nostalgia”³⁰⁰ to describe the nationalist nostalgia that we also see in historical adventure films. “As opposed to the reflective nostalgia that concerns individual memory, restorative nostalgia evokes a national past and proposes to rebuild the lost home. Not considering itself nostalgic, restorative nostalgia maintains its project is about the truth,” explains Suner.³⁰¹ The two main plots of restorative nostalgia are “restoration of origins” and “conspiracy theory”.³⁰² Restorative nostalgia in films signals the revival of nationalism within the society. Turkish nationalism yearns for the days it was a world-power, it is nostalgic for the “long-lost Ottoman/Turkish

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹⁹ It was stated by Rahmi Turan in the programme 2. *Sayfa* in Kanaltürk channel on January 27, 2011.

³⁰⁰ Suner (2010), p. 44.

³⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

³⁰² Ibid., pp. 45.

imperial power”.³⁰³ As it can not attain it in reality, it tries to relive and rebuild these memories in discourse, creating images of a glorified past and self, suggesting the same glory can easily be achieved again –as it is inherent to the nation- if only Others who are preventing the nation from fulfilling its potential are dealt with. What Nationalism does is “engage in the anti-modern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories’ (2001:e1)” as Suner explains, quoting from Boym. Films, the contemporary form of myth-making, are one of the major mediums through which nationalism does this.

In Banal Nationalism, Billig states that nationalism uses a “syntax of hegemony” in which the part claims to represent the whole.³⁰⁴ It is how nationalism claims its ideology speaks for the entire nation, its views shared by “all the people”. It also manifest itself by going beyond the borders of the nation in “self-worship” where the nationalist claims and interest may be represented as what “the world” wants, as “universal interest”³⁰⁵ and nationalist truths and rights are presented as “universal”. Be it the United States declaring its “war on terror” is for the sake of a better, safer world for all or Turkish historical film narratives constantly repeating how Turkish rule is the best and what even “Others” –but good Others- want, there is little doubt nationalism tends to present itself as knowing and doing best and representing all.

³⁰³ Ibid., p.48.

³⁰⁴ Billig (2005), p. 88.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

According to Emre Yıldırım, the Turkish historical action films find their roots in the Turkish comics from the same genre as well as the “national history” thought in high school. He says that the Turkish highschool history education is not one focusing on informing but rather “emoting” which is a characteristic seen in these films too and that the films serve to underline the “extraordinary, fairytale, mythic” qualities of Turkish history. Due to the films’ style, they “automatically” end up constructing and reproducing nationalist discourse, history and national identity, even if the filmmakers did not particularly aim to do so, he emphasizes.³⁰⁶

Like Gürata, Emre Yıldırım also points out to the connection between Turkish historical action films and Turkish legends and stories like Dede Korkut Legends, showing how certain details of the films show similarities to the details included in Dede Korkut Legends. But more than that, he claims they serve the same function for Turkish society. Quoting Bilgin Saydam, Yıldırım says Dede Korkut Legends were created at a critical, chaotic time in Turkish history marking a great change in Turkish identity: conversion of Turks into Islam. Turks, who had until then lived in a matriarchal culture and practice shamanism now needed to adapt to a new patriarchal world view and worship a single God. The painful transition period required popular works of art and literature to guide people through and Dede Korkut Legends was among them. In especially Deli Dumrul’s person, the legends told stories of the hardships Turks had in converting and adapting to an Islamic life and told them how to solve problems, behave and view the world around them³⁰⁷ – it taught them how to be Turks again. In the 1960s - since the founding of the Turkish Republic, really- The Turkish society have been going through a similar chaotic,

³⁰⁶ Yıldırım (2011), p. 72.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 78-9.

confusing transition and changing its world view as the people who once only defined themselves as being part of an *ümmet* (the Muslim community), now had to redefine themselves in terms of a nation state, and a western secular nation state at that, says Yıldırım.³⁰⁸ The Turkish historical adventure films, like Dede Korkut Legends, were a means through which Turkish people could work out their anxieties and issues, define themselves, make a sense of their new world order. Within the films, they did this by demonizing the Other, setting it as an example of all that is wrong and evil and then the definition of Turk is easily made through the Other³⁰⁹ - the Turk is the anti-thesis of the Other.

Quoting Saydam, Yıldırım also underlines that the fact that some of the Dede Korkut Legends were nothing more than foreign stories getting a Turkish make-over hints at the urgency of the need at the time and the inability of the local production to meet it.³¹⁰ One could make a claim there is a similarity to how Dede Korkut Legends adapted foreign stories to meet an overwhelming demand and how so many of Yeşilçam historical adventure films are accused of being “imitations” – Yeşilçam was also answering an urgent need, even though unconsciously. For, like the myths³¹¹, it is the unconsciousness the films reflect. “Cinema, as a world of fantasy, is of course the reflection of the unconscious,”³¹² states Yıldırım. Filmmakers of Turkish historical adventure films did not plan to reflect the sub-consciousness of the Turkish society on-screen. They were simply answering a demand they saw in the

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 79.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 78.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 74.

³¹² Ibid., p. 70.

audience, in hopes of profits. The need for such films at the time, and the story the film told, the characters it build, how it handled problems were all automatic and natural reflections of Turkish subconscious at the time.

Conclusion

What genre a film belongs to is one of the first information many of us seek when making a decision on which film to watch. All over the world people may be citizens of different nations, may laugh at different jokes, may have different preference for types of films, directors and actors and actresses but they are more than likely to agree on what a genre a certain film belongs to. A national cinema may try to differentiate itself from Hollywood and the other national cinemas, but due to the dominant influence of Hollywood, it will fundamentally have the same categories of genres with the rest of the world and will be operating within them, adding its own touch here and there.

In his book *Malaysian Cinema, Asian Film*, William van der Heide points out that although genre is, on paper, a transnational term, it usually applies to film genres specific to American cinema, so whenever a film is seen non-American and not fitting into an established genre, these films are given a national label³¹³ such as Japanese samurai films, Chinese martial arts films and Indian stunt films. These films, when they “cross national boundaries” are often given derogatory names by American critics such as Noodle Westerns, Chop Suey Westerns and Curry Westerns

³¹³ William Van der Heide, *Malaysian Cinema, Asian Film: Border Crossings and National Cultures* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2002), p. 28.

respectively³¹⁴, or Spaghetti Westerns in Italia's case, as they are considered "inauthentic, alien and derivative".³¹⁵ What van der Heide argues is that these films, which are usually overlooked and belittled as inauthentic Westerns, actually helped transform the American Western as well as other genres within their own cinemas, as there is much interconnectedness between what we call national cinemas and genres. According to him as Western genre changed, it in turn changed the "Indian stunt-film genre and social genre and the Chinese martial art genre", all of which in turn ended up shaping and changing Malaysian Cinema at the time.³¹⁶

What makes genre films a valuable source for social analysis is the fact that by nature they are at once static and dynamic and also universal and specific. As basic film standard of "interrelated narrative and cinematic components that serves to continually reexamine some basic cultural conflict"³¹⁷ genres are static. As a "social ritual" that "stops time, to portray our culture in a stable and invariable ideological position"³¹⁸, a genre film sheds insight to what believes and values and desires were held and what conflicts were being fought in a particular society at that very moment. On the other hand, as "changes in cultural attitudes, new influential genre films, the economics of the industry and so forth, continually refine"³¹⁹ a given genre, genres are dynamic. Regeneration means that genre is ever changing in accordance with the changes in its society over time and through following the changes in the genre

³¹⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 28.

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

³¹⁷ Schatz (1981), p. 16.

³¹⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

by comparing different films of the same genre from different times, as well as the rise and decline of a particular genres popularity over time, one can mark some of the social changes that the nation goes through.

The genre standards provide a universal, static structure for a genre film, how this structure is filled in and presented depends on what particular society that film is a product of, which gives the genre film its specific and dynamic quality. As such, genre and genre films are mirrors to the present and the past of the society they exist in.

As a universal standard of film-making a genre such as historical epic ensures that any film shot anywhere on the world that meets its specific formula will be acknowledged as one. But there are differences between two films that both fall under the historical epic genre produced in different nations. The society they present, the characteristics of the generic hero they use, the conflicts they showcase will all be different and will give the films their unique touch. A Turkish historical film, for all its technological shortcomings, is still as much of a historical epic film as its successful Hollywood counterpart. And yet, the Turkish “kostüme aventür” films are so unique that some like Emre Yıldırım, even call them a genre authentic to Turkish cinema.³²⁰ The uniqueness and Turkishness of the Turkish historical films comes from its content, the story it tells, its setting, characters, conflicts that are all unique and specific to it.

³²⁰ Yıldırım (2011), p. 71.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF TURKISH HISTORICAL ADVENTURE FILMS

Giving their first examples at the beginning of the 1950s, come the 1960s the Turkish historical adventure films have become one of the most popular genres in Turkish cinema³²¹ at a time when there was a general interest in historical films all around the world. With the first Karaoğlan film in 1965, the era of the Turkish historical adventure films had started and would continue until the 1980s. Some of the most memorable and successful films of the genre were those featuring comic-book heroes who already enjoyed a lot of popularity such as Karaoğlan, Malkoçoğlu, Kara Murat, Tarkan and Battal Gazi. Even though there were some changes to the comic-book heroes as they were adapted to the big screen, the basic characteristics of the heroes, the main stories, conflicts, themes and iconography of the comics was left unchanged and used in the films.³²² As it is the films of these comic-book heroes that I will be analyzing in this chapter, I think it is best to first give a short background information on how Turkish comic-book heroes found themselves on white screen came and what the basic characteristics of the genre are.

Turkish public met with superheroes of America in the 1930s as American comic-books were being translated and adapted to Turkish, but there were no Turkish heroes in comics yet. Ahmed Tuncer says during those days there was a serious

³²¹ Gürata (2007), p. 44.

³²² Karadoğan (2004), p. 67.

demand for Turkish heroes, as the foreign heroes –despite the attempts to turkify them, for instance renaming them in Turkish- didn't exactly satisfy the Turkish public, that there was always a feeling of a lack, a connection missing between the reader and the foreign comic book heroes. Tuncer adds they wanted a Turkish hero that even their “elders” would approve of. The end of the 50s and the 60s saw this demand met in abundance as numerous Turkish comic-book heroes were created to great success. According to Levent Cantek, the Turkish historical heroes, with their focus on history and eroticism, were understood to be aimed at adults and adolescents and not children,³²³ and it was even stated so on their newspaper strips. It is highly unlikely that this prevented the children from reading them, but then there seems to have been a special tolerance shown to Turkish historical heroes where they were exempt from the criticism brought to foreign comics for their violence and possible bad influence on Turkish children³²⁴, even though they actually had more violence depicted in them.³²⁵ It appeared, the Turkish historical heroes had gained the approval of the Turkish elders, becoming popular not just among children, but among adults too.

Kaan was among the first Turkish comic-book heroes created which found some success and he was the predecessor of Karaoğlan. But it was Karaoğlan who would lead the way to the golden age of Turkish historical heroes in comics and films. His popularity meant profit-minded newspaper owners and Yeşilçam

³²³ Levent Cantek, “Türkiye’de Çizgi Roman’ın Umumi Manzarası,” *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu – Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed.- Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 24.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³²⁵ Çoruk (2004), p 94.

producers all took an interest in Turkish historical heroes.³²⁶ Some comics, like Kara Murat, were so popular that they were giving their newspapers considerable boost in sales and were strong enough to be published as separate magazines on their own—as opposed to being just a newspaper strip.³²⁷ The competition among newspapers benefited Yeşilçam and the historical heroes as the newspaper owners couldn't wait to have their heroes up on the white screen. There were even competitions being held in search of actors best suitable to play the roles of popular heroes such as Karaoğlan and Tarkan.³²⁸

Popular and successful Hollywood epics like Ben-Hur and Spartacus and Italian peplums also proved beneficial the creation of Turkish historic heroes.³²⁹ These films all were shown in theaters in Turkey and gained quite the popularity, raising the genre's overall popularity and giving the writers, artists and filmmakers of the Turkish historic heroes inspiration to create similar heroes and make similar films. Even at a time when historical adventure films were starting to lose their previous popularity (1974), that 7% of the films shot in Yeşilçam were still historical action films is an indicator of the genre's success.

Most of the historical adventure films Yeşilçam made were “confection” style B-films with low budgets and resources. Same locations, same camera angles, same editing techniques, same sounds, same fighting choreographies would be used over

³²⁶ Cantek (2004), p. 33.

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 33.

³²⁹ Ahmet Gürata, “Çizgi Roman'dan Sinemaya,” *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu – Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed.- Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), p. 61.

and over.³³⁰ As genre films, the historical adventure films were made for commercial purposes, aiming to reach out to as large an audience base as possible. This gave them a transnational aspect that led to some of them also finding themselves an audience abroad.³³¹ Some were even produced as collaborations with foreign commercial cinemas, gaining Turkish actors some recognition there.³³² Just like American comic-book heroes got Turkish names in translation, Turkish film stars would end up with foreign renames in these collaborations – for example Cüneyt Arkın became George Arkın in Italy and Fahrettin in Iran.³³³

The iconography of the films was mostly based on the iconography already established in the comic-books. The same set of locations (the inn, the dungeons, the palace), decorations and props (like swords with handles shaped as a wolf's head, flags, banners etc) would be used in most of them.³³⁴ Sound and costumes play an important role in historical adventure genre, allowing them to call back on already established images and symbols to intensify the feeling during a scene or to categorize and pass judgments on the characters. The representation of the “good” hero and the evil “Other” in easily recognizable ways is a common characteristic of the genre films. A common iconography used in genre films is to have the “good” characters wear “white” or light colors, while the “evil” characters wear “black” or

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 64.

³³² Ibid., p. 63

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Karadoğan (2004), p. 68.

dark colors³³⁵, something also done in Turkish historical adventure films. Especially in Kara Murat's case, the "white shirt" has become his official costume.³³⁶



Picture 1: Black "Others", White "Us" - The scene of Ayşe (Battal Gazi's wife) being burned by the Others. The Other soldiers are all clad in black while she has a white shroud and headscarf.



Picture 2: Kara Murat in white hero outfit.

³³⁵ Picture 1.

³³⁶ Picture 2.

Furthermore, the films made sure to depict the Others in extravagant colors and jewelry.³³⁷ While the Turkish side was often shown to have simplistic, more neutral colored costumes.³³⁸



Picture 3: Decadent Others' Palace- When not clad in black, the Others were often shown wearing lively colors and living in luxury, drinking. Women could often be seen in the palace, being promiscuous.



Picture 4: Turkish Court – The Turkish court was simplistic, had neutral colors, and there were no woman present.

³³⁷ Pictures 3

³³⁸ Picture 4

Films shot from a Turkish-Islamic Synthesis view offer more in terms of iconography, using already established symbols and indicators of both Islam and Christianity. In these films, the Turkish hero was often accompanied by “Mehteran”, the March of the Ottoman Army or Sufi music, while Christian/Byzantine “Other” scenes had church bells and biblical hymns and lots of crosses.³³⁹ They also use shots of mosques, flags with Quran scripture on them to signify Muslim side, while mosaics and crosses are used for Others. The films would often have a reference to a “wolf” – be it a wolf-head crested ring or necklace the hero wore, the wolf-head handled sword he carried, or, in some cases an actual pet-wolf as the hero’s trusted companion. The wolf, an animal that plays an important place in Turkish foundation myths, was a strong nationalist indicator in these films.



Picture 5: Use of Christian Symbols - As the Other ruler gives a passionate speech at his palace about how he is determined to kill all Turks, a giant cross at the back and another cross in a priest's hand.

³³⁹ Picture 5.

As is common with the genre, the historical Turkish films would at times open with animations of a map³⁴⁰ that would show the progress of the Turkish nation as a “patriarchal” –“Voice of God”³⁴¹ narrated the events that happened so far, usually of the many conquests of the Turks or the cruelty of their enemy “Others” -with suitable visuals accompanying the story – Christian mosaics and crosses if the narrator is talking of Others, shots of a mosque or a Turkish leader if the narrator is talking of Turks. Both the narrator and the use of maps gave the films a certain seriousness and authority, which helped making their constructed history be taken for real history.



Picture 6: Use of Maps - Inclusion of maps helped create the feeling the history constructed in these films were the truth.

Like the comics they were based on, the historical adventure films featured a constructed history and nationalist discourse. Although writers of series like Karaođlan, Tarkan and Malkoçođlu would actually do much research to get their

³⁴⁰ Picture 6.

³⁴¹ Sobchack (2003), p.297.

facts straight,³⁴² the history in these comics and films was still a fantasy one. This unreal world allowed its heroes to experience extraordinary events and do great deeds and also served as a place where discourses of Turkish nationalism could be recreated.³⁴³ The conflicts within the films reflected the social and political conflicts and fears experienced in real life (such as the idea outside powers were trying to make Turks turn on one another) and solutions on how to handle such situations were formulated.³⁴⁴ As Levent Cantek states, Karaođlan and others were not heroes of the past, they were heroes of the present, who dealt with today's problems in the past.³⁴⁵

Historical adventure films were not films made where the filmmaker was trying to make a personal political statement. The films can not even be claimed to reflect the political views of their directors. Both conservative nationalist directors such as Natuk Baytan and Mehmet Aslan and "leftist" directors such as Atif Yılmaz, Tunç Başaran and Süreyya Duru made these films.³⁴⁶ Actually Tunç Başaran's Tarkan (1969) was considered the film that had the most nationalist indicators within the series, while Atif Yılmaz's films often had a more prominent Islamic overtone.

There were two distinct trends within the Turkish historical adventure films: films reflecting a Turkish History Thesis based understanding of Turkishness and films reflecting a Turkish-Islamic Synthesis based understanding of Turkishness. Karaođlan³⁴⁷ and Tarkan³⁴⁸ were heroes of the Turkish History Thesis. Their

³⁴² Çoruk (2004), p. 74.

³⁴³ Karadođan (2004), p. 69.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 70.

³⁴⁵ Cantek (2003), p. 45

³⁴⁶ Karadođan (2004), p.70.

homeland was Middle Asia, their leader Atilla the Hun –in Tarkan’s case-. They had no discernable affiliation to a religion. They defined themselves as Turkish and their one and only duty was to fellow Turks. Kartal Tibet was the actor who played both these characters



Picture 7: Karaođlan



Picture 8: Tarkan – Tarkan, accompanied by his trusted companion Wolf and his son baby-Wolf.

³⁴⁷ Picture 7.

