

WOMAN WITH MANY FACES:
BELATED MODERNITY IN TURKISH POPULAR CINEMA BETWEEN
1960s AND 1970S



İSTANBUL ŞEHİR UNIVERSITY

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**WOMAN WITH MANY FACES:
BELATED MODERNITY IN TURKISH POPULAR CINEMA
BETWEEN 1960s AND 1970S**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
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BY

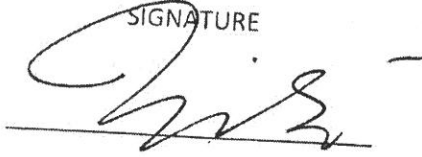


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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
CULTURAL STUDIES

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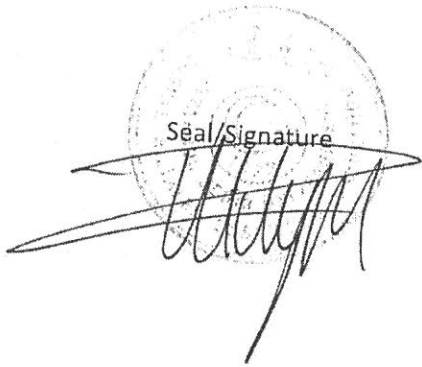
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ABSTRACT

THE WOMAN WITH MANY FACES: BELATED MODERNITY IN TURKISH POPULAR CINEMA BETWEEN THE 1960S AND 1970S.

Karaman, Ayşe Berre

MA in Cultural Studies

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This thesis is a critical analysis of the ways in which selfhood is created and expressed in Yeşilçam melodramas. I will primarily discuss the dynamics of a certain social and cultural dichotomy, namely, the antagonism that is constructed under the general rubric of a discourse of modernity through the central relationship between the male and the female protagonists in the movies chosen. In this sense, by keeping my primary focus on this specific point and addressing it as the central paradigm in Turkey's history, I follow a cultural reading to analyze the ways in which Yeşilçam, as a cultural institution, articulates modernity. Offering a comprehensive cultural reading with a psychoanalytic and postcolonial approach, I purpose to discover broader issues of culture and how it fits into the larger scheme of meanings surrounding the cultural mind.

Keywords: Belated modernity, Yeşilçam melodramas, woman, self-transformation

ÖZ

PEK ÇOK YÜZÜYLE KADIN:
1960-1970 YILLARI ARASINDA TÜRK SİNEMASINDA GECİKMiŞ MODERNLİK

Karaman, Ayşe Berre

Kültürel Çalışmalar Yüksek Lisans Programı

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Bu tez, kültürel bir üretim olarak Yeşilçam melodramlarında kendilik dediğimiz kavramın nasıl oluşturulduğuna ve aktarıldığına dair eleştirel bir çalışmadır. Tez içinde, genel anlamıyla modernleşme başlığı altında toplayabileceğimiz sosyal antagonizmaların oluşturduğu sosyal ve kültürel dikotomi, seçilen filmlerdeki ana kadın ve erkek karakterler ve ilişkileri merkezinde tartışılacak. Bu anlamda, modernleşme tecrübesini merkezde tutup, yine merkez paradigma olarak işaret ederek, kültürel bir enstitü olan Yeşilçam'ın modernleşmeyi nasıl işlediği analiz edilecek. Postkolonyal ve psikanaliz yaklaşımlardan faydalanmak suretiyle geniş bir kültürel okuma yaparak, kültürün büyük planda meselelerinin kültürel hafıza içinde nasıl konumlandığını anlamak amaçlanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gecikmiş Modernlik, Yeşilçam melodramları, kadın, kişisel dönüşüm

Kıymetli babaanneme



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Orhan Aksoy's *Kımalı Yapıncak/Golden Red Grape*(1969), Kımalı Yapıncak (Hülya Koçyiğit), a good-hearted peasant girl, has to move into her aunt's house in Istanbul after tragically losing her parents in a fire. She becomes deaf and speechless following the trauma of her loss. As she is harshly unwanted, she is placed in the storehouse of the mansion by her aunt. One night, her cousin Fikret (Engin Çağlar), who she is secretly in love with, arranges a party in the house. Kımalı Yapıncak watches the party behind the window of her room, watches Fikret and his lover kissing and laughing, and sees fancy guests, all dressed-up in fashionable costumes, drinking whiskey and having fun together all night long. She keeps watching the scene for a while.

As the scene goes by, we hardly catch a sign of a feeling in her face other than the timid distance of alienation. The picture leaves her so alienated, it leaves her alone with the fact that she is a complete stranger, that she does not belong to this picture. What is more, the scene does not only highlight Kımalı as simply as a stranger, but it creates her as someone who is nothing but a stranger, who is only someone who does not fit. What she watches is not only something she is not familiar with, but something that makes her feel alienated and face the fact that there is a distance between her and those in the party. It basically addresses an initial difference, a division that places each person within certain boundaries they belong in, along with an initial emphasis on what Kımalı Yapıncak does not have, that she lacks in comparison to Fikret. It is no coincidence that she has no voice, that she has no words, power or agency. It is also no coincidence that she stands behind the window, outside the boundaries of the party. The scene simultaneously constructs and portrays the impossibility of intersection between the rooms.

She is simply inside the boundaries, where she belongs to, in which she is supposed to be. Seen from here, the distance between Kımalı Yapıncak and Fikret signifies more than being spatial. Despite being under the very same roof, they belong in "separate

worlds.”¹ A while after, she closes the window, pulls the curtain. The same night, Kınalı Yapıncak dreams that she is one of those women in the party, those who dress up like a lady, who can dance. She equalizes herself, that is, equalized two separate worlds by simply crossing the edge towards Fikret’s picture. She turns into a woman who does not have to be in the storehouse, who can be in the party, who can dance and who can charm Fikret. This scene is only one sequence among many of its varieties. The discourse of belonging in “separate worlds” is a recurrent and characteristic theme in Yeşilçam melodramas. The movies I focus in this thesis also cover a story of “difference,” an impossible togetherness of two characters who belong in “separate worlds.” The story starts with an impossibility, is followed by a conflict and resolved with a happy reunion. In Yeşilçam melodramas, different degrees of conflict in the narrative are established upon this central dichotomy, along with a resolution that is covered predominantly by a happy ending. Ultimately, one way or another, what these melodramas highlight is nothing but this very difference.

In the movies I address here, female protagonists, who live in the village or belong to lower class families in the big city, have an encounter with the upper-class boys in the big city, predominantly in İstanbul. Mostly as a result of their families’ compulsion, a financial difficulty or a matter of heritage, the girl and the boy are forced to have an arranged marriage. Following the marriage, or the romantic relationship, the girls are rejected and humiliated by the boys because of their appearance and manners, that is, for not being a proper woman regarding modern codes and conduct. The boy clearly states that the two of them cannot possibly share a life in marriage, clarifying that their marriage is only a forced one, but no more. So, he either abandons the girl and goes his own way, or carelessly continue to live his own life with no regard for her in the cases that they have to share the same house. In what follows, the woman pursues vengeance and decides to have a self-transformation to charm the man and make him regret his misbehaviors. After she undergoes an education process of Westernization, she succeeds to transform into a well-behaved, well-groomed young lady. In what follows, “she comes back in disguise as an urban, rich, sophisticated lady

¹ Savaş Arslan, “Center vs Periphery: Visual Representation of the Party Scenes in Yeşilçam Melodramas”, unpublished MA Thesis, June 1997, Bilkent University.

and the boy, having failed to recognize her, falls in love. This time the girl takes her revenge and leaves him. In the end, her identity is revealed, and the boy learns his lesson.”² At this point, the girl becomes rich somehow. She is either inherited in an unexpected way, or she decides to use her father’s heritage. Mostly by the help of an alternative father figure, along with either a collective help and/or with the guidance of foreign teachers or mentors, she starts the process, which is projected on the screen in a very cursory way. The process requires certain steps to complete the transformation successfully, that is, basically, private education from a non-Muslim instructor, music lessons, training and rehearsals. These steps are either shown in a rapid succession of scenes or entirely skipped. After achieving the success, she comes back in disguise as an urban, rich, sophisticated woman.³ She shows up as a completely different person, and the boy, having failed to recognize her, falls in love with her. After this point, the girl, pursuing her attempt to teach the boy his lesson, challenges him in several ways. Her pride delays the reunion up until the point where the boy is tested with a final test. Having set a suitable stage for the purpose, he is expected to beg the peasant girl to forgive him and obtain her blessing. According to the girl’s plan, he is left in between and expected to make a huge sacrifice that requires him to give up on the girl he loves and appreciate the girl he once ignored. Only in this way, he can pass the test and prove himself worthy of the girl. In the finale, the boy, always pleases the female protagonists and they reunite to live happily ever after.

This particular plot reveals a number of valuable points for various reasons. The movies, first and foremost, reflect a certain segregation between the protagonists, marking a whole set of differences pictured by characters’ lifestyles, spaces, and surroundings and presenting them as representatives of either modern or non-modern lifestyle. Here, this very distinction refers to a specific point caused by a certain experience in Turkish history, addressing a period shaped by social change and transition under the influence of modernization processes.

² Nezih Erdoğan, “Narratives of Resistance: National Identity and Ambivalence in the Turkish Melodrama Between 1965 and 1975,” *Screen* 39, no. 3 (1998): 265.

³ Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 266.

As the focal point, on the other hand, how a woman's destiny is designated in filmic narrative, each of the phases that she experiences within the story, particularly reveals valuable insights of patterns of a society's identity. For the case of our concern, what melodramas mainly tell is the story of how a poor, mannerless, peasant women achieve in transforming to the "new Turkish woman" and ended up with gaining the men's love and approval. That is, truly, the story of how the woman is articulated as the site of production in the ways that she is designated to be the "desire of a nation."⁴ Yet, I am specifically interested in the way that female protagonists handle the selfhood of them in this portrayal. The central here is that not only the male protagonists, as snob and arrogant as they are represented, but the females themselves put their identity in jeopardy, as a result of what is highlighted due to their being lack. Commonly, they do not only accept, but internalize the very fact that they do not belong in a certain portrayal. Moreover, the way they are portrayed inside the picture is constructed as something to feel ashamed and upset for. That is, they indeed do not fit, not in a form of a random difference, but in a form of inferiority through an initial emphasis on what the girls do not have in comparison to the. She internalizes the difference as a matter of inferiority for herself. Thus, stories are far more complicated in the sense that they inherently reflect the domination of the modernization discourse over the selfhood itself. That is, the films do not only project a linear sense of hierarchical relation the superior and the inferior, it implies the multi-layered relations of domination and subordination over the subject. It initiates how the subjects, like Kınalı Yapıncak internalizes the very subordination in a form of self-awareness, so that she desires for the very expectations of the modern interpellation.

This thesis will be a critical analysis of the ways in which selfhood is created and expressed inside the cultural products, specifically, Yeşilçam melodramas. I will primarily discuss the dynamics of this social and cultural dichotomy, namely, the antagonism that is constructed under the general rubric of a discourse of modernity through the central relationship between the male and the female protagonists. In

⁴ Umut Tümay Arslan, *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil: Yeşilçam'da Erkeklik ve Mazlumluk* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004), 49.

this sense, by keeping my primary focus on this specific point and addressing it as the central paradigm in Turkey's history, I aim to follow a cultural reading to analyze the ways in which Yeşilçam, as a cultural institution, articulates modernity. In order to reach all-inclusive images of a cultural portrayal, along with the historical and political information, I plan to remark the society as the very subject of the process and trace the effects inside the Yeşilçam stories in which the cultural mind effectively reveals itself. In focusing on Turkish popular cinema between 1960 and 1970, the very years that modernity's outcomes are visibly projected in social ground in a way that provokes a variety of dichotomies, I intend to offer a comprehensive cultural reading with a psychoanalytic and postcolonial approach. I purpose to discover broader issues of culture and how it fits into the larger scheme of meanings surrounding the cultural mind. Such a pursuit will necessarily take further and intensified analysis of both women and men. So, I will attempt to frame the issue along with the ways in which the opposition that is embodied between male and female protagonists.

1.1. Belatedness Between History Identity

Turkey's modernization experience has operated as the central paradigm in Turkish collective consciousness. It interpenetrates Turkish cultural identity within a wide range of fields, including ideas and ideologies at a social, historical, and cultural level, as well as the era of feelings, influencing people's desires, aspirations, anxieties and fears.⁵ Thus, the pursuit of an answer will lead us to scrutinize the details of Turkey's story of modernity, along with the outcomes that have divided the society into a series of dichotomies, namely, modern/non-modern, lower class/upper class, Eastern/Western and so on.

The literature accumulated on modernity is mostly a portrayal of an ambiguity, so is the concept itself. It can be said that studies on modernity roughly follow two main routes. The first group of studies mainly handles modernization as a historical phenomenon within a historical frame, highlighting developments and innovations, while the latter focuses on the effects of modernity in a social and cultural context by

⁵ Nurdan Gürbilek, "Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel" *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102:2/3, Spring/Summer 2003 (London: Duke University Press, 2003), 615.

investigating cultural fragments to follow the influences on social unconsciousness and cultural mind. In both approaches, it is quite difficult to study modernization as an academic subject because it lacks a clear starting point and its influences are too complex and widespread to follow. Specifically, it is much more difficult to analyze modernity in its broader sense regarding its influences on societies' identities, than it is to discuss it as a historical phenomenon.

Though it is not very easy to pin down a starting point for modernity, for the history of Turkey, the most generally accepted idea is that the origin of modernization can be traced back to the Tanzimat regulations era starting in the year 1839. The era witnessed a substantial effort on a variety of fields to change the Ottoman institutions in order to make them more akin to their European counterparts. Modernization and Westernization were presumed to be the same throughout the 19th century. And because they were thought of as inseparable, it is difficult to analyze them separately. The period ending with the collapse of the Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic has not been a historical break only, but has been and continues to be such a transformative and constitutive part of Turkey's social and cultural life in Turkey, as well as it is in the political and economic life. Together with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, Turkey entered a rapid and intense process of modernization that aimed to re-construct the society not only in terms of politics, but also socially and culturally.

An attempt to examine the modernization process within the frame of culture differs significantly from historical and technical formulations that identify modernity in terms of a finite and distinct set of pattern variables. The republican system intended to modernize the private sphere as well it plans to re-establish the political and economic life. This attempt meant a broad framework of discourses that regulate each individual's life, targeting every phase "...from the clothing of its citizens to the music they should listen to, from the type of leisure activity they would be engaged in, to the type of family relations they would have."⁶ The history of modernization

⁶ Dilek Kaya-Mutlu, "Between Tradition and Modernity: Yeşilçam Melodrama, its Stars, and Their Audiences" *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 46, No. 3, May 2010, 419.

and Westernization, extending back to the institutional reforms of the late Ottoman era, covered a long and intense aspects of regarding the social, cultural, and political life, such as education, law, clothing, music, architecture, literature, and the arts.

Turkey's apparently successful adoption of Western norms, styles, and institutions is often heralded and praised for being "one of the most successful models of a universally defined modernization process" and celebrated for being the "testimony to the viability of the project of modernity even in an overwhelmingly Muslim country."⁷ However, when it comes to examining the modernization process within the frame of culture, scholars have usually seen very little that is worth celebrating. In this aspect, modernity is discussed as "a state of being, rather than a stage of development."⁸ It is framed in terms of existence, rather than within the limits of historical development. Daryush Shayegan offers that the modernity "has never been confronted for what it is, objectively, in terms of its philosophic content, but always in terms of its traumatic impact on our traditions, our ways of living and thinking."⁹ In this regard, Turkey's modernization experience has usually been approached with a suspicious distance and been defined by a vast majority of scholars with negative conventions, mainly addressing it as being the results of a paradigmatic shift from one civilization to another which have caused various "wounds" in the cultural mind.¹⁰ In his remarkable work *19. Asır Türk Edebiyat Tarihi*, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar defines the modernization experience of Turkey with the words "shift in civilization."¹¹ After Tanpınar, mainly addressing his point, the period has been depicted with the terms "revolution of values," "shift in values," "disengagement with the self," "schizophrenia," "disruption," "division," "rupture and break in

⁷ Reşat Kasaba, "Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities" in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (ed.) Bozdoğan, Sibel and Kasaba, Reşat (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1997), 18.

⁸ Liah Greenfeld, "Modernity and Nationalism," in *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, ed. Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications), 233.

⁹ Daryush Shayegan: *Cultural Schizophrenia in Islamic Societies Confronting the West* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁰ Orhan Koçak describes this as being "wounded since the first moment", Daryush Shayegan defines as "wounded consciousness", and Umut Tümay Arslan names as "the wounds caused by the modernization experience inside the cultural mind."

¹¹ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19. Asır Türk Edebiyat Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2012)

cultural mind,"¹² and so on. Along with the interpretations with regard to the political and historical dimensions of the issue, its many critics have focused on the practical dimension of modernization, that is, how its very subjects, the society handle this shift. Since the first attempts of modernization, the modernization efforts have been accused of being "excessive" and "funny, wretched, and incomplete" and representatives of modern lifestyle have been criticized for being "snobs" or "dandies with foreign desires, with copied fantasies."¹³ One may see this mass of negative conventions as emotional and reflective, yet, each one needs further reading to uncover the seemingly sharp judgement, all address to the traumatic shifting of models generally discussed under the heading Westernization.

The origin and persistence of problems with regard to the modernization process in Turkey could be analyzed by following what Gregory Jusdanis conceptualizes as "belated modernity." Even though I will use the term "belatedness" as Jusdanis uses it, many scholars have defined the concept with various definitions in a way that points the same idea. Having been defined also as "incomplete modernization," "imposed modernity," "late modernity," "delayed modernity," or "weak modernity," the concept basically offers that the modernity does not function in the same way in non-Western countries as it does in those of their Western counterparts. Rather, the former group experiences the process in a way that imitates and duplicates Western models. The basic premise here is that modernity divides the world as if there were two strict categories: modern societies and the societies that do not yet have the characteristic traits of a modern country, namely, the non-modern ones. While on the one hand modernity presumes itself to be an equal experience among all world societies, on the other hand it subjects each one of those to a certain hierarchy in terms of time and space. It starts with building a chronological time difference between those who are "ahead" and those who stay "behind" through a scheme of segregation between modern vs. traditional, modern vs. non-modern civilized vs. barbarian, center vs. periphery. That makes it impossible to mention a symmetry and equality between Western and non-Western societies. Whereas Western countries

¹² Fatmagül Berktaş, *Tarihin Cinsiyeti* (İstanbul: Metis, 2003), 151.

¹³ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 600.

are taken as the presumed ideal of the modern model, the discourse for non-modern countries operates within the dictation of only one path toward modernization, a path that would bring together “traditional”, “non-modern” or “undeveloped” countries with the level of West.¹⁴ In this frame, non-Western countries do not become “modern”, yet, they become “modernized”, which means that they get articulated with “modernization”- which is the institutive substructure of modernity. That is, the performances they happen to follow do not function as historically contemporary practices; rather, they serve as compensation elements in order to close the distance that had been made by Western counterparts, before the non-Western duplicates.¹⁵

The idea of belatedness not only defines a historical frame by fixing upon an insignificant starting point, but also creates a placement for the actors by permanently placing them in certain positions according to one another. The idea does not actually centralize its focus on a time period. Instead, it operates a permanent hierarchy with the acceptance of being late in comparison with Europe, and continues to operate with an urge to close the distance, catch up with the position of West and, complete what is incomplete. Central, here, is the idea that modernity builds this hierarchy in a way that marks the non-Western societies as those who will remain incomplete, by way of creating the assumption that a perceived lack of modernity as a flaw. This does not only present the existing societal characteristics as a structural deficiency, it also constructs a depended and wounded relationship between the local self and the West from the very beginning.¹⁶ The reason why belatedly modernized societies are restricted to be “incomplete” is not that they deviate from the supposedly correct path, but that their positions are assigned to be measured according to their faithfulness to the Western prototypes.¹⁷

¹⁴ Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12.

¹⁵ Ahmet Çiğdem, “Türk Batılılaşması’nı Açıklayıcı Bir Kavram: Türk Başkalığı Batılılaşma, Modernite ve Modernizasyon,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Batıcılık* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2016), 68-69.

¹⁶ Nilüfer Göle, “Batı Dışı Modernlik: Kavram Üzerine” *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Batıcılık ve Modernleşme* (ed.) (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004); Jusdanis, Gregory: *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 8.

¹⁷ Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 8.