³⁴⁸ Picture 8

Malkoçoğlu³⁴⁹, Kara Murat³⁵⁰ and Battal Gazi³⁵¹ were heroes of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. They lived in Ottoman times in Anatolia, often under the rule of Fatih the Conqueror, and the films had heavy Islamic themes. The Turkish hero was not just a hero of the Turkish world, he was the hero of the Muslim world, and Islam has become very much a part of Turkish identity in these films, the word Muslim often used as if synonymous with the word Turk. What the films all had in common was the general “unbeatable Turk” nationalist discourse.



Picture 9: Malkoçoğlu

³⁴⁹ Picture 9

³⁵⁰ Picture 10, also see Picture 2.

³⁵¹ Picture 11, also seen in Picture 4.



Picture 10: Kara Murat in his janissary outfit at the Ottoman Palace.



Picture 11: Battal Gazi in his youth.

Although Turkish historical adventure genre used the formulas of Hollywood, the conflicts, characters and settings it dealt with were of its own creation. The genre codes gave the directors with blueprints of how to shoot a historical film but how they depicted the characters and the homeland, what themes they repeatedly used, what stories they told in these films remained very much their own, and specific to Turkish society. In this chapter, I will be analyzing Turkish historical adventure films under four primary headings -the hero, the others, the women, and the landscape-, corresponding to the four main building stones of these films. In analyzing these main four aspects, I wish to explain how the Turkish historical adventure film is a reflection of Turkish society, how nationalist discourses are used within it, how it helps shape a Turkish national identity, what values it promotes under the rubric of “Turkishness”.

Turkish Hero as the Ideal Turkish Man

The Turkish historical adventure genre parallels the old Italian peplum genre a lot. Both genres had their peaks around the 60s, both were celebrations of masculinity “in the distant prehistorical, pre-industrialized past, and often in unidentifiable countries”.³⁵² The peplum films’ heroes’ superior masculinity was signified with their muscular body which meant the role of the hero was played by not professional actors but by American body-builders and musclemen instead.³⁵³ The most popular Turkish heroes, on the other hand, were played by professional actors, Cüneyt Arkın

³⁵² Günsberg (2005), p. 97.

³⁵³ Ibid., p. 100.

and Kartal Tibet, with neither one of them into body-building or particularly muscular –especially in Kartal Tibet’s case- , though Cüneyt Arkin is known to have taken judo, karate, boxing lessons and has bulked up somewhat for his role.³⁵⁴ The Turkish heroes’ masculinity relies not so much on the hero’s muscular body shape but on his feats, as well as the feminization and domination of all around him.

The Turkish hero is a handsome, charismatic man. He attracts the attention of the women wherever he goes. All the women encountered in the film, be it the dancer in the inn or the good princess –his future sweetheart- or the evil vixen –the film’s main villainess-, want to be with him, praising his manhood. Especially the evil vixen, who is loose with her sexuality and is understood to have slept with many men, praises him for being very different and superior to all men she slept with. Usually his future lover, the good princess, is smitten by him upon first sight and at the end of the film she tells him that she will give up her crown and her motherland out of her love for him. She even declares that she is ready to accept being his slave if only it means she could be with him forever. Making the hero thus desirable and perfect in all women’s eyes, the film underlines masculinity as one of the strongest traits of the Turkish men. The women’s total surrender to the hero and willingness to see him as their master serves as an insight into gender relationship and the Turkish male’s elevated position over women in general.

It is not only women that the Turkish hero impresses and is master over, he also suppresses all other men as a warrior and fighter. A master swordsman and bowman, he beats his opponents easily in all one-on-one fights. Turkish swordsmanship, in general, gets praised by others as being superior to all others –in

³⁵⁴ ABC, 11-12 March 1967

Malkoçoğlu: Avrupa'yı Titreten Türk (1966) the Serbian Princess is surprised when he claims he is Serbian, saying how he uses the sword is unlike how a Serb does and he then says that is because he learned how to wield a sword from a Turk. In Tarkan films the hero is often referred to as being worth an army, sometimes even by the ruler, Attila himself as was the case in *Tarkan: Altın Madalyon (1972)*. In Cüneyt Arkın films we not only see the Turkish hero accomplish impossible physical feats like bending iron but also witness his incredible athletic skills. Using his special mixture of aerobic skills, physical strength and mastery of all weapons, the historical Turkish hero is a super hero who can beat legions of the enemy's army on his lonesome.³⁵⁵ To showcase his superior wit, he doesn't only beat his enemies in battle physically, he usually ridicules them in the process, too, either verbally mocking them or putting them in humiliating situations.



Picture 12: Turkish Hero Outnumbered- In historical adventure films the Turkish hero would often be attacked by legions of the enemy's army and manage to beat them, proving his might and superior skills.

³⁵⁵ Picture 12.

The Turkish hero is brave, resilient and has an inhuman strength that one may not expect from him upon first sight. He is able to endure many difficult situations. He never caves into torture and doesn't even shout or show a sign of weakness when being tortured. He is shown to be able to bend iron bars to open passageway for himself and others from dungeons. In both the films *Tarkan: Güçlü Kahraman Kolsuz Kahramana Karşı* (1973) and *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), the hero finds himself tortured and beaten up by the enemy within an inch of his life, all the bones in his body broken. It is declared that even his survival under such a beating is a miracle, and that it is impossible for him to heal back to being the mighty warrior he was. Yet, with medicine and hardwork –in the Battal Gazi film- and with the help of the magical fumes of a mountain and his own inner strength –in the Tarkan film- the hero manages to surprise everyone, beat the odds, do the unimaginable and fully recover in just a few days, stronger than ever before.

The Turkish hero's masculinity is so important that it was given special consideration in casting and newspapers also focused on the actor's physical prowess. *ABC* newspaper's account of how Cüneyt Arkın came to be cast in the role of Malkoçoğlu is very telling in this regard.³⁵⁶ Before becoming the most sought after historical film actor of his time, Cüneyt Arkın -the actor who gave life to historical heroes Malkoçoğlu, Kara Murat and Battal Gazi and many others like Alpago, Köroğlu etc. - was well known for being cast in romances as a proper gentleman –someone whose clothes were meticulously clean and ironed, his hair gelled back and stylized, who would play the violin to woo the woman he loved... Due to such non-masculine traits of the characters he had so far played, Cüneyt Arkın was at first deemed unsuitable to play a historical Turkish hero and was not

³⁵⁶ *ABC*, 11-12 March 1967.

even considered for Malkoçođlu. Recep Ekicigil, a producer, did see the potential in him though and he was cast as in the historical adventure film, *Kerbela'nın İntikamı*, that Ekicigil was going to produce. Meanwhile Cüneyt Arkin took many lessons in stunts, judo and boxing among others and improved both his physical appearance and abilities. Arkin would do his own stunts and fighting in the films and was a skilled horse-rider. It was then realized that his tall, capable build and his hardened facial features made him a great fit for playing Turkish heroes. Come 1966 he was cast as Malkoçođlu – a role that would bring him great fame. There would be many consecutive films shot featuring the Cüneyt Arkin as the hero Malkoçođlu, and the character would become so associated with him that even after close to half a century he is still referred to as Malkoçođlu in newspapers.

Cüneyt Arkin was not the only actor to play Malkoçođlu in Turkish cinema. The popularity of the hero meant his name was used in several films such as *Malkoçođlu Kurt Bey (1972)* in which Serdar Gökhan was cast as the hero and *Akbulut Karaođlan ve Malkoçođlu'na Karşı (1967)*, in which the role of Malkoçođlu was played by Sami Tunç. The film *Akbulut Karaođlan ve Malkoçođlu'na Karşı (1967)*, saw three production companies at war with one another. Olcay Production and Duru Film, who owned the rights to the heroes Karaođlan and Malkoçođlu respectfully, were angered by the use of their heroes in this Topkapı Film production, which had its own hero, Akbulut, top them. As the film producers were at war, so were the actors, as Sami Tunç was criticizing Cüneyt Arkin for using protection like mats when doing his stunts, pointing out he played with his heart and challenging Cüneyt Arkin to face him without the aid of such “cheats”.³⁵⁷ Sami Tunç may have looked down on Cüneyt Arkin's physical prowess and stunts, calling them cheats,

³⁵⁷ Haftasonu, 6 October 1967

but there was little doubt that Cüneyt Arkin was impressing the public with his physical prowess and adding something special to his films, making them more successful than even his predecessor Karaoğlan's films with his "mind-blowing" stunts.³⁵⁸

Superior masculinity, fighting skills and physical strength are not the only traits the Turkish hero has, he also is very cunning and clever. He constantly outwits the enemy, infiltrating their palace under disguise to gather information and sneak around to save a captive. When fighting, he usually uses his superior intellect to take his attackers by surprise and keeps mocking them. Especially in Cüneyt Arkin films there are many funny sequences where he is not just verbally but also physically making a fool of his opponents, insulting them cleverly when in disguise or openly during a fight, confusing guards by sneaking up on them, slapping the hapless opponent many times who doesn't know any better and keeps coming at him...All these traits combined present the Turkish male as a very unique, special man who is above others in both physical and mental abilities.

One question the films have different takes on is whether the Turkish hero prefers the life of a warrior for the freedom it gives him, or if he is a warrior out of necessity and would rather settle down if only the enemies would leave him in peace. Tarkan and Karaoğlan are presented as heroes who do not seem to have any intention of settling down and having a family, while Malkoçoğlu and Kara Murat sometimes express a wish to settle down, even if they do not necessarily succeed to do so and barely make an effort at it. Battal Gazi, on the other hand, is shown as a family man. Although the films have different approaches to the matter, the importance of family

³⁵⁸ ABC, 19-20 May 1967

is an underlying theme in all the films. The films also all express the idea that protecting the homeland and serving the ruler for the well-being of the nation is the first duty of the hero and comes before all his other duties, including his duties as a husband and father. The homeland is supposed to be more important than anything and anyone else for the hero.

Tarkan is denied a family as a baby when both his parents are killed and his older brother, Tan, is kept an enchanted captive. With his father's entire clan killed off, he is left all alone in the world to fend off for himself. As a baby, he is looked after by a pair of wolves and as an adult he travels around with a wolf. When he finally reunites with his older brother, their time together is short as Tan is killed by the enemy. Tarkan, for all purposes, is a loner, with his wolf his only family and companion. Of the heroes he is the one most resistant to female charms, often refusing to even have sex with the women even if for just a night while he remains, like all Turkish heroes, irresistible to them. It is only in the film *Tarkan: Güçlü Kahraman Kolsuz Kahramana Karşı* (1973) that we see him fall in love with a woman and admit to it too, and come the end of the film, she is killed, by his own hands, no less, as he is tricked by the enemy to shoot an arrow at a target, not realizing she is tied up behind the target. Other than that one incident he never falls in love and has very few sexual relationships. He is not very social either, generally coming off as unfriendly and grumpy when friends offer to help him out and join him in his adventures. He meets an ally rather warmly in one film but come the next one he is not happy to see him and his men and refuses their offer to help. His social skills may be lacking but Tarkan proves how important both his country and his family are for him when he finally gets to kill his enemy in *Tarkan: Gümüş Eyer* (1970). As he stabs his enemy many times, he says the famous lines:

“this is for my mother, this is for my father, this is for my brother and this is for all Hun Turks”. - *Tarkan: Gümüş Eyer (1970)*

With the final stab wound, the enemy dies and Tarkan is seen on horseback, riding off with his wolf trailing him, to new adventures.

Karaoğlan is also introduced to be an orphan. His father’s enemies have killed his mother who refused to marry their leader, and his father is also believed to be killed by them later on. Once of age, trained by his clan to be a mighty warrior, he sets out to avenge his father. During his adventures, he discovers that his father is still alive and tries to save him. In *Karaoğlan: Bizanslı Zorba (1967)*, his father now accompanies him in his adventures. Although a wanderer himself, Karaoğlan is not as much a loner as Tarkan was, even if one was to disregard his relationship with his father. He is often shown interacting with his fellow Turks, and has sidekicks. In *Karaoğlan: Camoka’nun İntikamı (1966)* he tries to protect an *oba* (a nomadic village) and their food supply and the villagers who are questioned about his whereabouts all refuse to give him up due to owing him many favors. Unlike Tarkan, not only is he not open to female charms, he is quite the womanizer, himself. Although much is made of his love for a Turkish woman, Ulger, in the first film, she is not heard from again and he simply has a series of one night stands in the other films. He is also not unfriendly like Tarkan but has many friends who help him out, and whom he greets warmly at all times. All in all, Karaoğlan is depicted as a good, dutiful son and a helpful, friendly compatriot to all Turks.

Malkoçoğlu films are unique in that they include monologues describing explicitly what it means to be an “*akıncı*” (raider)³⁵⁹ and how it is a calling above all

³⁵⁹ Akıncılar (raiders) were a special light cavalry force of the Ottoman Army.

else. A raider is someone who would never want to settle down, for whom war is the only thing to live for. It is expressed many times in these films that love is not something befitting a raider. A raider is a man of nature and war, not domestic bliss. He will fall in love, marry and maybe even have a child but he will never really settle down. A woman in love with a raider can only have a life of misery. Her life will be filled with suffering and longing as she will never be his priority. The only life a raider knows is spent on horseback, going into war with his fellow raiders.

In *Malkoçoğlu: Cem Sultan (1969)* we find out that Malkoçoğlu tried to settle down, he had a wife and a child with her, but then he had to go on a raid again and was declared dead. Having lost contact with his family, he had started drinking heavily in grief. Unbeknownst to him, he meets his son Polat years later. Polat, has fallen in love with Melek, the daughter of a *bey* (provincial governor), promised to be married to a landlord. He goes to the landlord to ask him not to come between himself and Melek but offended that Polat, a lowly farmer, would dare make such a request, the landlord starts beating Polat with the aid of his henchmen. During the fight Polat does not even defend himself, taking the beating but when the landlord curses his mother, calling her a whore, he throws a knife at the man, killing him. Knowing the landlord's henchmen will come after him for revenge, he runs off, intending to join the raiders. When he declares his wish to join them he finds out one can only be a raider if they are a descendant of one or have a raider vouch for them. The raiders first refuse to let this young farmer boy join them, mocking him. When they start to joke about his mother, Polat, who has been silently taking their verbal abuse, becomes stern, telling them to cut it out. After this, Malkoçoğlu, the leader of the raiders, takes a liking to Polat, accepting him into their fold, vouching for him himself saying:

“He loves his mother. Someone who loves his mother loves his wife, his horse and his land. Someone who has killed to defend his mother’s honor carries dignity. Something as important as a sword.” - *Malkoçoğlu: Cem Sultan (1969)*

As such, even in Malkoçoğlu films where the family life is not something a hero can have, the importance of family is underlined. The family is important because one’s bloodline proves his worthiness as a warrior and also because how one loves his family and protects its honor is an indication of the love he’ll have for his country and his willingness to do what is necessary to protect it. The love of one’s family is once again shown to be related to love of one’s country, with the country having a superior position.

Although there is not much reference to whether Kara Murat intends to settle down at some point or not, his family features more in the films. In the first film of the series, Kara Murat is just a child, wanting to become a raider like his older brother. Ambushed and overwhelmed by the great numbers of the enemy Murat, his brother and some of his men, are taken captive by the soldiers of their enemy – Vlad the Impaler. In the enemy’s castle, Murat is told he will need to cut off his own brother’s hands and legs if he wants to save his own life. He refuses but his brother orders him to do it, saying one of them needs to live to avenge them and that he won’t give his blessings to Murat if he doesn’t. Complying with his brothers’ wishes, Murat cuts off his hands and legs himself and then the enemy beheads the dismembered hero. Rest of the film then becomes as much about protecting the country and doing Sultan’s wishes, as about avenging his older brother.

The enemy killing Murat’s family is a very common theme continued in other Kara Murat films. In *Kara Murat Şeyh Gaffar’a Karşı (1976)*, we see his older

brother in a big village house, living peacefully with his wife as Kara Murat's enemies raid his home, kill the wife and kidnap Murat's brother who they hypnotize using drugs to make him attack Murat later on. In *Kara Murat: Fatih'in Fermanı* (1973) he visits his mother in his village with his friends.³⁶⁰ The mother complains about all the wars which have cost her to lose all the men in the family –Kara Murat's uncle, older brother, and father. She just wants the bloodshed to end and for her son to come back to the village and settle down, marrying a nice girl. Kara Murat expresses a wish to fulfill this at some time in the future, but the time has not come yet. It happens to be the last time he sees his mother as the old woman is killed by the enemy who raid her village. At the end of the film, Kara Murat kills the enemy, in a scene very similar to one of Tarkan avenging his family. Realizing the man before him, who has just shot him with a few arrows, is the same man who has killed his mother, Kara Murat starts taking the arrows off of himself, and throwing them back at the man himself to kill him:

“So you are the man who killed my mother? This is for her. This is for Kabasakal and Nihal. And this is for all the Muslims you have murdered!” - *Kara Murat: Fatih'in Fermanı* (1973)

An interesting difference between this scene in Kara Murat and the scene in Tarkan is that the “people” of the Turkish hero that he protects and avenges are no longer defined as “Turks” but rather Muslims. This is because Kara Murat films, like Battal Gazi films, come from a Turkish Islamic national identity understanding as opposed to Tarkan and Karaoğlan films' nationalism that is more in line with the Turkish History Thesis. The importance and sacredness of the family is given when

³⁶⁰ Picture 13.

he throws the first arrow for his mother. The hero then avenges his comrades in arms. But the killing strike is the one that comes for the most important offence of all and most important act of vengeance, an arrow thrown to avenge the slaughtered Muslims.



Picture 13: Turkish Family - Family is very important to the Turkish hero; he is a dutiful, respectful son who is often left an orphan when the enemy kills his parents and other family members.

Another Kara Murat film, focusing on the family of the hero, is *Kara Murat Kara Şovalye'ye Karşı* (1975). In this film, Murat's father, who is a janissary, comes home after being victorious in battle, having spared his enemy's life after he begged him to. At home he is greeted warmly by his wife and his twin sons, whom he loves very much. In the following days, as he is off in the forest, taking care of his children, enemy soldiers ambush him. They kill Murat's father and his few men, kidnapping one of his sons, not noticing the other one. The film then continues in a sequence, in which the scene cuts back and forth to the enemy palace and Turkish village, showing how the sons are brought up differently. Kara Murat's mother raises him to be a man worthy enough of his father, to avenge him, with Turkish and

Islamic values, while his brother Mehmet, now renamed Marc, is being raised as a monster by the Christians, taught to hate Muslims and kill and torture them and grows up to become Kara Şovalye. Although Kara Şovalye is a warrior superior to all Christians, he loses the swordfight against Kara Murat. In doing so the film suggests that being Turkish automatically grant one superiority of fighting skills over all others, but only when that natural talent is crafted with Turkish upbringing one has the ultimate hero. Mehmet remembers his true identity when he witnesses his men beating his mother to death. Trying to save her, he himself is mortally wounded. Kara Murat comes to the scene too late, and is only able to help his brother revert back to Islam on his dying breath. He then goes off to face the enemy one final time to avenge his murdered family. The film ends when all enemies are killed with first a shot of Murat by his family's graves, praying and then the Turkish army marching to the sound of Mehteran, thus combining family and country to one another again.

The only hero we clearly see in domestic bliss is Battal Gazi who is a real-life hero from religion and history. As a result, the films featuring Battal Gazi have a more religious aspect to them and unlike the film series for the other characters, try to have more of continuity within themselves. The first film shows him as the son of a great hero who is getting training and we see some of the loving father-son interactions. The second film shows him with his wife whom he had married in the first film, living happily in his wooden house until it is attacked and razed. In the third one the continuity starts to become somewhat distorted. Battal Gazi is now an old man, and as expected, in retirement, with a son and a daughter but the son is not the same son from the previous film- (in the previous film the son's name was Ali, now it is Polat). The son takes over as the new Battal Gazi even though in the film there is a question of whether he's as good as his father or not... A family man,

Battal Gazi is also depicted as a social man who is open to friendship and help of others. He usually allies with people of other religion and as their leader and the person they look up to, causes them to become Muslims as well.

All these films highlight the importance of family to the Turkish hero, showing the audience what exactly it is the hero is fighting for. The Turkish hero is not just fighting for an abstract idea of a motherland or out of duty; he is fighting for his family, for his way of life, for the continuation of his line. The enemy he is fighting is not just a conqueror, it is a raider, a destroyer that is trying to kill all that he holds dear and leave nothing behind, giving him and his loved ones no chance to live their lives. As the head of the family and its protector, it is the hero's duty to protect it. And on a larger scale, it also means it is his duty to protect the homeland.

The hero is never the ruler of the country, he is never the Sultan or the "bey" but someone who is under the command of the ruler -he is a soldier. He is the person the ruler owes his life to and the safety of his lands. He is the person who is sent out to do the Sultan's most important and crucial missions. The motherland is free, powerful and safe thanks to the efforts of the hero and he remains the obedient subject who is loved and favored by the ruler a lot. At times there are instances where the ruler suspects the hero of treason and goes as far as to order his execution. These instances come about due to the enemy's trickery and false evidence and the execution decision is not one made easily. When the hero is believed to be traitorous, the parent of the hero agrees with the ruler that the son should be killed for treason even if expressing grief over it. The mother, unlike the father, may beg the Sultan for forgiveness, saying her son does deserve death but her mother's heart can't take it but it is clear she will abide with the decision her Sultan makes. By having this great hero be in servitude of the Sultan and his family agreeing to his execution when he is

believed to be treacherous, the films underlines that what comes first and foremost, before any person, is the love and responsibility felt for the motherland and anyone is expendable for its well-being.

The hero may be obedient to the ruler of the country, but he is not subservient. When the time comes for it, he is not afraid to speak up and reprimand the Sultan. In the film *Kara Murat: Devler Savaşıyor* (1978), when the Sultan, tricked by his deceitful Rum viziers starts doubting the loyalty of his grand-vizier, Kara Murat can't keep his tongue, and publicly reprimands him for trusting the wrong people and wronging his most trustworthy and valuable advisor. The sultan orders his capture but Kara Murat escapes the palace and the rest of the film he spends trying to gather enough evidence to prove to the Sultan the treachery of his Rum viziers, innocence of the grand-vizier and his righteousness. The film ends with Sultan thanking him for all he has done and agreeing that he was in the wrong, and one should not trust the enemies turned allies (as the viziers from lands conquered and did not have the best interest of the motherland in their heart).

Karaoğlan, Malkoçoğlu, Kara Murat, Tarkan and Battal Gazi films feature five different heroes but they all have strikingly similar characteristics, all being a representation of a similar idea of an ideal Turkish man and all being shaped by Turkish nationalist discourse. The Turkish male possesses über-masculinity, which reflects in his superior performance both in battle field and in bed. A wanderer, he is also a family man, protector of his bloodline, his fellow people, his ruler, his country. His love of his country comes above all his other loyalties and responsibilities and he is not afraid to oppose the ruler if it is for the well-being of the state. He is an intelligent, honest, good man who impresses others so much that women want to become his "slave" and foreigners wish to become his "friend", convert to his

religion, becoming citizens of the lands that produced him. He is a man that is the pinnacle of all humans who has devoted himself fully to the safety of his country.

According to Rukiye Karadoğlan, Karaoğlan, with his “practical intellect, dynamism, rationality, bravery and perseverance” was created to represent the ideal Turkish republican youth.³⁶¹ Indeed, the ideal Turkish man depicted in textbooks is not unlike the Turkish hero depicted in these historical films. A study by Tuba Kancı on Early Turkish Republic era (1928-1945) textbooks reveal that the ideal, hegemonic Turkish man is one who is a family man, who is the protector of his family, people and land. He is a healthy, strong build man with a lot of endurance – all traits necessary for military duty³⁶² which is one of the major and defining aspects of Turkish nationalism. Education is one of the means through which the state tries to shape the national identity while cinema is one of the means through which the nationalist discourse is reproduced in everyday life. The Turkish hero is the ideal Turkish man coming alive on white screen. He is a healthy, strong build man with a lot of endurance and is always on a “military duty” as he defends the homeland against its enemies. At times of peace, he is a loving, caring family man who protects his family, and his people and teaches his children to love their homeland and become protectors of it.

Pointing out to the popular saying “Every Turk is born a soldier” Ayşe Gül Altınay³⁶³ states that one of the foundational myths of the Turkish nationalism is that

³⁶¹ Karadoğlan (2004), p. 70.

³⁶² Tuba Kancı, “Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi (1928-1945) Ders Kitaplarında Kadınlık ve Erkeklik Kurguları,” *Kimlikler Lütfen: Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Kültürel Kimlik Arayışı ve Temsili*, ed. Gönül Pultar (Ankara: ODTÜ Yayıncılık, 2009), p. 114-115.

³⁶³ Ayşe Gül Altınay, *Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 26.

it is a military-nation. It comes as no surprise that the hero in Turkish historical adventure films is also always a military man, a soldier of the state and not a “civilian” who circumstances turn into a hero. Even in the case of Polat, son of Malkoçoğlu in the film *Malkoçoğlu: Cem Sultan (1969)* who the audience first sees as a farmer, we soon find out that he was a born soldier when he leaves his village to join the raiders and his mother comments it was “in his blood” and was inevitable. Polat was not born a farmer, he was born a soldier, like his father, like all Turks and was meant to be a great hero. The idea that being a “warrior/soldier” is “hereditary” and as such a “natural” Turkish characteristic is a common idea expressed in historical films. The hero is usually the younger brother or son of a mighty warrior who grows up to be just as mighty a warrior as his predecessor. The Turkish children are often shown taking fighting lessons, or playing war-like games.³⁶⁴ In The Turkish man is born and raised a soldier in the historical adventure films as befitting a hero of a military-nation.

³⁶⁴ Picture 14



Picture 14: Turkish Children - The scene shows Battal Gazi playing with his son, Ali. Children rarely show up in these films. When they do, they are always shown to be playing war-like games, asking to join the army or getting swordsmanship lessons. The child either gets orphaned early in the film and grows up to avenge his father or is abducted by the enemy to be brought up as a Turk-hater.

The Myth of First Duty and the Myth of the Ancestor are two of the five cultural myths that Aysel Morin identifies as being part of the mythical construction of Turkish identity, both of which can be traced so far back as Dede Korkut Legends and the Orkhon inscriptions. The myth of the Ancestor defines “who Turks are”³⁶⁵ while The Myth of First Duty is a reflection of “the military values of the Turkish nation”.³⁶⁶ The Turk is a “courageous soldier, strong, proud, dignified”. In Dede Korkut Legends, a Turkish boy was not considered to have achieved manhood and given a name unless he proved himself by showing of his skills as a fighter, be it in a war or competitions.³⁶⁷ A Turkish man will fight “others” to ensure the Turkish

³⁶⁵ Aysel Morin, *Crafting A Nation: The Mythic Construction Of The New Turkish Identity In Atatürk's Nutuk* (Doctoral diss., University of Nebraska, 2004), p. 186.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

nation will exist forever and will always be free. As such, maintaining independence becomes the first priority for any Turk, conquest of others a second one. In ancient stories, Turks are understood to be meant to be rulers through God's will.³⁶⁸ This also ties into the idea of martyrdom in Islam where people who die fighting for their country are assured a place in Heaven by God.³⁶⁹ Turks are blessed by God and have Him by their side. Through these stories military service becomes a characteristic of the Turks that is both their God-given talent (shown also by their ancestors), and a duty to their land and people as it is the only means to ensure their survival. All these ideas are reflected in how the Turkish hero is depicted in these films – he is a warrior, he needs to prove himself by avenging his father or joining the raiders to reach hero status, his main motivation is protection of his homeland from its enemies...

Survival is the key word as Turkish Nationalism is reactionary and defensive³⁷⁰ and it is this aspect of it that defines who the Turkish nation's "Others" are. A common perception in the Turkish society is that Turks are surrounded by enemies and have no friends other than themselves.³⁷¹ "The invading Others" and the danger of extinction they impose on the Turkish nation and the need to "know your history" and be always vigilant so as to protect yourself from their out-in-the-open and also often underhanded attacks remains the main theme of Turkish Nationalism as well as major themes seen in these films.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 91.

³⁷⁰ François Georgeon, "Türk Milliyetçiliği Üzerine Düşünceler: Suyu Arayan Adam'ı Yeniden Okurken," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil, trans. Tuvana Gülcan (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 36.

³⁷¹ Çetin (2004), p.353

Others in Turkish Historical Adventure Films and Turkish Nationalism

The heroes played by Cüneyt Arkın, especially in later year series of Battal Gazi and Kara Murat, tend to associate Turkish hero and Turkishness with Islam a lot, where the hero is not avenging only Turks but is out to protect and avenge “Muslims”. As such, the enemies they face are usually the Christian Others. In contrast, heroes played by Kartal Tibet (Karaođlan and Tarkan) focus on Turkishness mainly and religion is not part of the national identity. The hero’s religious affliction is not mentioned, and his enemies show much variety – they can be Vikings, Chinese, Christians and at times they are just a specific person whose nationality is not clearly identified – like Camoka in Karaođlan, the witch Gođa in Tarkan. What is consistent is it is the Others who are trying to wipe-out all Turks from existence and often are the ones to take action against them, be it attacking an ally of the Turks or killing the Sultan’s messengers or trying to kill the Sultan, himself.

The main “Other” of Turkish historical films is the Christian West³⁷², and the focus is especially on Byzantium in particular. Vikings, Easterners like the Chinese are among the Others too, as well as Arabs and Rums who are Others “within”. The Others’ inferiority to Turks -mentally, physically and morally- is expressed many times in the films. Even the Others who are deemed good and are allies of the Turks fail short of being as good as the Turks. In films that have a Turkish-Islamic Synthesis view, the good Others usually end up converting to Islam. In analyzing the depiction of Others in Turkish historical adventure films I will mostly refer to Battal

³⁷² Picture 15.

Gazi films as they not only give some of the most memorable scenes and examples³⁷³ regarding the matter but, as films made from a Turkish-Islamic Synthesis view provide examples of conversion of Others.



Picture 15: Christian Oppression - The main “Others” of Turkish historical adventure films are the Christian West with the conflict between Christianity and Islam being one of the biggest themes. Christian West is always shown to oppress and torture Muslims.

The good Others, be they female or male are all in complete awe of the Turks and recognize their superiority and mastery over them.³⁷⁴ In rare occasions they may start out hating Turks due to all the negative propaganda they have been fed but will come around when they meet the hero and get to know him and through him, the Turks. Often the good “Other” prince is in dire need of Turkish protection from his enemies. The good “Other” prince not only needs Turkish protection to reclaim his throne, but is shown as someone who is willing to live peacefully with Turks by acknowledging their superiority and willing to pay them the monetary dues demanded of him. As such, it is his obedience and submission to the Turks that marks him as “good”.

³⁷³ A lot of the witty dialogue associated with Turkish historical adventure films and remembered by the general public come from these films.

³⁷⁴ Picture 16.

Often, he is depicted giving speeches about how Turks bring “justice and righteousness which is the one thing missing in Europe” as he does in the film *Malkoçoğlu: Avrupa’yı Titreten Türk (1966)*. The female good Other ends up falling in love with the Turkish hero and at the end of the film leaves her home behind to go with him, often becoming a Muslim and giving up her throne for his sake. The male good “Others” who are not the submissive prince but rather allies of the Turkish hero who help him during his adventures and fight alongside him also tend to convert to Islam due to his positive influence on them (and the cruelty they see Christians inflict on all, even their own kind), even though he never makes such a demand from them. The tale of the Byzantine warrior Hammer, in the *Battal Gazi* film, is the best example of a good male Other and needs to be told in detail for a better understanding of how the “good Other” character is used to further mark the difference between a Turk and a Other, to elevate Turkishness (and Islam) as well as feminize the Other.



Picture 16: The ‘Good’ Others - Friends of the Turkish hero, the good others admire and love the hero and Turks, appreciating their many qualities. The female good Other often falls in love with the hero, and at the end of the film leaves with him. In this picture they are represented by Elenora & Hammer.

Even before Hammer makes an appearance in the film, he is introduced positively to the audience when Battal Gazi's father Hüseyin Gazi mentions him as he compliments his son on using a trademark Hammer sword move to win against his teacher by disarming him in three moves. He then reveals his plans to have his son sent to Hammer to be his apprentice. When the boy's mentor objects to this decision on the grounds no good would come of swords-fighting learned from an "infidel", Hüseyin Gazi replies that before everything else Hammer is a dependable and brave man – two crucial requirements for anyone to be a good warrior. He reminisces about Hammer being the only warrior in the whole Anatolia who he could not beat. Through him, the audience is given an idea of Hammer as Hüseyin Gazi's counterpart in Byzantium, a great hero who is unbeatable, courageous, dependable and of utmost highest esteem – a point further underlined when Hammer has the exact same compliments for Hüseyin Gazi and notes one of Battal Gazi's moves to be a trademark Hüseyin Gazi move when Hammer finally makes his appearance on screen.

Battal Gazi and Hammer first meet one another when a grown-up Battal Gazi seeks Hammer out to finish his education as a warrior so that he is ready to avenge his father's assassination. Battal Gazi (at the time still called by his birth name, Cafer, being an unaccomplished warrior) approaches Byzantium forces on his lonesome, challenging them to send him warriors to fight him and he bests every single one of them. When Byzantium runs out of warriors to send to Cafer, Hammer decides to face him himself, to save Byzantium's honor. Cafer's usual superior, mocking attitude seen when he interacts with other Byzantines is gone when faces Hammer, -all he has is respect for this elder warrior whom he refers to as "*usta*" (master). Hammer and Cafer fight for two days, not able to really beat one another

before the sun sets. On the night of the second day, Cafer and the audience find Hammer in the Temple of the Forty Virgins, where “the most infamous whore of all Anatolia”, Faustina, is keeping him company. Hammer is deep in thought, almost sad as Faustina compliments him on being a great warrior and tries to attract his attention and cheer him up. She raises a drink in his honor, calling him “the most powerful man in the world, the God of war, Hammer”, and Hammer responds by saying they should rather drink to the honor of the hero the God of War has failed to beat – meaning Cafer. Unbeknownst to them, Cafer is also in the room, hiding from the Byzantine Forces after him. As Hammer tells Faustina that Cafer is the kind of person with whom he could share not just wine and fun, but also sorrow and how he wishes Cafer was there right now, Cafer reveals himself, saying he could not disobey the call of his *usta*.

Just as Cafer reveals himself to Hammer, Byzantines come knocking on the door, in search of Cafer. Hiding Cafer behind the door, Hammer sends the Byzantine soldiers off, telling them he wants to be left alone right. He then introduces Cafer to Faustina as his “equal in war, companion in meal, son of the infamous commander Hüseyin Gazi” and together they drink to their fights and “brotherhood and friendship”. Upon Faustina’s insistence that they fight it out again right now and determine which one of them is stronger, they decide to wrestle. Cafer also proposes that before they begin wrestling, they make a deal in which the loser will change his religion and allegiance to join the winner on his side. After wrestling for some time, Cafer finally overcomes Hammer and is the winner. Hammer recites the introductory prayers to Islam with a smile to his face, repeating after Cafer, while Sufi music plays in the background. Cafer finalizes Hammer’s conversion to Islam and Turkish

world by renaming him “Ahmet Turani”³⁷⁵, upon which he is renamed “Battal Gazi” by Hammer as Battal means “grand, brave, heroic” and defines him perfectly. This is reminiscent of “passage into manhood” stories in ancient Turkish tales where a boy would prove himself a man and deserving of a name by proving his proneness in fights.



Picture 17: Hammer as Ahmet Turani.

An important aspect of the film is that Hammer is always presented as being something of an “exception” in the Other’s world and not really fitting in with them. In the opening scene, when Hüseyin Gazi confronts the Byzantium messengers with his knowledge they mean to kill him, he tells them that it would be futile to kill him, as there would be others just as powerful to fill in for him, the idea being it is not that uncommon for Turks to have such extraordinary heroes among themselves. His son

³⁷⁵ Picture 17

and his incredible heroics, proves his point – kill one Turkish hero, and another one is there to follow up on his stead. That is not the case with Hammer. He is shown to be one of a kind among the Byzantines, and he is unable to find real companionship among them. Rather he spends time in whorehouses, where he expresses a wish to have the Turkish hero accompany him, and harshly sends off the Byzantine commander who shows up. Even before his conversion, Hammer is depicted as someone who has more in common with the Turkish side and who would fit in better with them. He is not someone who was ‘forced’ to convert, even though his conversion came after he lost a fight, he was always willing, always a bit tempted, the film suggests

How Hammer wanted to be Turkish, is also further underlined by how he fully embraces it. After his conversion, he keeps correcting people that his name is no longer Hammer but Ahmet Turani. In one particular scene, he is captured and thrown into the dungeons by the Byzantines and there he is visited by a priest –who is in fact Battal Gazi in guise, there to rescue him – who offers him a chance of converting back to his original religion. Hammer is very hostile to the man, calling him names, not even waiting for the priest to address him. In another scene, when Battal Gazi is still weak during his recovery from massive injuries that he attained when he was tortured by the Byzantines, and is demoralized for not being as strong as he used to be, Hammer keeps reminding him how giving up is not in “their” customs, which is him referring to “Turkish” customs as his. That Hammer always had various good qualities unlike all the other Byzantines and that he internalized being Turkish set him apart from all the others, and made him a good Other.