Jusdanis mentions that modernity can also be experienced “late” by Western countries, just as it is by non-Western ones. Yet he underlines that the central idea for the non-Western societies is that they encounter modernization in a way that occurs as a historical break, rather than a historical continuity, and jeopardizes their presence since their encounter with the modernization happens to be the encounter of “two antagonistic epistemological systems.”¹⁸ What is implied here is that this historical break does not simply represent a historical difference regarding the backgrounds, it signifies the confrontation of a whole set of differences between the subjects encompassing their social, economic and cultural heritage. Thus, the encounter becomes nothing but a clash of histories, cultures, values, and desires. The key issue here, which makes the encounter an experience of a clash, is the belated societies’ acknowledgement of the new superior codes, together with the acknowledgement of the position of their self as the secondary one in this picture. That is, the clash is not constructed in terms of an equal confrontation; rather, it intends to preserve the hierarchical configuration. Orhan Koçak defines the modernization experience of Turkey as “nothing but the acknowledgement of our belatedness.”¹⁹ The admission of one’s self as belated is firmly a result of a modern narrative. That is, the acknowledgement of one’s belatedness means the recreation of one’s self within a “modern” projection.

1.2. Postcolonial Psyche: “Hurt Inside the Mind”

Those who experience modernization as a state of belatedness are destined to remain on “the sidelines of history”²⁰ and their cultural identity is inevitably formed within the periphery of European intervention.²¹ The central premise that forms the division, thus, is centrally manifested as a problem of lack due to being a “belated” modern. That is, cultural identity is constructed upon the state of belatedness and operates within this very hierarchy, followed by the acknowledgement of a lack when

¹⁸ Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), 103.

¹⁹ Orhan Koçak, “Kaptırılmış İdeal: Mai ve Siyah Üzerine Psikanalitik Bir Deneme” *Toplum ve Bilim* 70, Güz 1996, 99.

²⁰ Daryush Shayegan, *Cultural Schizophrenia: Islamic Societies Confronting the West* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), xii.

²¹ Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture*, xi.

compared to the absolute superior model. This implies an inherent sense of lack, which covers “a system of thought that has come to accept its insufficiency before a modern one presuming to be superior, and a culture that has adopted an infantile role when confronted by foreign modern ideals.”²²

This is not restricted to the social or political only; rather, it operates in the selfhood, in the era of psychic as widely and effectively as it does in the society. The question of selfhood leads us to a broader framework for discussing belatedness. Belatedness functions as a state of mind, as a way of perception that forms the self as one who imagines oneself as “peripheral, provincial, underdeveloped, and inadequate” in front of a presumed superior.²³ This state of mind is not easy to deal with. It initially refers to a broad framework of relation between power, knowledge and subjection. In this study, having said that the selfhood will be further followed in cultural narrative, I will follow the ways how narratives essentially take part in the creation of collective identities and how it eventually/substantially orchestrate an ideological consensus.²⁴ Since I particularly aim to analyze the ways in which the selfhood expresses itself in cultural products, I start with understanding the basis in which the subject exist/is created. Here, I handle selfhood along two main axes. The first axis of the analysis is that the knowledge of the subject is created within the webs of a world, one that had already been *worlded* by the webs of power. The central focus is that the subject is born into a world of meaning which is initially the result of power and knowledge relations “that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge.”²⁵ Simply, the subject is nothing more than an “object of knowledge” which is constituted as a peripheral *subject* as a result of the effects of power.²⁶ This leads us to the second axis, in which I aim to analyze selfhood in the way it is created as a form of subjection, which initiates the subordination of the

²² Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 599.

²³ *Ibid*, 621.

²⁴ Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture*, xi

²⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 28.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8, no.4(1982): 778; Michel Foucault, *Power and Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 97.

subject. Foucault discusses what he conceptualizes as “subjectivization”²⁷ as the origin of our modern culture and defines the process of subjection as a cluster of modes by which human beings are subjected to a process of subjection. Subjection is a process in which the subjects are objectified and placed according to power relations and hierarchical positions.²⁸ This becomes essential to “the formation, persistence, and continuity of the subject” since it creates “a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity.”²⁹ That is, subjection does not only refer to a form of external pressure on the subject, but firmly constitutes one’s knowledge of one’s self:

There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.³⁰

It is plausible to say that this form of hierarchy is a result of the central premise that the knowledge regarding the selfhood, the identity, the culture, and the memory is crushed by a single, postcolonial constituent. Ravi Vasudevan, puts this sense of subordination at the center of Indian cinema by referring to what he conceptualizes as “postcolonial exploration” and highlights the construction of difference built as a matter of hierarchical distance: “ [This] subjects the construction of difference, whether between societies, cultural forms, or the use of technologies, to a relationship of power, between metropolis and colony, Western center and colonial margin.”³¹

Matsushiro Yoshimoto, as well, poses this sense of subordination “as a sense of lack” which he further explains as the central sense that “animates new nations, a sense that we are always going to be unable to catch up with those who were the original

²⁷ Foucault, *Power and Knowledge*, 779.

²⁸ Ibid, 780.

²⁹ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 3.

³⁰ Foucault, *Subject and Power*, 781.

³¹ Ravi Vasudevan, *Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 28.

creators of modernity.”³² That is, the subject is created as an object of comparison, that is substantially destined to follow a set of limitations regarding the identification set by power. In this sense, Foucault’s articulation of power and knowledge, along with his theory of subjection, has been key for Edward Said’s understanding of Orient and for further post-colonial studies. Said argues that the Orient is basically a creation, namely “Orientalized,” as he argues that the relationship between the Orient and the Occident implies a certain degrees of hegemony, and presumes the positional superiority of the West over Oriental backwardness.³³ This pictures a complex set of hegemony in which knowledge is constructed by the grand narrative of the West, in which the “world” has already been coded accordingly.³⁴ This is what Gayatri Spivak conceptualizes as “the worlding of the World”, which she articulates from Heidegger’s “The Origin of the Work of Art.”³⁵ The idea basically is that the construction of inferiority, namely, the subordination as the subjection is an operation of the “worlding.” The concept argues that the world is not just a place, yet, it is a world that is already *worlded* by power. Mahmut Mutman articulates Said’s term by highlighting what the “worlding” offers:

In Said’s definition, Orientalism is not simply a name for an academic field or a system of ideas but an historically specific *discursive move* that makes “an epistemological and ontological distinction between the West and East” Orientalism is thus the production or inscription of places and directions, a “worlding” in Gayatri Spivak’s terms.³⁶

Here, I make use of the analysis of the Foucault’s theory of subjectivity, along with Judith Butler’s articulation of the concept, which offers to consider subjectivity as a matter of construction, namely, *assujettissement* [subjectivation]. Both Foucault and Althusser agree that subjectivity is a result of a paradoxical form of power which initially concerns the construction of the identity.³⁷ That is, rather than evaluating the

³² Ibid, 18; Matsushiro Yoshimoto, “Melodrama, Postmodernism and Japanese Cinema,” in *Melodrama in Asian Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), 26.

³³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 5-7.

³⁴ Mahmut Mutman, “Pictures From Afar: Shooting the Middle East,” *Inscriptions* 1992/6, 3.

³⁵ Spivak, Gayatri: *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 115-228; Spivak, Gayatri: “Three Women’s Text and a Critique of Imperialism,” *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 12, No. 1, “Race,” Writing, and Difference (Autumn, 1985,) 243-254.

³⁶ Mutman, *Pictures From Afar*, 2.

³⁷ Althusser, in his conceptualization of “interpellation,” offers that the subject is an inevitable result of interpellation of the power’s voice that represents the dominant ideology of a given society.

power as an external pressure that dominates and oppresses the existing subjects, Foucault offers that power operates as an internal form of pressure, which gives shape to the subject by way of implicating the subordination as the initial instrument of that subject's very becoming. Judith Butler offers on this point, that power aims at the subjectivity and operates inside the era of psyche. Butler states that power regulates the psychic by placing the self on the basis of subordination, simply, it does not externally affect, but constitutes the subject's self-identity. She offers that the most insidious effect of the power operates at this point, in the specific way that it runs itself as the subordination of the subject, upon which the subjectivity is existentially created. In this model, power operates by way of imposing itself on subjects and weakening them until the subjects internalize the effect of the power inside the self within a sense of subordination. Here, the subject is subjected to two fundamental processes of construction simultaneously: one signifies the subordination process of the subject by the power, the other is the very process of becoming a subject itself.³⁸ How power operates in the era of psyche, that is, how the power initiates the self, is particularly noteworthy. This point takes us to Foucault's conceptualization of "subjection" along with Butler's articulation of the concept. That is, power initially operates inside the era of psychic in a way that the subject eventually speaks out the very formulation/relation of power and knowledge, of the multilayered relation between domination and subordination. The subject, narrative, identity will eventually and substantially echo the very result of a central imprisonment regarding the self-existence/self-knowledge.

I aim to save my approach from considering Yeşilçam melodramas simply as a project that is designated by the official discourse to represent modernization and its effects on individuals and society. Rather, I argue that melodramas address a whole set of social sub-consciousness that initially refers to the internalization of the subordination employed by the role that the modernization experience brings. I attempt to focus on not only the modern eye shapes the inferior subject, but also how the so-called inferior subject internalizes this very gaze regarding its selfhood.

³⁸ Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 1-30.

1.3. Melodrama: The Genre, the Language and the Memory

Since the very beginning of film making, there has been a predominant approach in film culture that mentions a film together with its closeness to reality. An audience's basic response towards a film is shaped according to how "real" the film feels. That is, we are either amazed by how "real" and "believable" a movie is, or, left unconvinced, we think, "this only happens in the movies, life is not that perfect off the screen." However, critical discussions in film studies prove that these two seemingly opposite responses on our watching experiences, indeed, projects real life either way. Tom Gunning offers that each movie is, by definition, a historical movie, in the sense that it provides historical evidence by visually displaying a certain segment from the past.³⁹ My main concern is, further than framing the melodramas within the limits of historical evidence, is to argue that each movie, even the ones we respond to with a sarcastic smile, thinking "this only happens in the movies," reflects a story with strong ties to social reality. In this sense, it has not been very long since the melodrama as a genre has started to be accepted as a serious object of study, rather than being evaluated as "romantic tearjerkers to stroke the emotional sensibilities of suburban housewives."⁴⁰

After decades of considering the genre a pejorative mode of production, as "tearjerkers" and "weepies", there seems to be relatively an agreement on melodrama's cultural significance among various scholars. What basically paved the way for melodrama to be a part of contemporary cultural analysis has been the emphasis on/exploration of the genre's ideological effectivity as an aesthetic form.⁴¹ Particularly, exploration of melodrama's psychoanalytic convergence has been noteworthy regarding the genre's social premise. Followed by the shared approach of considering the genre as a key concept in film discussion, melodrama is acknowledged as "a coherent aesthetic system, with a repertory of expressive

³⁹ Tom Gunning, "Making Sense of Film," *Making Sense of Evidence Series on History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web*, (2002) 2-3.

⁴⁰ Thomas Schatz cited in Gledhill, Christine: "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation" in C. Gledhill (ed), *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Essays on Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: BFI)

⁴¹ Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation" in *Home is Where the Heart is*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), 6.

features and devices that can be subjected to analysis-formal, sociological, and psychoanalytic.”⁴² For this study, it will constitute the basis of analysis to regard the melodrama “less a genre, than an imaginative mode”⁴³ that covers and reveals public imagination within its narrative.

An emphasis to articulate melodrama as an imaginative mode indicates the genre’s cultural importance in the way it operates as the representative of the cultural mind. Brooks discusses the cultural importance of melodrama in *Melodramatic Imagination* as the central premise in discussing the melodrama:

workers in different fields who analyzed the imaginative modes in which cultural forms express dominant social and psychological concerns sensed that the category of the melodramatic needed revival because it pointed to - as no other term quite could- a certain complex of obsessions and aesthetic choices central to our modernity.⁴⁴

The genre indicates more than only a random choice of narrating stories. It reflects an inherent state of mind/psyche attached to a central experience, of selfhood, of cultural identity, and of social imagination. Regarding melodrama’s ideological efficiency, Peter Brooks highlights melodrama as the one genre that poses the very central fact of the cultural mind. He offers that “the appeal of the melodramatic remains a central fact of our culture,” that is, how melodramas as popular narrative reflects the “sense of lack” which initially poses the state of mind that marks itself inferior in comparison to a superior model. That is, melodramas operate its peculiar modality as the initial reflection of the shared sentiment, concerns and anxieties in which a central experience is echoed. This means that melodramas reflect the undertone of the social consciousness as “the most socially self-conscious” genre, as put by Schatz.⁴⁵ Discussions regarding the genre’s operation within social subconsciousness/as a social form, primarily begin with the archeology of melodrama, that is, melodrama as a mode that is a specific result of modern intervention, namely,

⁴² Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), ix

⁴³ Ibid, vii

⁴⁴ Ibid, vii

⁴⁵ Thomas Schatz, “From Hollywood Genres: Film Genre and the Genre Film” in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 589.

bourgeois ideology. Ben Singer discusses the relation between melodrama and modernity and offers that melodrama is established on a ground of imagination that is surrounded by modernity's effects on the individual. He argues that melodrama should be evaluated "as a product and a reflection of modernity—of modernity's experiential qualities, its ideological fluctuations, its cultural anxieties, its intertextual crosscurrents, its social demographics, and its commercial practices."⁴⁶

The basic feature of melodramas has long been viewed as the genre's disconnection with real life, how a melodrama betrays reality by displaying stories of exaggerated evils, unexpected encounters, unconvincing last-minute rescues, and happy endings that are too good to be true. On the other hand, the use of excess remains the heart of melodramatic narrative, emphasizing the psychoanalytic imperatives in using the excessive *mise-en-scène* as a specific mode of narrative. Melodrama has been the most targeted genre, in this frame, that is put in the line of fire regarding its "loose" obedience to reality. So, how come the melodrama operates as such a substantial reflection of reality and what is this reality? What if a melodrama tells very much about a covered reality despite all the elements that we tend to regard as being "outside of real life"? Brooks puts that melodrama's relation to reality forms in an oblique way, that is, melodramas "are tensed towards the exploitation of expression beyond,"⁴⁷ and he argues that "a dramaturgy of hyperbole, excess, excitement, and "acting out" -in the psychoanalytic sense may be the essence of melodrama."⁴⁸

The key concept in discussing the use of excess in melodramatic narrative is repression, as it is predominantly discussed.⁴⁹ Critical inquiries in melodrama primarily suggest that melodrama is a specifically modern mode, arising from the loss of pre-Enlightenment values and symbolic forms in response to the psychic consequences of the bourgeois social order."⁵⁰ It initially addressed "the

⁴⁶ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 1.

⁴⁷ Peter Brooks, "The Melodramatic Imagination", ix.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, vii

⁴⁹ Gledhill, *The Melodramatic Field*, 30

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 29

fundamental unsettling of the sacred and of socio-political hierarchies, especially after the French Revolution” and “generated a mode of excess involving an emphasis on gesture, expressionist mise-en-scene, and a dramaturgy of coincidence and peripeteia.”⁵¹ It has been suggested that melodrama operates inside the era where realism tends to repress the central fact of the central issues of sexual difference and cultural identity and “refuses to content itself with the repressions, the tonings-down, the half articulations, the accommodations, and the disappointments of the real.”⁵² Put simply, melodrama is developed in a way that reinterprets and represents reality in its peculiar way. Gledhill marks the generational and gender conflict as melodrama’s specialty and notes these as precise issues that realism is designated to repress. He discusses how melodrama faces pressure in a way that re-interprets the social reality within its peculiar excessive narrative, that is, how melodramatic mise-en-scène deals with the impossibility of a so-called “realistically representation” and what is “unrepresentable”:

If the family melodrama’s speciality is generational and gender conflict, verisimilitude demands that the central issues of sexual difference and identity be “realistically” presented. But these are precisely the issues realism is designed to repress. Hence the syphoning of unrepresentable material into the excessive mise-en-scène which makes a work melodramatic. From this perspective,[...] the possibility that the “real” conditions of psychic and sexual identity might-as symptoms of a hysterical text- press too close to the surface and break the reassuring unity of classic realist narrative.⁵³

Melodrama narrates what “realist representation” is designated to repress: the very reality of socio-political/cultural hierarchies. What makes a work be identified as “melodramatic” is decoded within the genre’s way of transferring what is unrepresentable into an excessive mise-en-scène, thus creating a way to express it. Mulvey analyzes this particular use of narrative as melodrama’s peculiarity which helps the films “save themselves from belonging blindly to the bourgeois ideology which produced them.”⁵⁴ She offers that melodramatic narrative, by means of textual analysis, should deeper be discussed within the frame of genre’s ideological

⁵¹ Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public*, 18.

⁵² Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 13.

⁵³ Gledhill, “The Melodramatic Field”, 9

⁵⁴ Laura Mulvey, “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama,” in *Home is Where the Heart is: Studies in Melodrama and teh Woman’s Film* ed.Christine Gledhill (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), 56.

coherence.⁵⁵ That is, melodramas generate a mode of excess involving excessive emphasis on the body and create a bodily representation of a central form of our cultural lives. At this point, I will go back to Gledhill who refers to melodrama as “a hysterical text,” and deepen my emphasis on the hysteria and the body. Gledhill employs the term hysteria from Brooks, and defines melodramatic narrative as one in which “the social must be expressed as the personal.”⁵⁶ He explains the excessiveness of the melodramatic body by referring to a moment when the bodies behave nearly hysterically, the very moment “in which the repressed affect is represented on the body.”⁵⁷ He underlines that what is referred to as “the hysterical body” represents “our lives” that he suggest that “however trivial and constricted-on the line.”⁵⁸ What Brooks highlights is that the body in melodrama, along with its excessive implications, is the body that is captured by modern intervention. The representation of the body becomes the text itself:

It is a pure image of victimization, and of the body wholly seized by affective meaning, of message converted onto the body so forcefully and totally that the body has ceased to function in its normal postures and gestures, to become nothing but text, nothing but the place of representation.⁵⁹

Melodrama offers remarkable insight into the psychic conflicts of the subjects in the way the “hystericized body” functions as the one “that has become the place for the inscription of highly emotional messages that cannot be written elsewhere, and cannot be articulated verbally.”⁶⁰

1.3.1. Melodramatic Engagement

It would be wrong to declare melodrama as a genre that creates a revolutionary narrative that has been able to stand up against social difference and all the pressure laid by social circumstances. Rather, I aim to focus on audiences’ engagement with melodrama as the most inherent relation between melodrama and social reality. Despite melodrama’s limitations, Brooks writes:

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Gledhill, *The Melodramatic Field*, 29.

⁵⁷ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, xi.

⁵⁸ Ibid, x.

⁵⁹ Ibid, xii.

⁶⁰ Ibid, xi.

[It] is an exceptionally supple and adaptable mode that can do things for us that other genres and modes can't. Perhaps melodrama alone is adequate to contemporary psychic affect. It has the flexibility, the multifariousness, to dramatize and to explicate life in imaginative forms that transgress the traditional generic constraints, and the traditional demarcations of high culture from popular entertainment. The study of melodrama has come to be an engagement with an inescapable and central form of our cultural lives.⁶¹

In the years 1960s and 1970s, Yeşilçam was enjoying its golden years. Yet, in the meantime, melodramas were criticized for being shallow, fabricated, and repetitive, accused of imitating other cinemas, and condemned as being incapable of creating a language for a national cinema with universal concerns.⁶² It is, today, one of the fundamental understandings of Yeşilçam, that the narrative form of Yeşilçam melodramas follow a certain path that comprises the repetition of specific, typical figures, dialogues, themes and stories. The films place the same clichés, similar, stereotyped characters, who are predominantly pictured in an excessive way. Despite all the criticism, back then and today, there was a high demand for these films from the public, which is, going to the movie theatres, and watching, and even responding to, all those clichés on the screen was one of the most common mass entertainment of the time.⁶³

Ravi Vasudevan raises the question of audiences' remarkable demand for melodramas and remarks how the large-scale consumption of the melodramas offer valuable insights for the social and cultural pattern in which these melodramas extensively operate, in order to understand how they continued to be produced, to be demanded by people, while on the other hand they were being judged with artistic concerns. For the cinemas of the "Third World,"⁶⁴ Ravi Vasudevan offers that melodramas articulate various methods of translating, transforming, and mirroring the West, in a way that recreates, rearticulates their own identity and culture. This way of articulation of melodramas addresses the politics of cultural identity and social

⁶¹ Ibid, xii.

⁶² Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 266.

⁶³ Serpil Kirel. *Yeşilçam Öykü Sineması* (İstanbul: Babil Kitabevi, 2005), 277-292.