Hammer’s conversion scene is also a crucial scene for underlining the Turkish hero’s superior masculinity over all others. Hammer was Hüseyin Gazi and

Cafer's counterpart in Byzantium, a "master" warrior. Cafer's battles with Hammer with various weapons and armors in the battlefield all ended with no clear winner- first day Hammer seemed to have the upper hand, the next day it was Cafer. But when it came to wrestling, where the two heroes went at each other with bare upper torsos, no weapons and no armors to make a difference but relying on pure muscle strength, Cafer was able to best Hammer – his masculinity overcame Hammer's. This was the moment Cafer's own masculinity peaked, where he really came to his own as a hero, and thus it was followed by him being renamed as Battal Gazi, which is in accordance with old Turkish customs where renaming was a sign of passage to manhood. He was no longer the boy who had set out to revenge his death, he was now a proper Turkish hero to whose name legends would be written, and who no longer had an equal among "Others". At the same time, from then on Hammer would be only second to Battal Gazi. In the final scene of the film, even Hammer notes this, joking about how he has become a coachman to Battal Gazi as he rides the coach carrying Battal Gazi's bride, Elenora, who has also converted to Islam and is now called Ayşe Hatun while Battal Gazi leads the way for them, on horseback, riding to the sunset. Thus, through conversion of their greatest hero Hammer into Battal Gazi's sidekick Ahmet Turani, the Others are further feminized by this removal of masculinity.

One running gag of Turkish historical adventure films is to have the Others mocked and called derogatory names for their inaptitude and stupidity by the Turkish hero. Films such as *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971) are well known for their various funny, derogatory quotes regarding the Others that are etched in the audience's memory. One famous quotation is "One can never guess what the ignorant and the

dumb will do,”³⁷⁶ which is Hüseyin Gazi’s reaction upon seeing two Byzantine commanders, Polemon and Leon, among the Byzantine force that is ambushing him. Both Hüseyin Gazi and Battal Gazi, in many occasions refer to their Byzantine opponent as “Byzantine crow” in mockery of how the Byzantines refer to themselves as “Byzantium eagle”. Battal Gazi refers to the Byzantine commander who boars of being named “mad head”³⁷⁷ -a nickname he seems to have gotten for his ruthlessness and being unstoppable- as “oxen head”³⁷⁸ –thus making it known how little he thinks of the man and how unimpressed he is with the nickname-. He tells Polemon that he is there to “remove your bitch head from your coward body”.³⁷⁹ Byzantium is frequently referred to as “bitch Byzantium” in these films, so much that, the 2000 comedy film *Kahpe Bizans* -a parody of Turkish historical adventure films-, used the phrase as its title. The Turkish hero also often mocks the enemy guards by tapping on their shoulder and as they look over, tapping the other shoulder, simply confusing them, and then landing a single punch to knock them out. His fight scenes with the enemy forces usually have absurd comedy sequences like how he keeps making an enemy soldier spin and spin with his slaps.

Another common practice in Turkish historical adventure films is the hero easily infiltrating the enemy Palace under disguise. In disguise the Turkish hero continues to mock the enemy right to his face. In *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), Cafer enters the Palace disguised as an Arab and the Emperor is made a fool first falling for this ruse and then when Cafer keeps mocking him during their practice sword fight –

³⁷⁶ “Aptalla budalanın ne yapacağı belli olmaz”.

³⁷⁷ “Deli baş Alyon”.

³⁷⁸ “Öküz baş Alyon”.

³⁷⁹ “Kancık kelleni ödlele bedeninden almaya geldim”.

like when the Emperor tells him that “stupid heads get cut off”, he replies back by pointing out the Emperor’s head is still on. In many other instances, the Turkish hero impersonates a priest or one of the Christian princes or famous warriors to infiltrate the palace and continuously mocks the Others, their beliefs and their way of life when under disguise. He especially makes a joke out of Christianity when he is disguised as a priest, with the over-the-top way he talks constantly uttering ‘Christian’ prayer in make-believe language of his own and his mocking voice when he blesses guards and so on. By having the hero insult and belittle the Others right to their faces in disguise, with them being none the wiser, the films make it clear that Turks are brighter than Others – especially the Christian Others.

Through association with witchcraft, the Christian other shown to be not only superstitious but is also demonized. In *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), the Byzantine Emperor sends a witch to enchant Elenora into loving Alyon and not Battal. In *Battal Gazi’nin Oğlu* (1974), King Antuan keeps seeking council from a warlock who informs him of his future. In *Battal Gazi’nin İntikamı* (1972) it is suggested that the Christians use magic to brainwash Battal Gazi’s son Ali and make him convert to Christianity as the boy’s refusal ceases only after he is made to inhale some fumes which put him in a trance and he is later on shown being made to drink a special drink, ensuring he remains in the trance. Overall, the Christian other is shown to have some deviant beliefs and practices

Treachery and immorality are among the main characteristics of the Christian Others in historical adventure films. Ambushes, secret mechanisms that trap the hero, secret meetings, usurping of thrones from rightful owners, betrayal of allies are all things that are trademarks of the Other. In *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), Byzantium’s penchant for dirty politics is showcased behind closed doors, as they bribe a member

of the Turkish court to betray Hüseyin Gazi and help Byzantines to ambush him. The Christian evil woman is shown to be a seductress, most of the time using sex to get people to do her bidding. A most memorable example of the seductress whorish Other is Maria in the film *Battal Gazi Geliyor* (1973). Clearly a nun –as she is always clad like a nun and is referred to as Saint Maria- she removes her robes to reveal she is barely clad under them as she offers her body to men either to get them to do her bidding –as is the case with Dark Knight- or due to her own lust –as is the case with Battal Gazi-.³⁸⁰ In contrast, in *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), Irene who is a virtuous, proper nun and is the best friend of Battal Gazi’s lover Elenora, is targeted and victimized by the Others as punishment when Alyon, Elenora’s fiancé and the evil Other commander, finds out Elenora sneaks out in the nights to meet with Battal Gazi. Alyon whips Irene within an inch of her life, as he mocks Irene’s belief in God daring her God to save her from him. He then announces he is “gifting the holy virgin body” she devoted to God to the Byzantine army, telling her men to do with her as they wish and then throw her dead body into a hole when they’re done raping her. Rape is associated with the Other as women -be they Muslim or Christian, a Princess or a farmer’s wife-are constantly sexually assaulted by the male Others.

³⁸⁰ Picture 18.



Picture 18: The Others as the Seductress- Although clad in a nun's robe for most of the film and treated like a saint by the Christians, Maria is an evil seductress who uses sex to get whatever she needs in her plans to conquer Anatolia. Evil Other women such as her serve the function to express how immoral the Others are but also feminize them. In this scene she removes her robe to tempt the Other Prince into having sex with her. This scene is now removed from some versions of the film on television, probably not passing the censorship.

Another aspect of Christian Others that is underlined is their cruelty. Almost all historical adventure films have a torture scene (sometimes more).³⁸¹ No one is safe from torture of the evil Others. The Turkish hero, the good Other prince/emperor, Turkish and good Other women and children (mostly psychological) are all subjected to torture. Apart from torture, the other is known for its senseless slaughter of innocents. No living being - women, elder, children, babies or even animals- are spared when Others attack Turkish villages or are in search of the Turkish hero who is hiding. In *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), during their search for Battal Gazi, the Byzantine soldiers have taken to killing all those Muslims they suspect to be Battal and put their heads in spikes by the roadsides for display. In *Battal Gazi'nin Oğlu* (1974), the Christian soldiers mercilessly kill babies as they search for Battal Gazi's son. In some films, the shots of Turkish villagers brutally

³⁸¹ Picture 19.

killed by attack of the Others also include a shot of an animal killed by an Other's spear. I believe these shots are meant to enhance the feeling that there are no bounds to Others' cruelty and to their hatred for all-things-Turkish. The Other will literally destroy anyone and anything in a Turkish village.



Picture 19: Torture - Pretty much all Turkish historical adventure films feature torture scene(s). These scenes are meant to underline the cruelty and evilness of the Others as they torture not just the hero but civilians too.

An important characteristic of the Other is its femininity which is a contrast to the masculinity of the Turkish hero, and feminization of the other is an important theme in the Turkish historical adventure films. Removal of masculinity from the Other by having its good males and capable fighters side with the Turks and/or revert to Islam is one way of feminizing the other. In some instances, the removal of masculinity and thus the feminization of the other, takes a physical form like it did in the film *Battal Gazi Geliyor* (1973) where Turkish hero due of Battal Gazi and his son castrate each and every one of the Other's knights and rulers and then kill them as payback for raping Battal Gazi's daughter.

Constantly praising the manhood of the Turkish hero and marking it as superior to all, while mocking the other's manliness also serves to feminize the other. In some instances one of the Other's rulers are made to be effeminate and depict as someone whose failure as a man is a matter of joke for everyone in the film, including even his own people. Another strategy used is to have the mastermind behind Other's evil plans and attacks on the Muslims be a woman. In *Battal Gazi Geliyor* (1973) it is Maria, who is the main mastermind behind all the evil Christian plans to conquer Anatolia and is the real enemy. She is the one who gathers all the knights to form -what appears to be- a Crusader army, and she is the one who is planning to rule the Christian Kingdom in Anatolia. She is the real enemy of Battal Gazi and Muslims who sets everything in motion. Associating the female characters with the others and not the Turks, is another way to feminize the Others. In some films, like *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), there is not a single Turkish woman we meet throughout the film, and there is not even a mention of Battal Gazi's mother, not even when his father dies. This total lack of females in Turkish side underlines the Turk's masculinity in relation to their enemies, as females usually only emerge in relation to the main Other of the Turks, Byzantium, and like Byzantium the majority of them are whores. The most striking example of this is in *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971).

The main female character in the *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971) is Elenora, the Byzantine Princess Battal Gazi falls in love with. She is accompanied by her best friend and caretaker Irene, who has a limited role in the story but is set apart from the rest of the females as she is a nun. Other than these two, the only women we encounter in the film are prostitutes and palace courtesans— either in Byzantine court or the infamous “Temple of the Forty Virgins” which is a house of debauchery which

soldiers visit. It is in “Temple of the Forty Virgins” that we meet the third and final supporting female character, Faustina, who has –unlike the other courtesans- a name and a special role in the film, as she encourages Battal Gazi and Hammer to wrestle for her amusement so she will know which one of them is stronger. Thus, every single female character in the film is established as a foreign.

Another step in feminization of Other, which is also meant to serve as a way to point out its inferiority to Turks in terms of both strength and morals, is its constant association with whores. A method used to do this is to have the majority of the female characters associated with Byzantium be whores. Except for Elenora and Irene, all women in the film *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971) were whores. Battal Gazi constantly calls Byzantium “whorish Byzantium” and points out how it is deceitful. On a mission to avenge his father’s murder by hunting down his murderers Battal Gazi infiltrates the palace of one of his targets and meets Elenora for the first time there. Immediately falling in love with her beauty and taken aback for a minute, he proclaims “whorish Byzantium, managed to baffle us on our very first day” when he finds out she is the daughter and niece to two of his target. Battal Gazi also refers to various Byzantine warriors, officials as “bitch” (kancık), as in the canine, which is meant to refer to their treachery and immoral, backstabbing behavior with female connotations attached to it. In the Temple of Forty Virgins scene Battal Gazi Cafer is seen mocking Alyon, suggesting he has his soldiers and the whores switch places, as due to him being cuckolded –for his fiancé Elenora loved and made love to Battal Gazi - what befitted him was to be in command of whores. Battal, when killing Leon tells him “You killed my father whorishly, I shall kill you like a man”.³⁸² Associating

³⁸² “Babamı kahepece öldürdün, ben seni erkekçe öldüreceğim”.

Byzantium directly and indirectly with whores serves to not only feminize it, but also to depict it as a “lowly” female, once again underlining its inferiority.

Elenora, after Hammer, is the most prominent Byzantine in the film as the Emperor’s daughter and Battal Gazi’s love interest, and thus serves as another way to feminize Byzantium. Although a Byzantine Princess, she is someone who, like Hammer, is very un-Byzantine in her goodness and courage, and this contrast serves to demonize Byzantium. When Battal Gazi first meets Elenora, he comments that it is hard to believe that “an angel” like her could be the daughter of a “demon like Leon”. She is the “inexorable beauty of the hostile lands”³⁸³ for Battal Gazi, the one he constantly refers to as “whorish Byzantium’s brave beauty”.³⁸⁴ She is the brave girl who is not even for a moment scared of Battal Gazi even though in their first encounter he is nothing but a stranger who is carrying giant sword, and trespassing in her uncle’s villa – she does not even call for the guards. Not only does she not alert the guards, she even hides and protects him from Byzantine guards when they come searching for him, despite the terrible consequences such an act of betrayal may have for her –as shown later when Irene is first whipped viciously and then handed to his soldiers to be raped and killed by Alyon when he finds out Elenora has been sneaking out to see Battal Gazi. For Elenora is also courageous and clever enough to secretly slip out of the Byzantine camp and find her way to Battal Gazi and be with him.

Elenora is also very loyal –as a daughter to her father and as a lover to Battal Gazi. She is the good daughter who is not afraid to throw herself in front of a sword

³⁸³ “Düşma beldenin yaman güzeli”.

³⁸⁴ “Kahpe Bizans’ ın yiğit güzeli”.

to protect the evil Emperor she at that point believes to be her father. She is the feisty woman who will attack a treacherous messenger with a dagger for conspiring against her beloved Battal Gazi. When Battal Gazi is in grave danger after being caught and taken to torture chamber, Elenora once again puts herself in danger by going out on her own to seek out her real father, the king of beggars and thieves, even though she does not know the password required for safe passage. And when there is a need for her to act as if she will indeed marry Alyon and hates Cafer so that she can find out the exact spot Battal Gazi is being kept at in the torture chamber, she rallies up, despite the emotional toll the whole ordeal takes on her, to play the part of faithful fiancé to Alyon and Turkmen-hater. She claims she can not live without Battal Gazi, and when her father asks her whether it is true she betrayed her father, her fiancé and her homeland her answer is she does not know if it is treachery or not, but that she loves Battal. For a woman putting her “lover” over her homeland does not seem to really classify as “treachery” when it is done for the sake of Turks. Elenora’s conversion to Islam and Turkish side at the end of the film symbolized Byzantium being conquered by the Turks.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁵ Picture 20



Picture 20: The Conversion of Others – The conversion of the Good Other woman to Islam and how she leaves behind her power position as Princess to become the Turkish hero's wife functions as a symbolic conquest of Byzantium.

Conversion of the 'good' Others –like Hammer and Elenora- goes on to become a main theme in historical adventure films. The Muslim prayers of initiation into Islam can be heard in all of Battal Gazi films as the good Others, those Christians who are good people at heart and through their association with Battal Gazi, have seen the right path, convert to Islam. It is not only the female who is in love with Battal Gazi and wants to become his wife who converts to Islam, it is also the male characters who later on serve as Battal Gazi's sidekicks in his battle against the evil Christians. These conversions underline the belief that anyone who is really good in heart and is righteous and honorable would end up embracing Islam and Turkishness, denouncing their Otherness, feeding to the idea of Turkish and Muslim superiority. It is also important to note that in the film *Battal Gazi'nin İntikamı* (1972) the Others who converted are specifically noted as being Orthodox Christians which seems to be an attempt to suggest to a camaraderie between Muslims and Orthodox Christians against the Catholic and Protestant Christian world. This singling out of Orthodox Christian's seems to be in relation to Turkish sensibilities

regarding Balkans -a sensibility Etienne Copeaux contributes to the amount of time the Balkans remained under Ottoman rule-³⁸⁶, but even more so, towards its own Christian minorities who are mostly Orthodox.

Apart from the Christians, the films also depict, in some rare instances, the Others within the Turkish state. In *Malkoçoğlu* and *Kara Murat* these are the Rum Viziers who are working behind the Sultan to harm the Ottomans. In *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971) we see an Arab, the slave/servant to treacherous Abdulselam –whose name hints at Arabic heritage but it is never mentioned. The Arabic servant is a “dirty spy” who carries messages between Abdulselam and Byzantines and serves as a look-out for Abdulselam. He is caught by Byzantine soldiers when trying to deliver a message to the Emperor, and being a Muslim is about to be beheaded like all the other suspicious Muslims they encounter during their search for Battal Gazi but he is saved when Battal Gazi intervened. When he realizes the man who “saved” him from the Byzantine soldiers was Battal Gazi and Battal Gazi mentions how there is a place left for his head on one of the spikes, he dies on the spot out of fear, without Battal Gazi even making a move towards him. Thus the Arabs are shown to be treacherous cowards. The depiction of “treacherous” Arabs and Rums who seem to be working as part of the Turkish state but are in fact working against it are instances where the common idea of Turkish Nationalism that “Turks have no friends but themselves” is proven to be true.

“National identities are socially constructed and inherently relational, such that collective imagination depends on a dialectical opposition to another identity” writes Ayla Göl in her article “Imagining the Turkish nation through

³⁸⁶ Etienne Copeaux, *Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk-İslam Sentezine: Tarih Ders Kitaplarında (1931-1993)*, trans.Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), p. 326.