⁶⁴ Vasudevan uses the term "third cinema" in order to imply a definition of cinemas with local concerns, namely, those beside Hollywood. He offers that recent discussions in film studies regarding cinema and national identity, by and large, clustered around the concept of a "third cinema." He films' referential emphasis on "national issues." in *Melodramatic Public*

transformation in a colonial and postcolonial world.⁶⁵ Yeşilçam, as well as other cinemas, articulates its own melodramatic modality in order to project its own cultural mode. Melodrama operates less as a genre than as an imaginative mode and expressive repertory regarding Yeşilçam texts. It has not been employed not only by the films classified under the genre of melodrama, but also applied to other genres such as comedies, thrillers, and political films.⁶⁶ Savaş Arslan argues that Yeşilçam melodramas present a melodramatic modality that “enmeshes elements of a melodramatic narration with an authentic practice of realism” and he offers to inquire melodramatic modality help understanding how Yeşilçam constructed its filmic texts.⁶⁷

Melodrama’s coherence with the reality is most importantly constructed regarding the audience’s attachment to melodramas. There have always been various interpretations about why melodrama has been one of the most popular genres, one always in great demand. Yet, I am interested in melodrama as a matter of large consumption, and more as a matter of psychic engagement of the audiences with the stories. I will use Ravi Vasudevan’s term “melodramatic engagement” and consider melodramas with a particular focus on audiences’ attachment to the films.

Melodramatic engagement does not simply signify that “people loved watching melodramas”; rather, it implies a further state of psychic attachment regarding the spectators’ central experience of belatedness. It implies large-scale convergences between the audiences’ selfhood and the how the films are designated. I aim to show that the film production reveals two simultaneous things. The first, is the similarity between people’s lives back then and the stories of Yeşilçam. The other, which is far more layered, is that cultural material is always shaped within the very frame that the culture itself is dealing with. That is, melodrama is not only something in which audiences find similarities with their own stories, but they are stories initially shaped

⁶⁵ Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public*, 102.

⁶⁶ Barış Kılıçbay and Emine İnciroğlu-Onaran, “Interrupted Happiness: Class Boundaries and the Impossible Love in Turkish Melodrama”, 236.

⁶⁷ Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17-19.

by such shared sentiments. Vasudevan points out the initial fact that melodramas are produced in and the product of specific historical and political circumstances. He highlights how style, form, and spectator positioning are determinative for the axis of melodramatic engagement:

My concern is with a certain public dimension to melodrama as a fictional form, in terms of how character is constituted publicly, and the implications such a publicness has for the way film audiences are addressed. I will consider the narrative conditions which allow for articulation of melodrama as a dynamic, expressive vehicle of meaning; in particular, the articulation of personalized contexts of home, family, and other fields of primary attachment, with public registers. In my understanding, the public field is constituted both by formal and informal structures of power, justice, social identity, and social mobility. In my premise this relationship provides for the expressive energies of the form, and is differently calibrated and organized in specific historical and political circumstances.⁶⁸

Being one of the fundamental and indispensable mode of expression in modern society, melodramas works “as a cultural form that has been crucial in shaping public sensibilities.”⁶⁹ I offer that melodramas offer a simultaneous process of both production and consumption. As Sirman and Akinerdem discuss, melodramas are celebrated because of their similarity and familiarity via creating an intersection between the realities in people’s lives and reflections on the screen. Also, melodrama’s treatment of a moral norm in narration is important.⁷⁰ The social norms presented on the screen are not a complete abstraction from the practiced ones. They are the products of the very same codifying systems of the society. Hence, the deconstruction of a norm with respect to morality, as an emphasis in the story line of a melodrama, attracts attention. This is because people want to see and comprehend how the resolution of a societal disruption is shown by a new norm construction, even if it is only in a film. Therefore, this connection implies many dynamics in the society both about production and consumption of melodrama, as well as interests and cultural codes and norms, that is, about the very “nature” of the social and its constituents, in terms of representation and reflection.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 17.

⁶⁹ Kılıçbay, İnciroğlu-Onaran, *Interrupted Happiness*, 236.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

1.4. Gender and Identification

In her book *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, Kaja Silverman notes that one of the basics of the psychoanalytical understanding of identification, is that the idea of "...identification, in any ways, follows gender."⁷¹

Constantly exposed to various, even contradictory implications regarding sex and gender, there is a scholarly agreement that we deal with sexual difference as an initial matter of hierarchy concerning the relation between sexual difference and gender and identification. Female subjectivity and politics regarding female representation have always been a controversial matter. It is by no means new that women are subjected to various politics not just by Yeşilçam, but by the diversity of agents in art, literature, and cinema. Kaja Silverman precedes and highlights the positional authority of the male in cinematic narrative, demonstrating that cinematic representation is substantially designated to project "the male lack onto female characters in the guise of anatomical deficiency and discursive inadequacy." Kaja Silverman and Laura Mulvey agree that movies follow a very specific trajectory in cinematic narrative, that is, the male lack is basically projected through what is defined as a lack in the female body. "The identification of woman with lack functions to cover over the absent real and the fore-closed site of production- losses which are incompatible with the 'phallic function' in relation to which the male subject is defined."⁷² In this sense, the necessary analyses for this study will follow gender as well. Since the thesis attempts to understand an initial concern of identity through a theme with a specific focus on a heterosexual love story, it necessitates to address sexual difference, cultural representation and subjectivity.

The movies I address here handle a specific theme and follow a specific pattern that is a typical melodramatic mode in Yeşilçam melodramas. In a commonly central theme, the story begins with the disapproval of the female protagonists, continues with the decision of a specific form of self-transformation, and concludes with a

⁷¹ Kaja Silverman. *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 3.

⁷² Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 4.

success. In this study, I have chosen to adopt a specific focus on the women because of the ways that the image of a woman could potentially be the signifier of a society's story. In almost every society and era, concerns in the wake of remarkable changes are symbolically projected in the realm of gender, specifically in the establishment of woman's identity.⁷³ Most especially for this reason, I aim to keep my particular focus on women from the eye of the men in a way that counts each gender as a constructed identity, related to the series of experiences and results to be discussed under the heading of modernization. A dual perspective that takes man into account in attempting to create a comprehensive reading of woman is more than necessary, because it is perfectly clear that man and woman are not isolated entities but co-existing members of their genders' material and cultural history in such a way that constantly create one another as a part and a result of the interaction and boundaries between and beneath them. This is the reason why each and every attempt to analyze woman necessarily has to problematize man, and vice versa.⁷⁴

1.5. Procedural Overview

In this study, I will analyze seventeen movies under the categorization of three groups. The first group will constitute the center of the analysis with the six in the following: *Düğün Gecesi/Wedding Night*(1966), *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*(1968), *Fakir Kızı Leyla/Leyla the Poor Girl*(1969), *Küçük Hanımefendi/Little Lady*(1970), *Kezban Paris'te/Kezban is in Paris*(1971), *Güllü/Güllü* (1972) and *Dağdan İnme/Came Down from the Mountains*(1973). But, the scope of the study will not be limited to these six. Though they do not follow the same pattern within the exact same steps, I will examine two more groups, including nine more movies. The second group, consisting of *Tatlı Meleğim/My Sweet Angel*(1970), *Kıvalı Yapıncak/Golden Red Grape*(1969), *Kezban Roma'da/ Kezban in Rome*(1970), and *Feride/Feride*(1971), closely share the same plot as the first six, with the same main concerns and figures, but slightly differ with regard to various details of the storytelling. The last group will include *Vahşi Gelin/ The Wild Bride*(1965), *Kezban/Kezban*(1968), *Sarmaşık Gülleri/Rambler*

⁷³ Fatmagül Berktaş, "Yeni Kimlik Arayışı, Eski Cinsel Dualizm: Peyami Safa'nın Romanlarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet," *Kadın Araştırmaları Dergisi* 9 (2006), 3.

⁷⁴ Fatmagül Berktaş, *Tarihin Cinsiyeti*, (İstanbul: Metis, 2003), 151.

Roses(1968), *Hayat Sevince Güzel/Life is Beautiful with Love*(1971), *Tatlı Dillim/My Sweet Lover*(1972), *Analar Ölmez/Mothers do not Die*(1976). The movies in this group differ from those in the former two in a relatively visible way with regard to their context, narrative and storytelling. They do not follow the exact same pattern, yet, still cover our main focus at the center. Although I will not analyze this group in detail, I still intend to take them into account by including them inside the analysis where they are relevant.

I find it important to keep the scope of this study as wide as possible, I therefore, focus on three groups, through my primary focus is on the first group. In this way, I hope to enhance the study by all the movies that commonly cover the same concern, rather than eliminating some of them according to an exact, single pattern.

In my analysis, I will particularly keep my focus on commonly repeated elements in order to follow the key aspects of the main theme. I will analyze what these points address with regard to the main focus of study. The broad semantic field of the contradiction between the man and the woman in the movies, being the representatives of two cultural poles, includes in the following:

Recurrent plot elements in the chosen melodramas:

The non-modern, lower-class girl and the modern, upper-class boy happen to come together, with a glimpse of faith. The girl falls in love with the boy, but the boy ignores her. In revenge, the girl transforms and becomes the woman that the boy expects her to be, in terms of modern codes and conducts. In what follows, the boy falls in love with her and has to face a series of tests in order to gain the girl's trust and love again. Then, the boy learns his lesson, redeems himself and the two reunites to live happily ever after.

Recurrent male figures:

They are sons of wealthy and traditional families, but they commonly are not reconciled with their roots of being a member of traditional families. They are well educated, mostly graduated from the schools in Europe, but do not usually work;

rather, they live as an heir (with an exception in *Dağdan İnme*, where the male character is the director of a fashion company). They all carry all the features of being a snob. In the end, they all learn their lesson and gain the women's love and trust.

Recurrent female figures:

They basically represent non-modern, traditional values. They usually fall into one of two types: poor, weak, and submissive, or wild and strong tomboys. In both types, they commonly respectful, good-hearted, traditional girls. In a recurrent plot, the woman happens to meet a modern man from the upper class and falls in love with him. Having fallen in love, she really encounters the upper class. In what follows, each woman is denigrated by the man, for not being proper in terms of modern codes. So the woman decides to take her revenge, transform, and make the man fall in love with herself. She becomes successful, plays with the man and subjects him to various tests, games and makes the man beg for her love. Then, the man learns his lesson, she forgives the man and the two reunite.