‘othering’ Armenians’.³⁸⁷ We need Others to be able to define ourselves. Using stereotypes, “shared, cultural descriptions of social groups”, contributes to our claims of “unique identity”³⁸⁸ states Billig, as they distinguish “them” from us. The Others thus usually lack much depth in how they are defined and characterized in the historical adventure films as they are mere stereotypes. How a collective imagination came to be and how the defining lines between Turks and “others” were formed requires a look into the Turkish history, mainly the period of late-Ottoman empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

The Turkish national identity is a reactionary, defensive construct due to the constant humiliation and fear of extinction suffered during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire³⁸⁹ states Taner Akçam. As the once powerful Empire that was a cause of pride for its people started to crumble against the power of Europe and rapidly lost territory, much anger and fear arose within its population. This fear and anger was then directed towards the non-Muslim minorities who were seen as the culprit behind the fall of the mighty Empire with their claims for independence. They were regarded as traitors to the state, who were weak on their own and could be suppressed militaristically by the Ottoman Empire but still emerged as the winners from the peace talks due to the European intervention on their behalf. Thus the minorities were forever linked to European powers, and this in general created a feeling the “Christian West” as a whole –from the powerful European nations to the minorities within the Empire who were seen as their relatives- was an enemy of the

³⁸⁷ Ayla Göl, “Imagining the Turkish Nation through ‘othering’ Armenians,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11 (1) (2005), p. 121.

³⁸⁸ Billig (2005), pp. 80-81.

³⁸⁹ Taner Akçam, “Türk Ulusal Kimliği Üzerine Bazı Tezler,” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), pp. 53-62.

Muslim Turks. This meant that both its minorities and the European nations were the Turk's "others", and Islam –despite Kemalist nationalist attempts to eradicate it from the national identity- was one of the defining traits of Turkish national identity.

Although in Orkhun inscriptions the Chinese are named as the eternal enemy of the Turks³⁹⁰, the main Other for Turkish Nationalism is actually Greeks and they play an important role in the construction of Turkish identity. The Chinese are too far away and have too little interactions with present-day Turkey to be its main Other³⁹¹, explains Etienne Copeaux while Greece is a neighbor country to the Turkish republic and has many interactions with it. Their geographical closeness to Turkey, the shared past between the two nations, and their constant –and not always friendly- interactions meant the Greeks were the Other through which the Turkish nationalism defined itself. Greek invasion of Izmir and how The Greeks were later beaten and drawn out to the sea is one of the most important stories of the Independence War. According to Herkül Millas, many Turkish historians regard it as the incident that marked the real beginning of the Turkish Independence War³⁹², an awakening moment for Turkish nationalism as we know it today. The Turkish nationalism was, in a way, shaped by Greek nationalism since the Ottoman times, with the Izmir invasion being a turning point. Before Izmir's invasion there was already distrust and enmity towards Greeks among Turks due to the Greek's position as Europe's ally, Greek separationist movement and its success and the Greek nationalist ideology that claimed Greeks were the rightful heirs to Ancient Greece and Byzantium–and thus to

³⁹⁰ Copeaux (2006), p. 325.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁹² Herkül Millas, "Milli Türk Kimliği ve 'Öteki' (Yunan) ," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 196.

their territory which were part of the Ottoman Empire. This enmity reached its pinnacle point with the Greek invasion of Izmir. Greeks, who were once subjects of the empire, were seen as traitors and regarded a conniving enemy. Rum minorities within the state, who were close relatives of Greeks and whose “Greekness” was becoming more dominant, came to be regarded with a similar enmity and distrust, too. Greeks, on their own, were of course not seen as a formidable opponent to the mighty Turkish nation, but as a part of “Europe”, of “Christian West”, they were a real threat. They were also seen as an obstacle in Turkish reconciliation with Europe.

Greece plays an important role in Turkish nationalism as the “other” that keeps causing problems for Turks, be it in war times or supposed “peace” times, who can never be trusted with anything, who is likely to cause inner unrest and who is actually an unworthy opponent whose “danger” lies in its conniving ways. The portrayal of “Byzantium” as well as “Rum” viziers in the Turkish historical films is true to how the “Greeks” are represented in Turkish Nationalist discourses as its main Other. They are evil, treacherous, unruly, cruel trouble-makers who won’t listen to offering of peace but rather will try to organize the rest of Europe for a Crusade against the Turks to wipe them all out. They are so horrible rulers that even their own people want to get rid of them, they are so brutal that they will kill even their own family members without hesitation; they terrorize everyone and are not just. As Çağlar Keyder points out, in these films, the Turkish hero emerges as “savior of a land and people suffering under a decadent Byzantine tradition” The Turkish hero, with the help of the good Other princess, who has fallen in love with him,

brings justice and peace for all and so “it is the virile conquerors that revive the supine and decaying empire, in the well-rehearsed sexual metaphor”.³⁹³

“Other”ing is a very powerful and dominant theme in Turkish nationalism, but it is important to note that the “othering” of Greeks, Europeans, minorities (basically anyone who is not Turkish) is done thorough presenting them as “dangers to us”. So, it is not “us” who has a problem with anyone and will not “include” us, it is everyone else who has a problem with us and who try to constantly “exclude” us. Actually, Turkish nationalism takes pride in claiming Turkey as a safe haven for immigrants, as a land of hospitality, equality and understanding where people from all kinds of ethnicities and religions lived and continue to live “together”.

In a similar fashion, in the films, it is the “Others” who will not let there be peace. They are the ones who fill the head of their youth with lies about the Turks as they try to pin their own crimes on Turks. They are the ones who are cruel and incompetent rulers, who don’t only treat Turks with hostility but also mistreat their own people, while Turks are the bringers of justice and peace. Turks, on the other hand, are the envy of others and will see “good” Others either join their ranks or want to be ruled by them, happy to be their subjects. What needs to be noted is that the “good Other” is good and can continue to exist only to the point he accepts Turkish superiority and rule and likes Turks. And the high point of being a “good other” is one who ceases to be an Other all together but becomes a Turk (like Hammer), converting, losing its own identity to be one of “us”. This, as Herkül Millas points out, is really a means to actually reject and ignore the Other for who

³⁹³ Çağlar Keyder, “A history and geography of Turkish Nationalism,” *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, ed.by F. Birtek and T. Dragonas (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 8.

they really are.³⁹⁴ The “good other” is someone who is constructed to fit Turkish Nationalist discourse by the Turks themselves, underlining Turkish superiority and the righteousness, praising the many qualities of Turks. It is not a real representation of who the Other is. The depiction of Others as the cause of all evil and Turks as perfect also serves to reinforce the belief that everything in present-time Turkey would have been in order if it was not for “Others” meddling in our business and causing problems where there is none and Turks are never in the wrong about anything.³⁹⁵

A major theme of Turkish Nationalism is the repression and distortion of memories.³⁹⁶ The Turkish nationalist history has many silences regarding those moments in history that it wants to overlook as they do not fit into the nationalist discourse.³⁹⁷ This is why, in the textbooks the Byzantium Empire will be presented mainly as the “East Roman Empire” and will barely be mentioned except for its encounters with Turks and will occupy as much space as an obscure, long-forgotten Ancient Anatolian Civilization. Byzantium gets ignored³⁹⁸, almost completely silenced, due to its association with all things “Greek”, which means it has no place within an official history that is trying to present a diagonal, unbroken Turkish history where the Turks existed thorough-out history in these very lands as a glorious nation, who brought civilization wherever it went and protected its subjects. The

³⁹⁴ Millas (2002), p. 200.

³⁹⁵ Etienne Copeaux, “Türk Milliyetçiliği: Sözcükler, Tarih, İşaretler,” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, trans. Tuvana Gülcan (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 52.

³⁹⁶ Millas (2002), p. 199.

³⁹⁷ Keyder (2005), p. 6.

³⁹⁸ Millas (2002), p. 199.

depiction of the past and the Others in Turkish historical films helps spread the distorted perceptions of them. In line with the nationalist discourse, the films also show Byzantium and all Others as one-note villains, the evil, cruel other, best known for its treachery, who is so inferior to Turks in all aspects that he is often ridiculed and demeaned to exalt Turkishness.

Gökçe İspi argues that, “Other”ing is a means to make up for what one is missing³⁹⁹, it is the means to explain the absence of something one lacks –the “other” has it or is the reason one doesn’t have it. As such the historical adventure Turkish films are understandably “nostalgic”, she says for it is only natural that people who are not happy with their “now” and not very optimistic of their future would look back to their “history” for satisfaction and have that past be completely fantasized⁴⁰⁰ and glorious. “When going through hard times societies create heroes”⁴⁰¹ says Emre Yıldırım, pointing out this is exactly what was happening in the 1960s and the 70s with the Turkish historical adventure films. Anxieties such as the feelings of helplessness and inadequateness against the West, the Cyprus War, the embargo of United States were all being solved in these films through a “father-like” hero who had the power to castrate all enemies, put an end to all threats.

³⁹⁹ Gökçe İspi, “‘Tarihi’ Türk Filmlerinde ‘İyi ve Kötü Adam Olmak’”*Türk Sineması: Kimlik Olgunlaş(tır)ma Enstitüsü,* *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler 6*, ed. Deniz Bayraktar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayınları, 2007), pp. 62-3.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴⁰¹ Yıldırım (2011), p. 70.

Women in Turkish Historical Adventure Films and Turkish Nationalism

In the masculine world of the Turkish historical adventure films, there are not many women. The few Turkish women one comes across serve as a means to signify what characteristics the ideal Turkish woman must have and also as a symbol for the homeland while the Other women are used as a way to signify the Turkish and “the Other”’s defining characteristics and sharpen the difference between the good and the bad.

In *Karaoğlan*, *Malkoçoğlu*, *Kara Murat* and *Battal Gazi* films there are very few women shown in the heroes’ world. There is usually the patriotic Other woman who is plotting against the Turks either for her own agenda or to help the Other Prince that she is in love with. And then there is the “good” Other woman who will fall in love with the Turkish hero and help him out. He also falls in love with her and at the end of the film will take her with him. There are also women in inns who are serving people, and usually take an immediate liking to the Turkish hero and want to spend a night with him and then one has the whores in Byzantium. The Turkish women are rarely shown in the films, and when they do they are usually in the role of dutiful wife/mother, and are often attacked and killed off by the evil Others. On rare instances, they are shown to fight along with the hero in the final scene, as even a Turkish woman is a better warrior than an Other man.

The patriotic Other woman is usually the mastermind behind all evil. She usually wears heavy make-up, revealing clothes and sleeps around a lot. Often, she is shown to know witchcraft and uses elixirs to hypnotize men to do her bidding. Even when in a minor role as the woman assisting the Other prince with his plans, she is

the one who is the most active in achieving their goal and is often shown to wander around alone to get things done. In the end she is usually killed by the Other prince who actually never really loved her, or by the “good” Other woman when they engage in a fight and rarely, by the Turkish hero himself.

The “good” other woman is not loose like the evil one even if her clothes are also a bit revealing. She has a sense of honor, justice and has a conscience. She helps the Turkish hero in his quest, realizing his quest is just and he is a good. At times she is a spoiled Princess or is too strong-willed refusing to behave in the manner the Turkish hero wants her to. In those instances there are a few scenes in which the Turkish hero “tames” her, usually by rough-handling her, punishing her, mocking her spoiled behavior. In some other cases she hates Turks due to lies she has been told and although she falls in love with the Turkish hero upon first sight, turns against him when she realizes he is Turkish. As the film progresses, she realizes the real evil ones are her kind and changes her opinion of Turks completely. Come the end of the film, she leaves with the Turkish hero, as she declares she will give up everything, her home, her throne just to be with him and is willing to even become his slave. It is understood, and in some instances shown, that she has converted to Islam. As such, her encounter with the Turkish hero is something that helps the intrinsically good Other woman overcome whatever inferiorities she has – being spoiled, being a Princess (someone in position of power), being Christian, not loving Turks etc. - to become a woman “worthy” of being with the Turkish hero.

The changes the “good” Other woman undergoes is most striking in the film *Kara Murat: Denizler Hakimi (1977)* as the Turkish hero manages to create a “proper” woman out of her. When the good Other woman, Maria, is first seen, she is the only female pirate among a horde of pirates and is referred to as “Devil’s

daughter” by them. Her attire is the same as all the male pirates as she wears pants and carries a sword. When one of the pirates hits on her, they engage in a sword fight which she wins - it is a half serious fight but it is clear she is a good sword fighter and is revered by them as a result. When the pirates ransack a Turkish village and kill civilians Maria is clearly disturbed and is not really happy with what is going on, but she does not really object as she believes her father was killed by Turks so hates them and lives for vengeance.

When the pirates capture a Turkish ship, the Ottoman Sultan sends Kara Murat to recapture it and save the Turkish Commander. Kara Murat joins the pirates in disguise, using the name Antonio, and he and Maria seem to be in love at first sight. Learning Maria hates Turks because they killed her father, he is saddened and tells her all she ever talks of is vendetta and hatred, leaving no room for love in her heart, which is a shame as she is a very beautiful woman, he concludes. Although swearing to take vengeance for the death of loved ones is something the Turkish hero often does himself, he doesn't seem to be that sympathetic to Maria's cause when it is Turks who has wronged someone and it is the Other woman who seeks vengeance. Rather he feels he should correct this behavior in her as she is too beautiful not to be saved from herself.

The ship comes to the pirates' headquarters and as usual there is to be a big feast. Maria is shown to be dressing up in her room, putting on a dress, making her hair and accessorizing with a flower on her head, putting on make-up and jewelry in an effort to look as beautiful as she can. As she descends the stairs to join the feast, the pirates laying eyes on her all start to laugh and mock and hit on her and she freezes, unable to do or say anything. Kara Murat comes to her rescue, acting all gentlemanly with her, kissing her hand and when the pirates continue to mock, he

engages in a sword fight with the best they have to offer to defend Maria's honor and teach them how to behave in the presence of a real woman.

Pointing out the big transformation she went through herself, Maria tells Kara Murat:

“Since you stepped foot on this ship, a lot has changed with me, Antonio. For the first time I feel so weak in front of a man, I'm ashamed”. - *Kara Murat: Denizler Hakimi (1977)*

The female who was one of the pirates, who was their equal, who was strong and able to defend herself is gone once she meets Kara Murat, all because of “love”. Finding the right man, she has turned into a proper woman, who dresses properly, who behaves properly, who feels properly. She now feels weak against a man, is being feminine and so does not engage in manly activities anymore and she rather requires the protection of a man to defend herself, no more able to do it herself.

When Maria finds out Kara Murat lied to her about his identity and is actually a Turk, she tries to slap him, but he prevents her. He takes her back to her room, throws her in her bed. He tells her she is his slave and has to do whatever she is ordered and that he'll come back to sleep with her that night, to see if she is worth it and then locks her up and leaves. When he comes back, she has subdued, which pleases him as he tells her:

“You were like a wild tiger, but now you became a tame cat. This version of you is better, Maria”. - *Kara Murat: Denizler Hakimi (1977)*

With these words Kara Murat once again confirms that the woman he desires, the one he prefers is not the strong-willed Maria who would fight him⁴⁰² but an obedient woman who does as she is told, and acts the way he wants, someone who he can shape at his own will.⁴⁰³



Picture 21-a: The Improper Woman - Maria as a pirate, before she is made a proper woman by the Turkish hero. She is an equal among men.

⁴⁰² Picture 21 a

⁴⁰³ Picture 21 b



Picture 21-b: The Proper Woman - Maria after transforming into a "proper" woman through the Turkish hero's influence and looking the part. She now needs his protection.

A similar sentiment is voiced by Malkoçoğlu in *Malkoçoğlu: Akıncılar Geliyor* (1969), when the good Other princess jokingly protests her uncle's orders that, as a show of goodwill, she accompanies the Turkish hero to the Ottoman Palace. As she lightly reproves her uncle for ordering her around, pointing out she was not asked for her consent Malkoçoğlu proceeds to leave, saying: "I am Turkish. I don't look for consent of woman". She is then made to run after him, begging him not to leave her as he breaks the fourth wall and turns to the audience, to address them directly and imparts more manly wisdom about "woman" to the viewers. "Women. Princess or not it doesn't change anything. They always want what they don't have, run after one who eludes them" he says with a smirk and a wink. The hero knows too well the woman will do anything he demands of her, that all he has to do is deny her himself and she'll come running after him, that has complete power over her and she is "his". It is no surprise women are often treated unflatteringly in these films. The

scene is a striking example of the lower position women have as a gender in Turkey. They are expected to be obedient and when they express a wish to be asked for their consent it is not taken seriously but rather regarded as her being childish and spoiled and “womanly”, for which they are mocked

Although one sees a greater number of women in Tarkan films, and warrior women no less, they are the films that are especially unflattering in how they depict women. Like in all the films, all women fall in love with the Turkish hero immediately and throw themselves at him freely, but he usually has little to no interest in any of them. He interferes only when there is a need to protect them from other men and does not seem to find much usefulness in them other than sex. He seeks and wishes no female company and is usually annoyed when a woman will not stop following him around, seeking both his love and protection. In *Tarkan (1969)*, every single Other woman who falls in love with Tarkan, helps him out and tries to run away with him is in turn killed off by the male Others they are betraying. It is a world, where even helping the Turkish hero or being Turkish will not save a woman from being killed off.

In *Tarkan: Viking Kanı (1971)*, when he arrives in the Turkish foundation to find out the regular army is off to quell a rebellion and the protection of the Turkish castle is up to a handful of Turkish female warrior Tarkan is skeptical and criticizes the captain for his decision. The captain claims the Turkish women warriors are each worth ten men of the enemy’s male warriors but Tarkan is still not happy. Sure enough, when the castle is attacked, the women are unable to protect it and it gets raided. Tarkan himself almost dies, and is only saved at the last minute by his precious companion Wolf , who is killed in the process as Tarkan passes out from his injuries. As he wakes up, he finds out that Turkish women, men and children have all

been killed and a handful of the Turkish women warriors, along with Bilge , the daughter of Attila the Hun, have been taken prisoners. What really devastates Tarkan in all this mayhem is Wolf's death. He swears he will avenge Wolf's death upon his grave, accompanied by baby-Wolf, the son of the deceased. There is no talk of the Turks who have been killed or rescuing Bilge in this scene, the focus is completely on Wolf and the fact that he died, as if he is the one who is more important than all the others who have been killed and captured. It is only later on in the film that Tarkan will mention he also needs to save Bilge as she has been entrusted to him by Atilla the Hun. He again shows no particular interest in the Turkish female warriors who have been captured, this disinterest continues on for the rest of the film. Not surprisingly, each of these women, except for Bilge, will suffer torture and rape at the hands of the Vikings and then die a gruesome death as the film progresses.