What makes these repeated elements valuable for the thesis is that they basically establish a certain dichotomy in the narrative. That is, these figures, each addressing a critical point in national identity, are used as antagonistic elements in a way that projects the main break in Turkey's modernization. The story of each movie is built around the tension of the relational dichotomy between the East and the West. Following the contradiction established through certain repeated elements, I will ask questions on how the contradiction between the genders is established and defined in a way that projects the main issued of Turkey's modernity. In relation with the analysis of the contradiction between genders, I will also try to discuss what each figure of the dichotomy addresses.

Each movie's story will be summarized in the introduction chapter. Further and deeper analysis will be given in the following chapters through selected dialogues, figures, typologies and cases. Deeper inquiry will take the form of narrative analysis, through which I intend to trace the storyline and narration with respect to the gender constructions in the given movies. As important as it is to follow the traces of

modernization through stories, visibility in the movies is equally important, since the movies do not only work as written scripts, but implement a visual narrative. So, I will take into account the visual elements in the stories in order to prevent the analysis from simply being an analysis on a written script, but rather, on scripts that should be viewed with an inclusive gaze to comprehend what visual references signify.

1.6. Outline of Analysis

I have organized the thesis into four main chapters. The introduction chapter provides information about the framework, including the highlights regarding the main concepts, the method I will follow, the summary of each movie, and a series of semantic schemes that demonstrate the topic of my concern.

In the second chapter, I will lead a detailed discussion on Turkey's modernization experience, focusing on certain conceptualizations and relational explanations of melodrama; using psychoanalysis within a postcolonial approach. Here, mainly framing the work within the relational concepts of psychoanalysis, I present and provide the necessary groundwork for Turkey's modernity. I aim to follow the main discussions, emphasizing the explanations, interpretations, and critiques of belatedness. Then, I present and provide necessary explanations on how cultural opposition is established as projected to man and woman. My main concern in this sense is to discuss the main figures and acts, through which the fundamental contradictions with regard to the East and West are defined. I try to explore the depths of what it means to be an Eastern or a Western, with an attempt to understand how this opposition is established and represented in a way that project a clear clash of values between the man and the woman.

The next chapter will offer a critical analysis of the male protagonists through a discussion of snobbism. I will start with laying out a general framework regarding the snob as an archetype, and question the veiled details of his identity, in the way that it hides particular references of a belated modern. Then, I will focus on the critical representation of the snob in the movies, aiming to understand what Yeşilçam narrative pursue by representing the snob in an excessiveness.

In the last chapter, I will discuss the woman figures thoroughly, mainly focusing on the decision, the process and the aftermath of transformation. My main concern in this chapter is to analyze the female subjectivity in the movies, focusing on the self-transformation of the female protagonists, in relation to the questions of woman's position regarding the modernity, selfhood and nationhood.



CHAPTER 2

YEŞİLÇAM AS A NATION'S STORY WITHIN THE FRAME OF BELATED MODERNITY

Peter Brooks formulates the tableau in melodrama by highlighting the genre's specific use of signs that provides the "...spectator the opportunity to see meanings represented, emotions and moral states rendered in clear visible ways."⁷⁵ Yeşilçam melodramas effectively operate this formulation within their narrative by a pattern of figures which have long been considered "clichés". These clichés construct archetypes that reflect the fundamental stresses of the historical and cultural circumstances of their period. The fundamental stress was a sense of cultural consciousness regarding an initial constituent, that is, the experience of modernity as an experience of belatedness. The initial encounter with modernity resulted in a cataract inside society in a form of division between the modern and the non-modern. Yeşilçam stories operate on this contested ground of the battle between figures who have been able to catch up with "modern", and those who have stayed behind. The movies primarily reflect a stereotypical segregation between the protagonists within a broad frame encompassing a whole set of differences pictured by characters' lifestyles, spaces, and surroundings and present them as representatives of either a modern or a non-modern lifestyle. Stories are surrounded by the archetypes of rich girls and poor boys who belong in "separate worlds": braided peasant girls with shalwars against spoilt girls from the "big city" with mini-skirts and high heels; crazy parties, whiskeys, luxury cars, and immoral blondes against idealist, hardworking girls with no fancy clothes.

In this chapter, I will focus on this dichotomy by centering the concept of belatedness not as an historical matter, but as a matter of identity that concerns the selfhood. That is, I will probe into a series of questions regarding the ways in which belatedness operates in Yeşilçam melodramas and the ways it serves as a valuable cultural

⁷⁵ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 62.

representative. In doing so, I aim to understand what it means to be late in terms of filmic narrative.

The central here will be that the narrative is basically intervened with this single postcolonial intervention and is imprisoned to operate as the reflective of a cultural psyche that is under the influence of the very experience. Films project an initial state of mind that creates itself within the acknowledgement of its lack; which will inevitably be echoed in every segments of culture. In this regard, I will center upon the question of how cultural status is reflected in the process of production and the consumption of a single cultural product, namely, Yeşilçam melodramas. I will argue that all Yeşilçam melodramas deal with anxieties and concerns regarding what the modernization experience brings, and that all in all, the result that creates modernity as a state of desire.

2.1. Construction of the Difference: Power and Knowledge

The initial result of Turkey's encounter with the modernization/Westernization, "subjects the construction of the difference whether between societies, cultural forms, or the use of technologies, to a relationship of power."⁷⁶ This relationship is one that is built between the Western center and the adapted margin, which is formed with an initial state of lack for the peripheral margin. Yeşilçam melodramas, regardless of how the plot may vary in various senses, the central plot is always the difference between the protagonists. They cover a particular story of "difference," with a particular emphasis on the impossible togetherness of two characters who belong to "separate worlds". They start with an impossibility, followed by a conflict and resolved with a happy reunion. The difference and the impossibility in the relationship between the protagonists do not only refer to a sense of random difference, rather, to a hierarchical violence of man over woman, and of the modern over the traditional. The difference implied by "belonging in separate worlds" involves to a broad framework of relations between one that is ahead and one that stays behind. That initially carries the fact that the knowledge that defines the figures

⁷⁶ Vasudevan, *Melodramatic Public*, 28.

within a certain frame as such, refers to a broader framework of relation between power and knowledge. The central here is an initial concern of power. It regards a substantial degree of asymmetric hegemony inside which the knowledge regarding the inferior is continuously produced and fundamentally enacted by power.

The basic use of Yeşilçam's narrative is that the movies present each protagonist with a particular focus on their difference in comparison to one another. That is to say, protagonists are marked as strangers not only towards one another, but also towards spaces of one another's. This dual design enables the spectator to perceive each of the protagonist by way of their "difference" in a way that codes them within their space that constructs the gap between them. This is particularly significant in the way it helps the narrative to follow the central dichotomy, namely, the "difference" between the protagonists and their spaces. Neziha Erdoğan observes that Yeşilçam repeatedly returns to the variations on the "girl meets boy" plot.⁷⁷ In the movies I address, the story begins when the girl meets the boy, which happens either by coincidence or by obligation where the couple is compelled to have an arranged marriage. From the first instance, the tableau is constructed in a way that each protagonist is defined within the boundaries they belong to. This way, the narrative portrays a definition of what "modern" and "non-modern" mean, drawn from a broad range of things from everyday life practices to moral values; and with a central focus of the difference between protagonists. Male protagonists in the movies appear as representative figures of a modern, Western life style, and upper class snobbery, whereas the females represent pre-modern, rural, lower-class figures. All in all, narrative operates within a construct and emphasizes a certain degree of difference, with a specific focus on what the female protagonists do not have in comparison to the male protagonists.

In what follows, I will try to analyze the ways in which the films of our concern construct this dichotomy by means of cinematic narrative, I will argue that Yeşilçam construct this difference as a state of domination and subordination.

⁷⁷ Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 266.

2.1.1. Representing the Cultural Dichotomy: Subordination and Domination

In the films of our concern, the narrative follows some specific paths in order to make the difference between the protagonists both visually and textually visible, and to mark the first encounter as a significant transformative point.

The first of the paths is to picture the boy in the context of the girl's space in a way that poses a displacement, that is, the boy is pictured not in the city, but in the village, where he meets the girl. As in *Güllü*, *Dağdan İnme*, *Tatlı Dillim*, *Analar Ölmez*, *Kezban Paris'te* and *Kezban Roma'da*, each male protagonist is pictures within the frame of a displacement. In this plot, the boy finds himself in the village because of a coincidence, an accident, or a planned visit. Here, the difference does not seem to represent a crisis between them. On the contrary, the boy behaves with friendship and sincerity, while the girl behaves with kindness and hospitality. The other form of this encounter, again, takes place in the village, but this case involves the impellent of an arranged married, mostly arranged by the couple's families as a matter of heritage. In this plot, the difference turns into a crisis when the peasant girl crosses the line towards the boy's boundaries, which is stigmatized by the boy's saying: "Is this the girl you deem worthy for me?"⁷⁸ This point, the boy feels a potential violation towards the female protagonist, due to the hierarchy in which he is supposedly occupies a superior place. In the former case, if the girl is a kind peasant who hosts the boy for his short visit, or who helps him recover after having a huge accident, that means each of the subjects stays "loyal" to the roles, as they are meant to. Yet, if the case differs in a way that damages the boy, such as by considering the girl as his wife, meaning his equal, the response of the boy also changes. He totally rejects the marriage, because he does not approve of the girl and insults her for being a "peasant," that is, for not behaving properly according to the codes of modern manners and conduct. In *Fakir Kızı Leyla/Leyla the Poor Girl*, Fikret travels back to his family's village to visit her mother after a long time. Here, he sees Leyla, who grew up on the farm with Fikret when they were children, and has been like a daughter to Fikret's mother. Yet he does not remember her. After his mother's reminder of who

⁷⁸ Referring to his family who happen to encourage him to marry the girl: "*Bana eşliğe layık gördüğünüz kız bu mu?*"

she is, he kindly responds: "Praise be! You have grown up so much, look how beautiful you are!" The response is not meant to be taken as a compliment toward Leyla as a woman, but as a kind gesture for the beloved servant of his mother. A while after, his mother asks Fikret to go with her on a walk to have a little conversation. She declares that she no longer wants her son to be alone and a stray in the city life, and advises him to get married and settle down:

Fikret's mother: I found the perfect girl for you, she is like a flower. Leyla!

Fikret: Leyla? No, this can't be possible!

Fikret's mother: Why not? Is she ugly?

Fikret: No, she is not ugly.

Fikret's mother: So, what is it then? Is she stupid?

Fikret: Well, I don't know. Maybe she is not stupid, either.