During *Tarkan: Viking Kanı* (1971), Tarkan runs into the Viking Princess, Ursula, the daughter of the usurped king who was murdered. She also has a handful of women warriors but without Tarkan's help she is incapable of claiming her throne back. Tarkan does not really want her or her warriors' help but when he finds out she knows the secret passage to the Viking Palace he reluctantly agrees to the alliance. Like all woman, she is smitten by Tarkan, considering herself lucky to run into someone like him, something she would never dream of being possible. Although Ursula manages to get Tarkan inside the palace as she promised, her usefulness as an ally ends there. Incapable of holding her own during battle, she is captured, causing Tarkan to surrender so that she is not harmed. When Tarkan is left at an altar to be killed off by the Viking's sea monster, she tries to help him, but fails in this endeavor as well, as she is immediately wounded. Where Ursula fails, Bilge, being a Turkish

woman, succeeds, and she manages to save Tarkan from his bonds. He then goes on to kill the sea monster and the usurper Viking King and restore Ursula into power.

This film also features a third woman character, an evil Chinese princess⁴⁰⁴ who was the brains behind Bilge's capture and the raid on the Turkish castle, having sided with the Vikings as a means to weaken the Turks. She is exotic, cruel and is not beyond sleeping with whoever is necessary to get what she wants. No real warrior herself, she uses others to get her job done and does not blink twice before leaving them behind to their death. She also sneak attacks others. In her final scene, we see her doing a sexy seduction dance in front of a bound Tarkan, whose bounds she is cutting one by one by throwing knives so that he will fall down to the pits of a lava well. The scene signifies her deadly exotic beauty, her seductioness position as well as her sadistic evil nature. By the end of the scene, she meets her end when baby-Wolf comes to Tarkan's rescue and makes her fall down into the lava pit herself by scaring her with his growls and barks, causing her to back into it.



Picture 22: The deadly, exotic, deviant, Other woman.

⁴⁰⁴ Picture 22

The patriotic evil Other woman always dies at the end of the films while the good Other woman survives, usually as someone who will be with the Turkish hero from now on. But, except for the *Battal Gazi* series where Battal Gazi's wife appears again in the second film only to being killed off in the beginning, no "good" Other woman makes a second appearance in the films either. "Settling down" is never the primary goal of the Turkish hero, he always reemerges as a single man who has devoted his life to his country in the next film, so his relationships with the good Other woman in these films do not come off as great love stories but rather a case of her being his personal prize for his troubles in that particular adventure. The Turkish woman, on the other hand, appears less in these films compared to the Other women, but she has more of a presence than the two of them and serves a symbolic function.

The Turkish woman often wears a headscarf and traditional Turkish clothes that do not reveal the body. She is usually either the mother of the Turkish hero or the mother of his child, teaching the kid how to be a proper Turk. In *Battal Gazi'nin İntikamı* (1972), she scolds her disobedient son who wants to play more war-like games with his father that the "hand that is raised to the father turns to stone", a warning that comes true later on in the film when the "hypnotized by the elixir of the Others" son tries to strike his father with a sword as they are forced to fight, and his arm turns to stone. In *Kara Murat Kara Şovalye'ye Karşı* (1975), she is the mother⁴⁰⁵ who takes on her son's education –including fighting and praying– after her husband is killed in an ambush and her other son is captured. She keeps telling her son he needs to avenge his father and prove himself worthy of him. She makes an appearance before the Sultan to beg for the life of her son and is also the one who tries to guide him in the right way, suggesting prayer to exorcise his demons, when it

⁴⁰⁵ Picture 23.

is mistakenly thought he is being a traitor to the county. The Turkish woman is seldom shown outside the boundaries of her house or village, and her main function is to serve her husband and raise her son properly.



Picture 23: The Older Turkish Woman: The Mother- The Turkish mother raises her son to be as mighty a warrior as his father and avenge his death.

Turkish women who appear in the films also usually die within the same film, with the exception of the younger Turkish woman⁴⁰⁶ who joins the hero in the big final fight against the Other's army with sword in her hand.⁴⁰⁷ The mothers, both old (hero's mother) and young (hero's wife) are killed by the Other either to punish the hero or as one of the many casualties of an attack on a Turkish village by the Others. In *Battal Gazi Geliyor* (1973), Battal Gazi's daughter who has been raped by the

⁴⁰⁶ Picture 24 a

⁴⁰⁷ Picture 24 b

Others to send a message to Battal, commits suicide due to her shame. When a Turkish woman is captured, it is a big deal of stress for the hero who wishes her death, as death is preferable over her being raped and thus sullied.



Picture 24a: The Younger Turkish Woman: The Lover - Wearing traditional outfits, at times of peace she is the dutiful wife and loving mother at home, or the lover waiting for her beloved to come home.



Picture 24b: The Younger Turkish Woman: The Warrior – The Turkish woman, due to her Turkishness, turns into a fierce warrior taking on two Other soldiers at times of war.

The Turkish women plays an important function not only because of the insight she offers into what an ideal Turkish woman must be, but also because she, as a female beloved and a mother, is a symbolic representation of homeland (*vatan*).⁴⁰⁸ If the female is sullied, “*vatan*” is also sullied. “Sexual and national honor intimately constructed each other”⁴⁰⁹ says Afsaneh Najmabadi, pointing out that the idea of purity of a woman corresponds to the integrity of the homeland. The homeland is not just the place where one is born, but it is the place “within which the collectivity of national brothers resided”. Brothers, who are born of the same “mother”, the same homeland, which is a concept that gives people a feeling of solidarity.⁴¹⁰ The

⁴⁰⁸ Afsaneh Najmabadi, “The Erotic Vatan [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To Love, To Possess, and to Protect,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (July 1997), p. 442.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 459.

homeland is the defenseless female that requires constant protection of the hero who fights Others for her honor, for her integrity, for her safety. And the sisters of the nation, the female population, serve the homeland by keeping themselves pure, giving birth and raising children who love and value their homeland and prove themselves to be useful and worthy of it.⁴¹¹ Thus, it becomes the Turkish hero's duty to protect the honor of the Turkish woman as well as the homeland, while it is the Turkish woman's duty to raise proper children who are aware of their duties to the homeland and family and she instills in them the necessary values of the nation.

Landscape as the Mythic Motherland

The idea of homeland, plays an important part in Turkish Nationalist discourse and its naturalization. The official history of the Turkish nation claims Anatolia as being inherently "Turkish", with the Turkish Republic, which is the first nation to have its boundaries coincide with the geographical boundaries of Anadolu, the rightful heir to it, says Çağlar Keyder.⁴¹² The nationalist discourse does not acknowledge the existence of Others in the homeland but rather sees it as a place that has always been uniformly Turkish. This has been achieved by constructing "an unbroken ethnic history reaching back to a mystical past in an alien geography" according to Keyder.⁴¹³ Constructing an unbroken ethnic history also meant the heroes in all stages of this history would show similar characteristics as they'd all be

⁴¹¹ Ibid., p. 464.

⁴¹² Keyder (2005), p. 8

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 7.

fundamentally “Turkish/Anatolian” heroes and share “Turkish/Anatolian” characteristics.⁴¹⁴ Except for the differences in how they approach and use religion, all the heroes in Turkish historical adventure films are indeed like one another and depict a similar kind of Turkish hero/ideal man. The mystical past is the setting in which the historical films’ stories usually take place. This is especially true for Karaođlan and Tarkan films, which, like it is the case in the foundation myth chosen for the nationalist discourse, places homeland in “Middle Asia”.⁴¹⁵

In Anatolian nationalism, Anadolu’s Turkishness comes from the fact that when Alparslan invaded it in 1071, the synthesis of his Turkish forces and the Anatolian population that was already there created a brand-new nation, who are our ancestors.⁴¹⁶ The Turkish-history thesis, on the other hand, finds Turkish roots even in the ancient Anatolian civilizations such as the Hittites, and claiming Turks were the first inhabitants of Anatolia in the first place and are the source of all civilization. In an effort to make Anatolia come off as homogenously Turkish as possible, and erase the traces of Others, such as Greeks and Armenians from Anatolia, names of towns were changed to “Turkish” ones. The capital was moved to Ankara which appeared to be more pure than Istanbul that carried the traces of both Byzantium and Ottoman empire, and accommodated a considerable number of “Others”.⁴¹⁷ This selective ignoring of certain geographies of the homeland also meant, despite Turkey being a country that is a peninsula and is surrounded by sea on three sides, people

⁴¹⁴ Copeaux (2002), p.50.

⁴¹⁵ Çađlar Keyder, *Memalik-i Osmaniye’den Avrupa Birliđi’ne* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), p. 115.

⁴¹⁶ Mithat Atabay. “Anadoluculuk,” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 532.

⁴¹⁷ Keyder (2005), pp. 8-9.

have a dismal relationship to the sea, which was regarded as “the domain of the Greeks”. Because the sea was not seen as being related to “us” it has not been used as effectively. It is with the 1960s an effort was made by some elites to have Turkey recognize the heritage of Anatolian civilizations and Turkish people started to reconcile with the sea.⁴¹⁸

Except for the film *Kara Murat: Denizler Hakimi* (1977), where long shots of horseback riding are replaced with long scenes of sailing -which are clearly taken from a foreign film-, the Turkish hero in Turkish historical films is never shown as a sailor. In certain instances he has to go on a boat to reach the land of the Others but he normally has nothing to do with the sea. Usually the only times the sea makes any appearance in these films is when the hero is galloping to reach a foreign country and is passing by a shore⁴¹⁹, or there is an exterior shot of the Other’s fortress. In *Kara Murat: Devler Savaşıyor* (1978) we see the hero going to the Mora Island in a small boat with only two people in it. The scenes do not show a ship moving in the sea but only the hero’s arrival to the shores of this troublesome island. In *Tarkan: Viking Kanı* (1971), Tarkan is also seen trying to go to the Vikingland by using a “boat” by his lonesome, he fails and becomes a galley slave. He escapes the ship by jumping into the sea at first chance. Next, we see him lying all passed out at the shore, the waves having brought him in, so he is not necessarily depicted as someone who fares well at sea. In this film, the sea is really the realm of the Others. It is where the Vikings, the enemy, come from and it is what hosts the wicked evil sea creature they use to kill their victims, including their own king. Tarkan kills this evil octopus in an underwater struggle. As it is, the sea is usually associated with Others in the Turkish

⁴¹⁸ Keyder (2007), pp. 116-117.

⁴¹⁹ Picture 25.

historical films in general and is foreign to the Turkish hero. He can deal with it, as he can deal with anything but it is not his forte.



Picture 25: The Sea and the Galloping Hero

In *Kara Murat: Denizler Hakimi* (1977), although Kara Murat is shown as an apt sailor, and Turks are told to be dominating the seas, the Ottoman fleet is nothing more than a single ship and loses the fight to the great fleet of the enemy due to being severely outnumbered. The Turks don't win in the water but the victory comes from their ability to burn the Other's fleet where it is waiting at the shore. The fighting shots between the ships in these film are clearly stolen from foreign films and edited in, but the shots of the admiral ship and the interior shots done in the ship seem to be genuine material shot for this film. The film's date suggests this sudden interest in the sea and the islands may have to do with the Cyprus War (1974). Another film, *Malkoçoğlu: Kara Korsan* (1968) also featured pirates but in it Malkoçoğlu was never on sea but was rather by the shore at all times and the only

time he was in the sea was during a torture scene when the Other's dragged him tied to a horse's back through the sands in a shore.

In Turkish nationalism, the homeland of Turks, Anatolia is a mythical place. It is imagined as a fertile, rich land where there is plenty of water, it is green, has lots of forests where birds chirp happily. A place that is of "Other's" envy, a real treasure.⁴²⁰ The reality is different. Anatolia, especially the inner parts of it, can be quite arid and was even described as "the already dead part of the world's nightmare" by Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, who used to believe in the mythical Anatolia but was very much disappointed when he traveled Anatolia.

The depiction of the homeland in the Turkish historical films is left ambiguous. The films are mainly shot in interior of palaces, the inns (with an exterior shot of the inn), the marketplace and the fighting scenes take place by the city walls; landscape shots in general are avoided. The majority of exterior scenes are horseriding scenes as the hero rushes to his mission in a foreign country. Still, in what little exterior shots there are, there seems to be an effort to present the homeland as a fertile, green, rich land just like it is imagined in nationalist discourse.

What seems to be a recurring theme in the exterior horseback shots of the films, especially in *Malkoçoğlu* and *Kara Murat* series, are the long segments of the hero riding on a horseback, which seem to be an effort to show how vast the Ottoman lands are. The effect is slightly ruined when the same shot is used over and over within the same scene. These shots usually feature mountains at the back, and the horse is riding through green or brown lands with some trees around and relies on the length of time to have the desired of giving the impression the hero has traveled far.

⁴²⁰ Georgeon (2002), p.33

In some others, the scenery keeps changing from a forest, to a hill⁴²¹, to a shore, to a desert⁴²² to give a sense of how far away the hero has gone. But in the horseback riding shots the focus is not on the scenery but on the hero and as one doesn't have an idea where the territories of the homeland start and end in these films, it doesn't afford much in terms of determining what kind of a depiction of the homeland the director was aiming at, if any.



Picture 26: The Hills

⁴²¹ Picture 26.

⁴²² Picture 27.



Picture 27: The Desert

These horse-riding sequences almost always feature a focus of the horse stepping over some water, to give the impression the hero is passing a river, as befitting the description of fertile Anatolia with its many rivers.⁴²³ To further these images, the hero often ends up camping by the river in a forest with birds chirping in the background. There are some artistic shots of the hero resting in the forest with the water of the lake behind him shining beautifully. Little details like how the camera focuses on the water when the horse steps on it, how distinguishable the bird chirping noises are, and some shots of the shining water suggest these are consciously made decisions aimed at representing the homeland like the mystical heavenly Anatolia of nationalist discourse as much as possible. They fail to be very effective as the water the horse steps on is usually little more than a puddle and one can see the arid wastelands⁴²⁴ in the background in many scenes.

⁴²³ Picture 28.

⁴²⁴ Picture 29.



Picture 28: The River



Picture 29: The Wastelands

There are a few instances where the landscape is given some special focus, and in these instances there is an obvious care shown to how the landscape is depicted. One such instance is the Ottoman Army, in all its might, leaving for further conquest. This shot, used repeatedly in several of the films, is a grand shot, featuring many extras, shot in a forest.⁴²⁵ Another obvious attempt as a “great” view of the landscape is in the film *Malkoçoğlu: Cem Sultan (1969)* where we start with a distance shot of a green field and a man working in this field. It is a rather artistic shot where the man in the white shirt stands out in this great green field he is surrounded with, with a hill at the back to complete the shot.⁴²⁶ The man, as the camera focuses, is no other than son of Malkoçoğlu, Polat, who at the time thinks he is the son of a farmer and is working on the farm himself. In *Battal Gazi Destanı (1971)*, Battal Gazi’s camping place is shown to be near a river in the forest. The river shines beautifully under the sunlight, all sparkling, in which he and the princess later on take a bath in.⁴²⁷ This shot of the river stands out in the film as the camera rests for a long time on the sparkling waters of the river and it is another artistic shot not seen commonly in these films.

⁴²⁵ Picture 30.

⁴²⁶ Picture 31.

⁴²⁷ Picture 32.



Picture 30: The Ottoman Army marching through the forest.



Picture 31: The Green Fields



Picture 32: The Beautiful Lake

The depiction of the landscape in the shots used in the films may not stand out much, but the relationship the hero expresses to the landscape is important. The hero himself may not be a farmer but in the films he is frequently shown to come from a farming family. In *Malkoçoğlu: Cem Sultan* (1969) we see Polat, the future Malkoçoğlu, working the fields himself. In *Kara Murat: Fatih'in Fermanı* (1973), his mother is shown to live in the village with chickens and roosters running around. In *Kara Murat Şeyh Gaffar'a Karşı* (1976) his brother is told to have a farm. The Turkish hero is not someone from a more urban, or palace life but someone with farming background.

Apart from the farming background, the hero is shown to have a special relationship with nature in general. In *Malkoçoğlu: Kara Korsan* (1968) the hero says the best friend a person can have is nature. Sunny plains to rivers, he talks to all.

In *Malkoçoğlu: Krallara Karşı* (1967), at the end of the film, by the seaside, he tells the princess he is off to go to the “foggy valleys, the smokey mountains” as that is where the raiders go. The film ends with Malkoçoğlu shouting “our way is the way of the righteous. Our line, the line of the wolf. Give way mountains. Let Malkoçoğlu pass. Forward”. Malkoçoğlu is a nomad. The whole homeland is his home.

Malkoçoğlu mentioning Turks being a descendent of a wolf is also a call back to the Turkish origin myth of Ergenekon. Wolves are one of the symbolic animals of Turkishness and especially in Tarkan and Malkoçoğlu films they are mentioned many times. Tarkan is always accompanied by his one true companion, Wolf, who he treats like a person and family. Malkoçoğlu wears a special ring with a wolf’s head engraved on it, which helps identify him to his allies when he is in disguise but wants to assure them help is there and even snaps his son out of hypnosis in one instance. Karaoğlan refers to his sword handle being of an engraving of a wolf’s head. According to Aysel Morin, a wolf was the reincarnation of their God, Gök Tanrı, or her spirit for the ancient Turks. As descendants of the wolf, Turks are not only in touch with the nature but can also add a “will of the God” aspect to their claims of legitimacy and sovereignty.⁴²⁸

The greatest bond the Turks have with the landscape is the blood they shed for its sake, which is reminded various times in these films. In *Battal Gazi Destanı* (1971), the hero swears on his father’s grave that he will grow up to take his revenge and that the tree will be growing on his father’s blood. In *Kara Murat: Devler Savaşıyor* (1978), when the Turks are told they can leave Mora island at any time if they feel their treatment there is bad, the Turkish girl, Zeynep, says the Turkish

⁴²⁸ Morin (2004), p. 187.

people have as much a right to live in the island as anybody due to all the blood they shed to gain it. Whenever the Turkish hero is blamed with treachery, his parents are willing to sacrifice him for the well being of the homeland as it is holier than all. The heavenly homeland of the Turks is the precious lands which the envious Others always try to steal from them, and which they, throughout history, protected, watering it with their very own blood.