Fikret's mother: If it's about her purity, you can't even question that.

Fikret: All right, you may be right about all of these. But Leyla is no match for me.

Fikret's mother: Why is that? Tell me what is wrong, does she lack?

Fikret: How can I take a peasant girl to İstanbul and introduce her to my social environment?

Fikret's mother: What you are doing right now is to deny your own origin. What about you? Who are you exactly? Aren't you a son of two peasants? Aren't your parents a couple of peasants?

Fikret: Yes, but this is a different case.

Here, the scene basically points out the Fikret's denial of his peasant roots and he is reminded of those roots by an elder generation. The scene poses both the denial and the recognition, which is signified by the mother. In the first scene of encounter, Fikret behaves like a gentleman towards Leyla, because in the scene, both Leyla and Fikret remain inside the boundaries where each of them belongs. That is, until the idea of marriage is brought up, there is nothing to bother Fikret. But when the hierarchy is violated, the difference becomes visible. To Fikret, the difference between Fikret and Leyla is difficult to define, but nevertheless a reality that needs to be acknowledged. He admits that Leyla is a perfect girl, as long as she is the servant of his mother. However, he also admits that "they are no match" because Leyla is not a girl who is proper and qualified enough that Fikret can willingly "take to İstanbul and introduce to his environment" (figures 2.1&2.2).



Figure 2.1. A Scene from Fakir Kızı Leyla (1969)



Figure 2.2. A Scene from Fakir Kızı Leyla (1969)

Fikret can no longer deny his mother's offer, because his share of his father's inheritance was imperiled. A few days after their wedding, Leyla and Fikret come back to Fikret's house in Istanbul. Inside the house, they are greeted by a welcome party for Fikret, which does not provide a warm welcome for Leyla. First, Fikret's lover Suzan thinks that Fikret has brought Leyla from the village as a servant. She thinks that Fikret has made "a good choice" since a peasant girl would be a perfect choice to hire for helping around the house rather than hiring someone in the big city. Fikret clarifies this misunderstanding by introducing her to his friends: "She is not a servant; she is my wife." He bows his head in shame, there enters a nervous music, and guests start to whisper, "How is this possible?", "His wife?", "Is this girl his wife?" What is surprising here is not that Fikret comes back as a married man, but the girl he has married. Suzan's voice becomes clear inside the crowd in a way that represents everyone in the room: "I can't believe this. How could you get married to a peasant girl?" (Figures 3&4)



Figure 2.3. A Scene from *Fakir Kızı Leyla* (1969)



Figure 2.4. A Scene from *Fakir Kızı Leyla* (1969)

Similarly, in *Feride*, Engin is forced to get married to his peasant relative by his father who wants his son to have a “decent” life. After he meets Feride, Engin complains to his father: “So, this is the girl you deem worthy for me? A braided, ugly, ordinary girl from the town.” Despite how unwilling he is, he has to get married. After the wedding, Engin’s friends arrange a party for him, without knowing that he would come back with a bride. All of his friends have a big surprise when they see Feride, and Engin’s lover grumbles: “How could you get married to an ordinary, average peasant girl?” (Figures 2.5 & 2.6)



Figure 2.5. A Scene from *Feride* (1971)



Figure 2.6. A Scene from *Feride* (1971)

In *Dağdan İnme/Down the Mountains* (Metin Erksan, 1973) Elif finds Vedat severely injured after his plane crashes on a mountain nearby Elif’s village, which might be evaluated as the accidental return of the male protagonist to his origins. She takes great care of Vedat to help him recover. In the meantime, Elif and Vedat spend time together, share things and build a friendship. One day, Vedat secretly watches Elif

having a bath. When Elif's mother and sister see him peeking on Elif, they force him to marry her, because this marriage would be the only way he can compensate the dishonor he has caused. The day after their wedding, Vedat leaves a letter, saying that they cannot stay married, and returns to Istanbul. Leaving some money as the cost of her virginity, he writes: "Elif, we have to break up. We belong to different worlds. You can't keep pace with the crazy life in the big city, and I can't be a part of this ordinary, monotone life in your village." In this way, the village and the city are coded with a group of conventions, mainly in a way that pictures the city, the life in the city, and its people as the agents of a modern life, and represent the village as the opposite. Thus, when Elif comes to Istanbul to find Vedat and take her revenge, the difference between Elif and the city becomes clearly visible for the audience. The sequence serves all the figures of controversy in order to sharpen the contrast by placing Elif, as the agent of a non-modern, peasant lifestyle, inside the city, among all the agents of a modern life. Elif walks the big streets of Istanbul with her traditional peasant clothes; the scene includes taxis, the Bosphorus Bridge, highways, and cars in the frame, and, places Elif at the center of our attention (figures 2.7-2.10). It is plausible to remark at this point that the material and moral distinction between the characters is mainly established around the concept of space. The discourse of difference is held mainly with a spatial concern, by framing the characters as attached to the space, and spaces as attached to a particular world. Savaş Arslan asserts that melodramas of the 1960s and 1970s use spatial tropes to make social and cultural segregation visible.⁷⁹ Hence, the terms rural/peasant, and city/urban do not only refer to geographical boundaries, but address specific phases with regard to the articulation of "different worlds," addressing significant positions taken in the process of modernization.



Figure 2.7. A Scene from *Dağdan İnme* (1973)

⁷⁹ Arslan, *Center vs Periphery*, 6.



Figure 2.8. A Scene from Dağdan İnme (1973)



Figure 2.9. A Scene from Dağdan İnme (1973)



Figure 2.10. A Scene from Dağdan İnme (1973)

The life in the big city, namely, İstanbul, is constructed as an enchanting center for the periphery, one where upper-class people live in wealth and luxury. In *Feride*, Feride describes life in Istanbul in a letter she writes to her sisters: “Runways, nightclubs, casinos, the very trendiest dances. All these make me feel like I am in a fairy tale.” In the next sequence, her sisters are seen as they read the letter. Fascinated by the portrayal Feride draws, each sighs with naive envy: “What a beautiful, what a perfect life!” Central here is the way Feride describes the city life in order to prove to her sisters that she is happy, that is, because all the “opportunities” she describes would be impossible for her to experience if she stayed back in her village. On the other hand, the audience is very aware that Feride has been experiencing nothing but unhappiness towards the “blessings” of city life. This can be interpreted as not only a portrayal of how the city life is meant to be perceived by the non-modern, lower-class figures, but also as a narrative tool for the audiences to question the representation of the city life as an object of desire. That is, portraying Feride with an emphasis on her happiness inside all the glittering opportunities of the

city is designed to create a series of questions about the audiences' fantasies regarding the city (figures 2.11 and 2.12).



Figure 2.11. A Scene from Feride (1971)



Figure 2.12. A Scene from Feride (1971)

In *Düğün Gecesi/Wedding Night*, a rich, famous singer, Zeki (Zeki Müren), and a “tomboy” villager, Zeynep (Türkan Şoray), are forced into a marriage that is arranged by their parents. Zeki unwillingly accepts the marriage and travels to the village where Zeynep lives to visit his bride. When Zeynep visits Zeki in his house so that they can get to know each other better, Zeynep looks at some photos on Zeki's desk and asks questions about what she sees. Both the frame captures and the dialogues in the sequences represent the difference between the protagonists not only in terms of psychical and spatial concerns but also of a general understanding of moral values (Figure 2.13).



Figure 2.13 A Scene from Düğün Gecesi (1966)

Zeynep: Who are these people?

Zeki: My friends from college.

Zeynep: How can women become friends with men?

Zeki: They can, in the civilized world.

Zeynep: I can't understand this.

Zeki: Would you like a cigarette?

Zeynep: No! Women do not smoke. Who are these people?

Zeki: Some of my friends in Europe. It was taken at a beauty contest.

Zeynep: Do you call these ones beautiful? They are like shaved chickens, they are shameless!

Zeki: They are modern. I mean... Never mind, you can't understand.

Zeynep: Can they cook? Can they cook pastry? Can they dig cows' dung, can they milk the cows? With the help of God, I can knock down ten of them by myself.

The other of those paths is to portray the girl inside the city. The most common use of narrative construction is to picture the girl as left in the middle of a party scene. There, the difference between the characters is rendered visible in a single frame that highlights a variety of figures in a way that sharpens and augments the tension between the characters. In this case, the girl faces sharp disapproval and humiliation by the people at the party and her identity is made an object of mockery. The girl is simply attached to a picture in which she does not fit. Her clothes, her manners, each and every aspect attached to her identity becomes an object of mockery.



Figure 2.14 A scene from Feride (1971)

In all these party scenes, the difference is projected within a large scale that covers all the physical and spatial agents as well as each figure is placed, also, within moral values.



Figure 2.15 A scene from Kezban (1968)



Figure 2.16. A scene from Kezban (1968)

In *Kezban*, Kezban stands in front of a crowd of people who are having a party on the night Kezban comes to Istanbul from a small village in Bursa. She wears a coat that extends below her knees, a skirt that is a little longer than that and a scarf tied under her chin, while on the other hand, the people in the party are dressed very differently. All the girls at the party have fancy mini-skirts, fashionable high heels, couiffoured their hair and make-up. There, Kezban stands still, under the humiliating gaze of these strangers who look down at her. In a little while, a young man steps up and starts to make fun of her clothes. She tries to seem strong, yet she is deeply hurt (figures 2.15 and 2.16). The next day, she joins a boat tour with the same people and faces the same attitude one more time. Again, they make fun of Kezban for her clothes. One of the girls on the boat yells at Kezban: “You should look at those clothes on you, before you dare to speak with me. You, a peasant!” Kezban responses: “There is nothing wrong with being a peasant. I am proud of being a peasant. I do not see anything awkward in my clothes to be ashamed of. I think you are the awkward ones.” Both times, she keeps her dignity, is hurt, meaning that even though she seems to stand strong, she feels, if not “awkward”, then at least that there is something different that she does not yet to know but needs to deal with (figures 2.17 and 2.18).



Figure 2.17. A scene from *Kezban* (1968)



Figure 2.18. A scene from *Kezban* (1968)

In *Fakir Kızı Leyla/Leyla the Poor Girl*, Leyla wakes up late at night because of the noise from a party Fikret and his friends are having. She looks at the room, the guests, all that she feels a complete stranger towards. One of the guests asks Leyla for a dance, and Leyla answers with confusion and diffidence: “I don’t know how to dance.” When Suzan, the lover of Fikret, hears this dialogue, she steps up towards Leyla, and starts talking to her. With a humiliating laughter, she says:

Suzan: “No way! I can’t believe this. How can the wife of Fikret not know how to dance? Is it possible? Shame, indeed, a big shame. It is a big lack.”