According to Etienne Copeaux, the nation state establishes the bonds between the homeland and the population through renaming of landscape in Turkish and bringing forth idea of its holiness and sacrifices made for it.⁴²⁹ Naming a place yourself, mentioning the loss you suffered for its sake are all means of making a claim on it, on possessing it. In the Turkish historical films, the hero often suffers loss as he is trying to defend the homeland as the enemies kill his family and his friends, his fellow Turkish warriors. The films often show the Turkish villages being raided by invading Others as everyone within them are killed. In the nationalist discourse, one is often reminded of Çanakkale Wars and Independence War and how Anatolia is a place that has been “blessed by blood” and is therefore Turkish. The loss of life in those Wars, the bloodshed, was a price paid to gain Anatolia’s freedom in present day.⁴³⁰ The historical adventure films and their scenes of suffering and loss, serve as a reminder to the sacredness of the lands and the heavy price paid to keep them “ours”. As the landscape becomes “homeland/motherland/vatan” through being turned into a sacred place, a strong geographic aspect is added to the national

⁴²⁹ Copeaux (2006), p. 341.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., pp. 342-4.

identity, making identity and the land inseparable, states Kemal H. Karpat.⁴³¹ The Turkish historical films may not be able to do such a great job depicting the motherland as a heaven that is the envy of all, but they do manage to present it as sacred through the constant reminding of the bloodshed for it and martyrs given, thus helping strengthen the bond between the individual and the land. This “territorial bonding”⁴³² is part of the process of national identity construction. The common bond to a landscape that they consider sacred (homeland/motherland) that people share creates a collective identity.

⁴³¹ Kemal H Karpat, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Kimlik ve İdeoloji* (Timaş Yayınları, İstanbul, 2009), p. 96.

⁴³² Dittmer (2005), p. 633.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

When I first set out to write this thesis, popular Turkish historical heroes of the 1960s - Karaođlan, Malkoçođlu, Kara Murat, Tarkan and Battal Gazi- were still finding themselves a place in Turkish popular culture. They regularly aired on TV, comic books featuring some of the characters are still in publication, Cüneyt Arkin would appear in TV commercials as “Malkoçođlu”. This long-lasting popularity was one of the starting points of my thesis as I wanted to know why and how they have managed to still be relevant. In the couple of years that have passed, they have taken things one step forward and instead of being popular TV reruns, they are now starting to make a real comeback to the big screen.

I think one of the first indicators of a possible come-back of the historical genre was *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* and its success –despite all the initial protests. Although it is classified as a Turkish historical soap opera, it proved “history” sells. It is telling that one of the main criticisms it keeps getting is how it has very few war scenes and how that is not a right portrayal of Ottomans. People want to see Turkish victories on screen. That is why it comes as no surprise that over the summer the series has been making the headlines with its announcements of preparing a great war scene for the Mohaç War and inclusion of Malkoçođlu into the series.⁴³³ There have also been

⁴³³ Hürriyet. 17 August 2011. '*Muhteşem Yüzyıl'a Malkoçođlu!*'. Available[online]: <http://www.haberturk.com/medya/haber/659994-muhteşem-yuzyila-malkocoglu> [20 January 2011].

news of both Kara Murat and Battal Gazi films being remade. Whether or not these projects will come to a completion and achieve much success remains to be seen, of course, but the renewed interest in the historical adventure genre is intriguing.

A film is successful with the audiences as long as it manages to meet their wishes and needs. Technical and artistic qualities as well as content of the film end up determining its value for the audience. A film that is severely lacking in production quality is not likely to achieve much success, but neither is a high-tech film that is unable to appeal to the audience in terms of its story and characters. Film has the power to social engineer, it can shape the perceptions of the audience and work as a powerful medium of identity construction and maintenance but first it needs to be able to “sell” itself to the audience, to encapture the audience into the world it creates as reality. It can’t achieve that if its “reality” is too disconnected from what the audience perceives as reality. The film is always tied to the audience, their perceptions, their experiences, their needs.

“Audience demand” pretty much determined what films Yeşilçam would produce. The films produced in the 60s and the 70s were mainly popular films, imitating popular Hollywood genres, aiming to appeal to the highest number of audiences possible to ensure the most profit. Yeşilçam was trying to compete with Hollywood and European films in its domestic market at the time, and the only advantage it had over them was its locality. Yeşilçam’s number one priority had to be to satisfy its “Turkish” costumers if it wanted to survive. “The public demands this” was often used as an excuse to explain artistically low quality films produced at the time. Albeit gaining much scrutiny from the intellectuals at the time, these films, appealing to the masses, were proven to be economically highly valuable. For some intellectuals these films had no national value and told nothing of “the Turkish

people”. I think, even if the films were done abiding by American formulas and were not “authentic” or artistic, they still has a lot to say about the Turkish people and are very much “Turkish”. A film does not have to consciously and openly make social criticism to say something about the society they are a product of. Often, just the popularity of certain films, certain genres says something about the social atmosphere at the time and the audience’s demands and wishes. An analysis of those films, in turn, reveal more about the society as it is something within these films, their stories, characters, conflicts etc. that appeal to masses so much and manage to satisfy them. Its artistic and technical qualities as well as content determine a film’s success. Lacking resources and capital, Turkish cinema was never a match to American films’ technical quality. Yeşilçam also generally lacked in terms of artistic qualities. The difference it could make was in its content, in its ability to meet “audience demand” as far as the stories it told, the characters it created, the conflicts it presented and solved were concerned.

One of the most popular genres of Yeşilçam among the Turkish audiences was the historical adventure film. These films would depict the glorious past of Turks where the mighty Turkish hero would beat the entire enemy army on his own, securing the homeland from invading others and ridding it of its traitors. He was a savior of his people and punisher of the Others. He was not just solving the problems of the state and the Turkish people on screen, he was setting an example of how to react to Others, how to view the homeland, how to assess and treat women.

The Turkish historical adventure films such all showcase the enmity toward the Christian West. Byzantium is the enemy and the first base to be conquered in the great scheme of conquering Europe. That Byzantium is the most common enemy in all these films without a care for historical or geographical accuracy, is a sign of

Byzantium's special status as an imagined other that embodies all the resentment and enmity felt toward the actual "others" of the Turkish nation. Byzantium in the films was symbolizing Greece as a whole. Greece was the main "other" of Turkish nationalism. It that kept causing problems for Turks, be it in war times or peace times, who could never be trusted, and was likely to cause inner unrest. These characteristics of the "Greeks" as an "other" can be observed in the portrayal of "Byzantium" in the films.

The "other" is constantly revealed as cowardly, treacherous and cruel in the epic Turkish films. Almost all films include the other's ruler torturing the hero, the civilians –be they Muslim Turks or loyal Turkish minorities- and even their own mother and sister who side with the Turkish hero. The Turkish hero on the other hand is clever, courageous, just and a great swordsman. He is acknowledged as a great warrior by the men and desired by both Turkish and "Other" women he runs into. Quite often, his love affair with the Byzantine or Christian princess leads to not only his victory, but also her conversion to Islam and acceptance of Turkish values as his wife... The Turkish hero is generally not the one who initiates the violence, he is rather the defender of his nation and family against the 'other' who strikes first – which is in line with the xenophobic, reactionary, defensive characteristics of the Turkish national identity.

Turkish nationalism is defensive and reactionary due to the humiliation and anxieties suffered during its formation years as Ottoman Empire collapsed and modern Turkey was found. Turkish nationalism rises when anxiety in the society rises, when the Turkish people are unhappy with their present, feeling hopeless for the future, fear for their survival, think they are excluded and unwanted and under threat.... As they have nothing to look forward to in their future, and their present is

unsatisfactory, they turn to the past instead, solving their present-day problems in the past. They want to -need to- see a glorious past, one where they are powerful. It is in the past they can get some reassurance.

Women play important functions in the historical adventure films even though the role they play may change according to the film. There is certainly a correlation between the depictions of women in Turkish historical adventure films and their respective homelands. The types of women one comes across in these films can be put into three categories: The patriotic “evil” Other woman, the converting “good” Other woman and the Turkish woman.

The patriotic ‘other’ woman is the Byzantine or Christian princess who works for the benefit of her homeland and against the Turks. She is referred to as ‘Satan’; she is an evil, promiscuous woman who will shamelessly use her body to get what she wants. She is a schemer who is the mastermind behind the plan against the Turks, who is in the end killed either by the Turkish hero or by the ‘other’ prince, who she was helping out as he betrays her once he is done with her. Her use in the films is to feminize the ‘others’ and underline their evilness and corruptness as she is their evil corrupt matriarch. This also draws attention to the superiority of the Turks over the others as Turks are symbolized by the good, ideal patriarch. She is the troublesome, feminine ‘other’ who is conquered and destroyed.

The converting ‘other’ woman is the Byzantium or Christian princess who falls in love with the Turkish hero, helps him out in his adventurous at her own risk and in the end converts to Islam, changes her name and embraces Turkish values as his wife. She represents the condition of acceptance for the ‘other’ –assimilation. She is the loyal ‘other’, who is also conquered, but this is not a conquest of destruction,

this is one of willingness and compliance. She is the imaginary other who, faced with Turkish superiority, embraces Turkishness.

The Turkish woman in these films is either the mother and/or the wife/lover of the Turkish hero. As a symbol for the motherland, she often gets attacked by enemy and is either kidnapped or killed. Her kidnapping creates a great distress for the hero who is worried about her virtue, of her purity being sullied by the 'other'. In these cases she is clearly a depiction of the homeland, and her kidnapping and the distress it causes is symbolic of the fear of invasion and annihilation that is ever present in Turkish consciousness. In other cases the Turkish woman appears as the child-bearer and supporter of the hero. She is the mother who raises her child with Turkish and Islamic values as a great warrior –usually so that he will avenge his father who has been killed by the other in ambush-, or the lover who when necessary fights alongside the hero. In such cases she is the ideal Turkish woman who will raise her children with love and loyalty to the homeland and Turkish values and who, when necessary, fights for her homeland herself.

In the Turkish historical adventure films, the homeland that the Turkish hero defends is an imaginary homeland with no certain boundaries. Like Ergenekon in the Turkish foundation myths, it is a mythical place. It is a beautiful land where Turks live in dignity. It is a Turkish land of harmony and homogeneity created by a just Turkish rule. It is a land that fits the imaginary heaven that is Anatolia in the Turkish nationalist discourse. "Defending the homeland" emerges as a main theme in Turkish nationalism that also defines the relationship to the 'other'. The "homeland" for the Turkish Republic is Anatolia not only because the state's boundaries coincide with the geographical boundaries of the territory but also because the 'Turkish history thesis' claims Anatolia as being inherently Turkish. This makes all the 'others' (such

as Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds) who make some claim over Anatolian territory ‘invading others’ and enemies of the Turkish Republic.

Historical adventure films do not only depict the “homeland”, they ‘prove’ its existence over ages, make clear who “us” and “others” are, depict the ideal man and ideal woman of the nation that everyone should aspire to be, and remind people of the “duties” they have to the homeland – mainly the duty to protect it, which is one of the main plots of Turkish historical adventure films and also a main theme in Turkish nationalism that also defines the relationship to the ‘other’.

The film *Malkoçoğlu: Avrupa’yi Titreten Türk (1966)* comes to an end as the narrator says:

“God created Turks as rulers. “Rule over the other nations, bring justice to them, love the righteous and the weak and destroy the wrongful and the strong,” He ordered. He gave [The Turks] horses, He gave women, He gave weapons. “The world is your motherland, war is your fest, martyrdom your last rank,” he said. “Asia was yours, so is Europe,” he told. And God made the Turk superior”.⁴³⁴ - *Malkoçoğlu: Avrupa’yi Titreten Türk (1966)*

As the narrator utters these lines, the Turkish hero, Malkoçoğlu, with his wife –a Serbian Princess who just converted to Islam-, rides to the sunset on a horse through the vast Anatolian lands to the tune of Ottoman Army March playing in the background. The scene lasts less than a minute, yet within mere seconds it is able to feed a condensed version of the main nationalist claims to its viewers –how the Turkish nation is superior due to its positive characteristics such as justness and strength, how it is its God-given right and duty to rule over others as their superior,

⁴³⁴ Original narration is as follows: “Tanrı Türk’ü ilbay yarattı. ‘Öteki ulusları yönetin, onlara adalet götürün, haklıyı ve zayıfı sevin, haksızı ve kuvvetliyi ezin,’ buyurdu. At verdi, avrat verdi, silah verdi. ‘Dünya senin yurdun, cenk bayramın, şehitlik son rütben,’ dedi. ‘Asya senindi, Avrupa da senin,’ dedi. Ve Tanrı Türk’ü üstün kıldı”. It is most probably based on a passage from Kaşgarlı Mahmud’s *Divan-i Lügüt-it Türk* that goes: “Tanrı onlara Türk adını verdi ve onları yeryüzünde ilbay kıldı. Zamanımızın hakanlarını onlardan çıkardı; dünya milletlerinin idare yularını onların eline verdi. Onları herkese üstün eyledi, kendilerini hak üzerine kuvvetlendirdi.” *Der.(Divan-i Lügüt-it Türk terc. Cilt 1, sayfa 3, Besim Atalay Tercümesi).*

how the good ‘others’ actually love Turks and want to be one of them etc. It is scenes like these that are rich with nationalist discourse and symbolism that makes an analysis of old Turkish historical adventure films a viable source for an analysis of Turkish nationalism and construction of Turkish identity.

The historical adventure films are places where nationalist ideology could be reproduced. The characters they featured were the embodiment of the values and characteristics associated with their respective nations and gender –the hero, the other, the women- and had much common themes with the foundation myths of the Turkish. They are films giving us an insight into a nationalist view of Turkish history and identity. They also reflect the anxieties and fears of the society, signaling a rise in nationalism.

The 60s and the 70s, when these films were produced, was a time paved with mass social conflicts and ever-changing politics for Turkey. It witnessed the introduction of a new constitution in 1961; a coups d’état first in 1971, and then a second time in 1980; and finally the introduction of another new constitution in 1982- which would remain as the constitution of the Turkish Republic up-to-date. It was a time of chaos marked with assassinations, executions, conflicts between political left and right wings that resulted in physical alterations and bloodshed and general social unrest. The era of the Cold War, this was a time of fear and tension, and the Cyprus problem with Greece meant Turkey, which was still a relatively young nation, felt left alone and vulnerable. The decade saw a rise of nationalism as well as Islamist belief. All of which were reflected in the films through the stories told, the stereotypical characters created, the conflicts the hero had to face...

I think the historical adventure films lasting popularity is related to their ties to nationalism, too. They act as nationalist myths and like all myths there is a certain timelessness attached to them so even when they were being ridiculed for their low production quality and over-the-top acting and dialogue there was also still something inherently appealing about them. I believe it is also fitting that at a time when feelings of exclusion and fear are climbing in Turkish society, when people feel powerless against United States and European Union, when there is not much hope for the future the historical heroes of Yeşilçam are once again called for help. As anxiety and fear of Others rise in Turkey, so does nationalism and in return, so does the popularity of historical heroes.

I think it is also important to note the heroes that are making a come-back are all heroes who presented a Turkish-Islamic Synthesis view of Turkish nationalism – namely Malkoçoğlu, Battal Gazi and Kara Murat, who were actually enjoying more popularity than Karaoğlan and Tarkan during the TV-reruns period too. There can be a few explanations for this, such as the difference in production quality of the films, the difference in character of the heroes, or the difference in the star power of the actors playing them. In my opinion between these films there is no real production difference and the general characteristics of the heroes are the same too. One could say Cüneyt Arkın –the actor for Battal Gazi, Kara Murat and Malkoçoğlu- has more star power than Kartal Tibet –the actor playing Karaoğlan and Tarkan- and that the Turkish public liked him more. But another explanation to this may lie in the fact these heroes do represent a Turkish-Islamic Synthesis understanding of Turkish nationalism and the audience feels more close to them because that has become the dominant nationalist view and how most of the audience now define themselves as –

not just a Turk but a Muslim Turk. In any case, I think the historical adventure films still have more to say to us about “us”.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF FILMS USED IN THIS STUDY⁴³⁵

<u>Karaođlan Series</u> ⁴³⁶
Karaođlan: Altay'dan Gelen Yiđit (Karaoglan: The Hero Came from Altai) - 1965
Karaođlan: Baybora'nın Ođlu (Karaoglan: Baybora's Son) - 1966
Karaođlan: Camoka'nın İntikamı (Karaoglan: Camoka's Revenge) - 1966
Karaođlan: Bizanslı Zorba (Karaoglan: Byzantine Despot) - 1967
Karaođlan Geliyor – Cengiz Han'ın Hazineleri (Karaoglan Is Coming: Genghis Khan's Treasures) - 1972

<u>Malkođođlu Series</u>
Malkođođlu: Avrupa'yı Titreten Trk (Malkođođlu: The Turk who Makes Europe Tremble - 1966
Malkođođlu: Krallara Karşı (Malkođođlu vs. the Kings) - 1967
Malkođođlu: Kara Korsan (Malkođođlu: The Black Pirate) - 1968
Malkođođlu: Akıncılar Geliyor (Malkođođlu: The Raiders Are Coming) - 1969
Malkođođlu: Cem Sultan (Malkođođlu: Cem Sultan) – 1969
Malkođođlu: lmn Fedailerı (Malkođođlu: The Henchmen of Death) - 1971

⁴³⁵ The English translations were taken from IMDB (The Internet Movie Database) when available.

⁴³⁶ There are supposed to be two additional films in Karaođlan series, Karaođlan: Yeřil Ejder (Karaoglan: The Green Dragon) & Karaođlan: Samara-Őeyh'in Kızı (Karaoglan: Samara – Daughter of the Skeikh) but these films have been lost, no known copies of them left anywhere. Source: Cantek, Levent. *Erotik ve Milliyetçi Bir İkon: Karaođlan*. İstanbul: Ođlak Yayıncılık, 2003, p. 241.

<u>Tarkan Series</u>
Tarkan: Mars'ın Kılıcı (Tarkan and the Sword of Mars) - 1969
Tarkan: Gümüş Eyer (Tarkan and the Silver Saddle) - 1970
Tarkan: Viking Kanı (Tarkan and the Blood of the Vikings ⁴³⁷) - 1971
Tarkan: Altın Madalyon (Tarkan: The Gold Medallion) - 1972
Tarkan: Güçlü Kahraman Kolsuz Kahramana Karşı (Tarkan: The Virile Hero vs Armless Hero) - 1973

<u>Battal Gazi Series</u>
Battal Gazi Destanı (Batal Khan) – 1971
Battal Gazi'nin İntikamı (The Revenge of Batal Khan) – 1972
Battal Gazi Geliyor (Batal Khan Is Coming) – 1973
Battal Gazi'nin Oğlu (The Son of Batal Khan) - 1974

<u>Kara Murat Series</u>
Kara Murat: Fatih'in Fedaisi (Kara Murat: Sultan Fatih's Daredevil) - 1972 ⁴³⁸
Kara Murat: Fatih'in Fermanı (Kara Murat: Sultan Fatih's Firman) - 1973
Kara Murat: Ölüm Emri (Kara Murat: The Command of Death) - 1974
Kara Murat Kara Şovalye'ye Karşı (Kara Murat vs the Black Knight) - 1975
Kara Murat Şeyh Gaffar'a Karşı (Kara Murat vs Skeikh Gaffar) ⁴³⁹ - 1976
Kara Murat: Denizler Hakimi (Kara Murat: The Sovereign of the Seas) - 1977
Kara Murat: Devler Savaşıyor (Kara Murat: The Giants Battle) - 1978

⁴³⁷ In IMDB the US DVD title is listed as “Tarkan vs the Vikings”.

⁴³⁸ Rahmi Turan refers to this film as “Kara Murat: Aşk ve Kan” (Kara Murat: Love and Blood).

⁴³⁹ In IMDB the english title is listed as “Karamurat”.

APPENDIX B
FILMOGRAPHY⁴⁴⁰

BATTAL GAZİ DESTANI / “BATAL KHAN” (1971)

Director: Atif Yılmaz

Scenario: Ayşe Şasa, Afif Yesari

Director of Photography: Çetin Tunca

Producer: Memduh Ün – Uğur Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Fikret Hakan, Meral Zeren, Reha Yurdakul, Erden Alkan, Melek Görgün, Kerim Afşar, Ali Taygun, Atif Kaptan, Baki Tamer

BATTAL GAZİ’NİN İNTİKAMI / “THE REVENGE OF BATAL KHAN” (1972)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Duygu Sağıroğlu

Director of Photography: Cahit Engin

Producer: Memduh Ün – Uğur Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Meral Zeren, Bilal İnci, Reha Yurdakul, Hikmet Taşdemir, Oktay Yavuz, Atif Kaptan, Behçet Nacar, Necdet Kökeş, Sertan Acar

BATTAL GAZİ GELİYOR / “BATAL KHAN IS COMING” (1973)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Duygu Sağıroğlu, Natuk Baytan

Director of Photography: Cahit Engin

Producer: Memduh Ün – Uğur Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Fikret Hakan, Zuhale Aktan, Reha Yurdakul, Kazım Kartal, Birsen Ayda, Doğan Tamer, Tarık Şimşek, Yaşar Güçlü

⁴⁴⁰ I have listed the series alphabetically and within each series the films are then listed in chronological order. Source: Scognamillo and Demirhan (2005), pp.381-421.

BATTAL GAZİ 'NİN OĞLU / "SON OF BATAL KHAN" (1974)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Duygu Sađırođlu

Director of Photography: Mustafa Yılmaz

Producer: Memduh Ün – Uđur Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Zerrin Arbaş, Bilal İnci, Yavuz Selekman, Hikmet Taşdemir, Yusuf Sezer, Nazan Adalı, Nevin Nuray, Mine Sun, Süheyl Eğriboz, Necdet Kökeş, İhsan Gedik, Arap Celal.

KARA MURAT: FATİH'İN FEDAİSİ / "KARA MURAT: SULTAN FATİH'S DAREDEVIL" (1972)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Natuk Baytan – based on the comic book story by Rahmi Turan and Abudullah Turhan

Director of Photography: Çetin Gürtop

Art Director: Sohban Kolođlu

Producer: Türker İnanođlu – Erler Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Hale Soygazi, Turgut Özatay, Mualla Omay, Erol Taş, Süheyl Eğriboz, Bora Ayanođlu, Atilla Ergün, Yusuf Sezer, Atıf Kaptan, Kayhan Yıldızođlu, Asım Nipton, Özdemir Aydın.

KARA MURAT: FATİH'İN FERMANI / "KARA MURAT: SULTAN FATİH'S FIRMAN" (1973)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Erdoğan Tünaş, Fuat Özlüer – based on the comic book story by Rahmi Turan and Abudullah Turhan

Director of Photography: Çetin Gürtop

Art Director: Sohban Kolođlu

Producer: Türker İnanođlu – Erler Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Meral Orhonsay, Melda Sözen, Erol Taş, Kenan Pars, Atilla Ergün, Kayhan Yıldızođlu, Bora Ayanođlu.

KARA MURAT: ÖLÜM EMRİ / “KARA MURAT: THE COMMAND OF DEATH”
(1974)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Fuat Özlüer – based on the comic book story by Rahmi Turan and Abudullah Turhan

Director of Photography: Çetin Gürtop

Art Director: Sohban Koloğlu

Producer: Türker İnanoğlu – Erler Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Feri Cansel, Turgut Özatay, Hulusi Kentmen, Atıf Kaptan, Melek Ayberk, Atilla Ergün, Yıldırım Gencer, Bora Ayanoğlu, Kayhan Yıldızoğlu, Cemil Şahbaz, Hüseyin Zan

KARA MURAT KARA ŞÖVALYE’YE KARŞI / “KARA MURAT VS THE BLACK KNIGHT” (1975)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Fuat Özlüer, Erdoğan Tünaş – based on the comic book story by Rahmi Turan and Abudullah Turhan

Director of Photography: Çetin Gürtop

Art Director: Sohban Koloğlu

Producer: Türker İnanoğlu – Erler Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Burçin Doğu, Mualla Omay, Reha Yurdakul, Turgut Özatay, Atilla Ergün, Yavuz Selekman, İhsan Gedik, Yılmaz Türkoğlu, Aydın Haberdar, Süheyl Eğriboz, Kudret Karadağ, Yusuf Sezer, Osman Han, Mehmet Yağmur, Hüseyin Sayar, Günay Güner, Bora Ayanoğlu, Hayati Hamzaoğlu, Aliye Rona.

KARA MURAT ŞEYH GAFFAR’A KARŞI / “KARA MURAT VS SKEIKH GAFFAR”
(1976)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Fuat Özlüer, Erdoğan Tünaş – based on the comic book story by Rahmi Turan and Abudullah Turhan

Director of Photography: Çetin Gürtop

Art Director: Sohban Koloğlu

Producer: Türker İnanoğlu – Erler Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Daniella Giordano, Serçin Erdem, Yavuz Selekman, Hüseyin Alp, Kadir Savun, Turgut Özatay, Atilla Ergün, Bora Ayanoğlu, Necla Fide, Pasquale Basile.

KARA MURAT: DENİZLER HAKİMİ / “KARA MURAT: THE SOVEREIGN OF THE SEAS” (1977)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Fuat Özlüer, Erdoğan Tünaş based on the comic book story by Rahmi Turan and Abudullah Turhan

Director of Photography: Çetin Gürtop

Art Director: Sohban Koloğlu

Producer: Türker İnanoğlu – Erler Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Sevda Karaca, Peter Fabian (Pietro Fabiani), Hüseyin Baradan, Turgut Özatay, Kayhan Yıldızoğlu, Atilla Ergün, Süheyl Eğriboz, Kudret Karadağ, Hakkı Kıvanç, Oktar Durukan, Mustafa Nalkafa, Kadir Kök, Yadigar Dağdeviren, Yılmaz Kurt, Yusuf Sezer, Mehmet Uğur, Aydın Haberdar, Sönmez Yıkılmaz, Osman Han.

KARA MURAT: DEVLER SAVAŞIYOR / “KARA MURAT: THE GIANTS BATTLE” (1978)

Director: Natuk Baytan

Scenario: Fuat Özlüer, Erdoğan Tünaş – based on the comic book story by Rahmi Turan and Abudullah Turhan

Director of Photography: Çetin Gürtop

Art Director: Sohban Koloğlu

Producer: Türker İnanoğlu – Erler Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Canan Perver, Tanju Gürsu, Sümer Tilmaç, Reha Yurdakul, Hulusi Kentmen, Atilla Ergün, Kadir Savun, Kayhan Yıldızoğlu, Mümtaz Ener, Nejat Gürçen, Turgut Özatay, Nubar Terziyan, Kadir Kök, Muammer Gözalan, Orhan Elmas, Süheyl Eğriboz, Kudret Karadağ, İhsan Gedik, Mehmet Yağmur, Osman Han, Günay Güner, Hakkı Kıvanç, Mehmet Uğur, Yadigar Ejder.

KARAOĞLAN: ALTAY’DAN GELEN YİĞİT / “KARAOĞLAN: THE HERO CAME FROM ALTAI” (1965)

Director: Suat Yalaz

Scenario: Suat Yalaz – based on his same comic book story

Director of Photography: Hayrettin Işık

Producer: Suat Yalaz – Olcay Production

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Tülin Elgin, Danyal Topatan, Reha Yurdakul, Mehmet Ali Akpınar, Orhon M. Arıburnu, Yavuz Selekman, Gürbüz Tansever, Ayfer Feray, Sevinç Pekin.

KARAOĞLAN: BAYBORA'NIN OĞLU / “KARAOĞLAN: BAYBORA'S SON” (1966)

Director: Suat Yalaz

Scenario: Suat Yalaz – based on his same comic book story

Director of Photography: Mustafa Yılmaz

Producer: Suat Yalaz – Olcay Production

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Emel Turgut, Reha Yurdakul, Hüseyin Peyda, Engin İnal, Yavuz Selekman, Sevinç Pekin, Ali Şen, Mehmet Ali Akpınar, Ergun Köknar, Hayri Caner, Kaan Yalaz, Ahmet Sert, Selahattin (Godzilla) Geçgel.

KARAOĞLAN: CAMOKA'NIN İNTİKAMI / “KARAOĞLAN: CAMOKA'S REVENGE” (1966)

Director: Suat Yalaz

Scenario: Suat Yalaz – based on his same comic book story

Director of Photography: Hayrettin Işık

Producer: Suat Yalaz – Olcay Production

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Figen Say, Danyal Topatan, Yavuz Selekman, Recep Filiz, Elif İnci.

KARAOĞLAN: BİZANSLI ZORBA / “KARAOĞLAN: BYZANTINE DESPOT” (1967)

Director: Suat Yalaz

Scenario: Suat Yalaz – based on his same comic book story

Director of Photography: Mustafa Yılmaz

Producer: Suat Yalaz – Olcay Production

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Esen Püsküllü, Tanju Gürsu, Devlet Devrim, Reha Yurdakul, Nurhan Nur, Birsen Ayda, Altın Günbay, Yavuz Selekman, Gürbüz Tansever, Turgut Akaslan, Muammer Gözalan, Nevin Nuray, Turgut Savaş.

KARAOĞLAN GELİYOR - CENGİZ HAN'IN HAZİNELERİ / "KARAOĞLAN IS COMING - GENGHIS KHAN'S TREASURES" (1972)

Director: Mehmet Aslan

Scenario: Mehmet Aslan –based on the same story by Abdullah Ziya Kozanoğlu

Director of Photography: Erdoğan Engin, Özdemir Ögüt

Producer: Nahit Ataman – Arzu Film

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Ahmet Mekin, Meral Zeren, Ceyda Karahan, Suphi Tekniker, Kazım Kartal, Cemil Cem Bıçakçı, Serpil Gül, Zeki Alasya, Atf Kaptan, Müfit Kiper, Yalçın Boratap, Kanat Tibet.

MALKOÇOĞLU: AVRUPA'YI TİTRETEN TÜRK / "MALKOÇOĞLU: THE TURK WHO MAKES EUROPE TREMBLE" (1966)

Director: Süreyya Duru

Scenario: Ayhan Başoğlu – bason on his same comic book story

Director of Photography: Mahmur Demir

Producer: Naci Duru – Duru Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Selma Güneri, Semih Sergen, Gülbin Eray, Yılmaz Köksal, Nurtekin Odabaşı, Leman Öztürk, Tuncer Necmioğlu, Kayhan Yıldızoğlu, Toron Karacaoğlu, Necip Tekçe.

MALKOÇOĞLU: KRALLARA KARŞI / "MALKOÇOĞLU VS THE KINGS" (1967)

Director: Süreyya Duru, Remzi Jöntürk

Scenario: Bülent Oran – bason on the same comic book story by Ayhan Başoğlu

Director of Photography: Mahmut Demir

Producer: Naci Duru – Duru Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Sezen Güvenirgil, Yıldırım Gencer, Yılmaz Köksal, Kaan Batur, Atilla Sarar, Remzi Jöntürk, Ahmet Kostarika (Turgutlu), Behçet Nacar, Kayhan Yıldızoğlu, Leman Öztürk.

MALKOÇOĞLU: KARA KORSAN / "MALKOÇOĞLU: THE BLACK PIRATE" (1968)

Director: Süreyya Duru, Remzi Jöntürk

Scenario: Bülent Oran– bason on the same comic book story by Ayhan Başoğlu

Director of Photography: Bülent Oran

Producer: Naci Duru – Duru Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Nebahat Çehre, Tanju Gürsu, Birsen Ayda, Kayhan Yıldızoğlu, Ferhan Tanseli, Behçet Nacar, Sevgi Can, Remzi Jöntürk, Nuri Candaş, Leman Özipek, Necip Tekçe, Bahri Özkan, Can Odabaşı, Polat A. Jöntürk.

MALKOÇOĞLU: AKINCILAR GELİYOR / “MALKOÇOĞLU: THE RAIDERS ARE COMING” (1969)

Director: Süreyya Duru

Scenario: Remzi Jöntürk – based on the same comic book story by Ayhan Başoğlu

Director of Photography: Orhan Kapkı

Producer: Naci Duru – Duru Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Esen Püsküllü, Feri Cansel, Meltem Mete, Kayhan Yıldızoğlu, Behçet Nacar, Leman Öztürk, Adnan Mersinli, Nurtekin Odabaşı, Reşit Çıldam, Ayton Sert.

MALKOÇOĞLU: CEM SULTAN / “MALKOÇOĞLU: CEM SULTAN” (1969)

Director: Remzi Jöntürk

Scenario: Remzi Jöntürk – based on the same comic book story by Ayhan Başoğlu

Director of Photography: Ali Uğur

Producer: Naci Duru – Duru Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Gülnaz Huri, Cihangir Gaffari, Feri Cansel, Suzan Avcı, Behçet Nacar, Özdemir Han, Aytekin Akkaya, Ayton Sert, Levent Çakır, Adnan Mersinli.

MALKOÇOĞLU: ÖLÜM FEDAİLERİ / “MALKOÇOĞLU: THE HENCHMEN OF DEATH” (1971)

Director: Remzi Jöntürk

Scenario: Remzi Jöntürk – based on the same comic book story by Ayhan Başoğlu

Director of Photography: Cahit Engin

Producer: Naci Duru – Duru Film

Cast: Cüneyt Arkın, Leyla Selimi, Oya Peri, Talat Hüseyin, Tuncer Necmioğlu, Danyal Topatan, Yaşar Güçlü, Aydın Tezel, Kami Kasravi, Adnan Mersinli, Hakan Bahadır, Yaman Çoşkun, Yusuf Sezer, Haydar Karaer, Sohban Koloğlu.

TARKAN: MARS'IN KILICI / "TARKAN AND THE SWORD OF MARS" (1969)

Director: Tunç Başaran

Scenario: Sezgin Burak – based on his same comic book story

Director of Director of Photography: Necati İlkaç

Assistant Director: Temel Gürsu

Producer: Nahit Ataman – Arzu Film

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Zuhâl Aktan, Lale Belkıs, Mümtaz Ener, Sevgi Can, Kayhan Yıldızođlu, Oktar Durukan, Birsen Ayda, Nil Başak, Behçet Nacar, Aynur Aydan, Moris, Danyal Topatan, Mehmet Ali Akpınar, Deniz Gürsoy, Yusuf Sezer, Mustafa Yıldız, Hüseyin Kutman, Zeki Alpan, İhsan Yüce.

TARKAN: GÜMÜŞ EYER / "TARKAN AND THE SILVER SADDLE" (1970)

Director: Mehmet Aslan

Scenario: Sezgin Burak

Director of Photography: Cahit Engin

Assistant Director: Yılmaz Korkut

Producer: Nahit Ataman – Arzu Film

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Eva Bender, Bilal İnci, Reha Yurdakul, Altan Günbay, Suphi Tekiner, Danyal Topatan, Mehmet Ali Akpınar, Refik Ansav, Kaya Volkan, Hüseyin Alp, Benan Öz, Yıldız Bora, Ümit Yaşar, Yusuf Sezer, Levent Çakır, Osman Han.

TARKAN: VİKİNG KANI / "TARKAN AND THE BLOOD OF THE VIKINGS" (1971)

Director: Mehmet Aslan

Scenario: Sadık Şendil - based on the comic book story by Sezgin Burak

Director of Director of Photography: Cahit Engin

Art Director: Basri Büyükcan

Assistant Director: Yılmaz Korkut

Producer: Nahit Ataman – Arzu Film

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Eva Bender, Seher Şeniz, Fatman Belgen, Bilal İnci, Tarık Şebnem, Atıf Kaptan, Yusuf Sezer, Refik Kansav, Deniz Çimenli, Osman Han, Ahmet Sert, Hüseyin Alp.

TARKAN: ALTIN MADALYON / “TARKAN: THE GOLD MEDALLION” (1972)

Director: Mehmet Aslan

Scenario: Sadık Şendil - based on the comic book story by Sezgin Burak

Director of Director of Photography: Cahit Engin

Assistant Director: Yılmaz Korkut

Producer: Nahit Ataman – Arzu Film

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Eva Bender, Bilal İnci, Reha Yurdakul, Altan Günbay, Suphi Tekiner, Danyal Topatan, Mehmet Ali Akpınar, Refik Ansav, Kaya Volkan, Hüseyin Alp, Benan Öz, Yıldız Bora, Ümit Yaşar, Yusuf Sezer, Levent Çakır, Osman Han.

TARKAN: GÜÇLÜ KAHRAMAN KOLSUZ KAHRAMANA KARŞI / “TARKAN: THE VIRILE HERO VS THE ARMLESS HERO” (1973)

Director: Mehmet Aslan

Scenario: Mehmet Aslan - based on the comic book story by Sezgin Burak and Wang Yu’s *One Armed Boxer* (Kolsuz Kahraman) films

Director of Director of Photography: Erdoğan Engin

Assistant Director: Muzaffer Hiçdurmaz

Producer: Nahit Ataman – Arzu Film

Cast: Kartal Tibet, Hakkı Koşar, Hülya Darcan, Halit Akçatepe, Reha Yurdakul, Kazım Kartal, İlhan Hemşeri, Müfit Kiper, Semra Yıldız, Mithat Oktay, Kazım Aktan, Erol Adıyaman, Yaşar Dikbıyık

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