Leyla: Well, it is funny. I haven't felt this as a lack before.

Suzan: That's because you use to live in the village. But you are in the city now. You need to get used to these customs. First, you need to tidy up your attire. And then, you need to learn how to behave and talk properly in a hall. You have no right to come out to public and embarrass Fikret. If you are not capable of getting accustomed to Fikret's life, then do not go out of your room and embarrass him.

Leyla: Do you really know what it means to be embarrassed? It is quite funny for a woman like you to talk about embrassement. You spend all day and all night with a married man, you don't even feel ashamed of kissing him in front of his house. I really wonder, don't you have a place to sleep? Do you always stay up all night in the houses of married men? (Figures 2.19 and 2.20)



Figure 2.19. A scene from *Fakir Kızı Leyla* (1969)



Figure 2.20. A scene from *Fakir Kızı Leyla* (1969)

In many conversations similar to this, it is observed that the characters' representative of the modern/urban lifestyle always insult the non-modern/rural character for their lack of proper appearance or manners. This common attitude provides us various information on both how the urban, upper-class characters are constructed, and how peasant girls like Leyla are expected to be, from this perspective. Similarly, in *Feride*, Feride's husband takes her to a fancy restaurant together with his friends. Feride does not know which utensils to use. She seems shy and confused when all the other people around the table start eating. Engin's lover realizes this, and in an insulting manner, she says: "I think she could not choose which utensils to use. Those are not the ones for eating the fish, honey. You need to use these ones. [*She picks and shows the proper pair.*] You can't use those. People will

call you mannerless. Polite people do what the etiquette requires.” Another day, Feride prepares dinner for Engin. Again, Engin’s lover warns: “Oh sweetheart, it is so old fashioned to cook at home.”

Party scenes are particularly useful in the way they serve the common Yeşilçam narrative which attributes negative conventions to the modern/urban/Western lifestyle, it sides with the non-modern/rural/Eastern lifestyle by praising it for its simplicity, modesty and morality. Dilek Kaya analyzes that Yeşilçam melodramas constructed an image of “modern” that

...symbolized the “ills” of Western modernity, namely hedonism, opulence, immorality, artificiality, selfishness, and even intellectualism. The urban upper class were represented through such clichés as opulent homes, private cars, fashionable dress, house parties, discos, and whisky as well as through writing a novel or having an interest in Western music.

This image of the modern and Western man is contrasted with an image of the non-modern woman, who represents such characteristics as innocence, simplicity, modesty, sensibility, sincerity, loyalty, and morality. In these scenes, Yeşilçam always gives a chance for the girl to speak up and teach the upper class snob a lesson on moral values.

2.1.2. Ambivalence of Yeşilçam Discourse: How Movies Strengthen the Hierarchy Between Figures and Hypocritical Celebration of the Female Identity

Yeşilçam melodramas produce a predominantly common discourse that establishes a certain degree of contradiction between traditional and modern/Western lifestyles. While the upper class is portrayed with a series of negative conventions, films almost always side with the “good” rural lower-class characters by celebrating nostalgia for the traditional. However, Yeşilçam uses an ambivalent discourse, inside which the traditional upper class is assigned to create a “new sensibility” towards Westernization, that is, by creating illusions of social harmony and exploring the possibilities of achieving a compromise between tradition and modernity.⁸⁰ In this part, I aim to analyze how this ambivalent discourse of Yeşilçam creates a sense of

⁸⁰ Kaya-Mutlu, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 418-420.

desire for modernization, and therefore, a sense of self-recognition particularly for the traditional lower class.

2.1.2.1. Contradiction Regarding the Placement of Female Identity: Which One Is the Girls? Perfectly Pure or Initially Lack?

In contrast to the male protagonists, female protagonists are portrayed with a series of coherently positive conventions, that are predominantly articulated in an associated in a way that celebrates non-modern life and nostalgia for the traditional past. Female protagonists are sincere, helpful, cheerful, honorable, honest, devoted, and hardworking lower-class girls, who are commonly poor, uneducated, and unsuccessful at adapting to the modern lifestyle and behaving in a “modern” and “cultured” manner. The common trait among them is that they all represent pure goodness and innocence, that is, being uninfluenced by the evil that is associated with the modernized upper-class.

They are portrayed as the embodied representation of goodness and kindness, but most importantly, of “maintaining purity.” That is, evil, in the ways it is associated with the modernized upper-class, is unable to exert its destructive influence on these girls and cannot harm who they essentially are. They are portrayed as if they belong to a truly different world, which is presented as the village.⁸¹ The village is portrayed as a space where the evil impact of the city has not penetrated, and so too are the girls, as members of that space. On the contrary to the male protagonists, they have not lost their “original self.” It is highlighted that what protects them from the social degeneration that is caused by the influences of modernization is their loyal commitment to traditional virtues and their distance from the effects modernization. In this regard, the most extreme portrayal is Türkan Şoray’s character Ayşegül in *Vahşi Gelin*. Ayşegül’s mother leaves Ayşegül and her father in order to pursue an acting career in the big city, that is, to follow her dreams. After he has been abandoned by his wife, Ayşegül’s father moves into a small cabin far away from the city center. He

⁸¹ Though the space is predominantly a village, it is sometimes the outskirts neighbourhoods inside the big city. That is, the spaces of the lower class, namely, anywhere far away from the modern city life. are associated within the same sense.

raises Ayşegül in an isolated life away from all humans, whom he believes to be nothing but pure evil. He hates “the city life and its insincere crowd” since he has lost faith in all humans after the enormous disappointment left by his wife. The city and its people explicitly mean insincerity and evil for him, which is why he moves to a village, where the people are not spoiled and selfish, but sincere and friendly. Ayşegül grows up without any contact with the outside world. Her knowledge about the outer world is at the level of an encyclopedia information from the books that his father has chosen for her. One day, a young man named Metin moves the neighborhood. He is the first stranger Ayşegül meets, that is, her first real connection with the outside world she has been wondering about for a long time. The first time she sees him, she talks in an unsophisticated way, since she lacks the required manner she needs when talking to a complete stranger. She starts to tell about herself:

I do not know how to be sad or happy. My dad taught me everything I needed. For example, to read, to write. We read many books with my father. I try to replace people there myself; I cannot do it any way. I'd love to see the world. I read that the women there are very nice. And men are nice, as you are.

The first time she speaks to a person from the outside world, the scene underlines Ayşegül's alienation in front of Metin, a man from the city. The scene centers Ayşegül as a figure of comparison in front of Metin, with a central focus on her lack of knowledge and manners. She is a stranger to “real life”; thus, everything about the outside world surprises and astonishes her. Every new thing she learns about the world arouses her curiosity and urges her to learn more. As extreme as her representation is, Ayşegül embodies a common archetype of the female protagonists in the movies of our concern. It can be said that each of the female protagonists represents different degrees of the similar state of excess, as a variation of Ayşegül, in the sense that they have grown up as equally isolated from the concepts of city life. Also, all the rest, like Ayşegül, encounter a similar impasse as the central conflict in their lives: the boy and his world. The fundamental breaking point for the girls' lives is commonly the moment where they encounter with boys, which equally means the moment they meet the city life and its requirements, including the expectations of a modern lifestyle. City life constantly reminds the girls that they belong to a different

world, while it is portrayed as a battlefield for the girls where they have to fight, in order to survive, and claim an identity.

The discourse constructed upon the women is not limited to the emphasis on her ethical strength; it also points out the woman's capability to heal. Furthermore, the narrative aims to centralize the idea that the woman is the only one who is capable of healing the evil in the man in the modern society, thanks to all the potential she has inside her heart. In *Hayat Sevince Güzel*, Ayşe is raised in the village by her parents, who are village teachers. She is taught to be "happy all the time, and thankful for what she has been given." After her parents die, she has to move to the big city to live with her aunt, who is frustrated with her sister for marrying a village teacher. Before leaving the village, Ayşe tells her teacher how difficult it is to leave a place she loves so much. Her teacher encourages Ayşe by reminding what she should hold onto: "Ayşe, there are people in all over the world who need love and help. You will help them with the goodness and happiness inside, that you spread around like a light around you." As taught by her parents, and assigned by her teacher, Ayşe heals everyone around her. Throughout the story, we watch how she intervenes in a series of unpleasant cases and relations in the neighbourhood one by one, and miraculously succeed to heal each one of them. She cheers up the grumpy old woman who has not smiled at anyone for years, she protects the little boy abandoned by his father from the insults of people calling him as "bastard," and she glues back the boy's family by softening the father's heart. She even works her magic on her cold-hearted aunt and helps her and the doctor to have a happy marriage. She listens to everyone's sorrows one by one and finds a remedy for each one of them.

Most important of all, she succeeds at making Ali love her and they end up happy together. In the end, thanks to Ayşe, everyone in the neighbourhood is "healed." Together with everyone, Ayşe also gains the happiness she deserves. Ayşe is a central founding figure in the film with her kindness. Without her, the people around the neighbourhood would not know how to be happy and helpful. She becomes the only one who can bring people together around a shared value.

Moving on from the case of Ayşe, each of the female protagonists in the movies of our concern is portrayed in the same way. Central here is the idea that, the most significant mission assigned to the girls is to heal the evil around them with the power coming from the goodness inside them, which they each “spread around like a light.” This, for sure, works perfectly in parallel with Yeşilçam’s traditional narrative that, from the first instant, sides with the good, traditional, powerless lower class, against the evil it associates with the upper class and social power.⁸²

As much as the men in the movies are portrayed as evil, it works as the exact opposite for the women. So much that it is sometimes quite difficult for the spectator to believe that a person *can* be this perfect. On the one hand, the girls are praised and celebrated for their traditional virtues, along with a portrayal that reminds the spectator of a long lost memory, a level of goodness and purity, which the city people could not manage to preserve, but these girls could. On the other hand, the perfectness of the girls is shadowed by a social reality, with a series of ways established by the narrative. That is, with a closer look, the narrative takes us to a multifaceted picture, inside which, operates a deeper narrative behind the representation of the perfectness the girls. That is, as far as I see, the films reveal the dominant gaze towards the woman, which highlights her as she lacks several crucial necessities, that is, how much she is in need of change. While on the one hand, all the girls are appraised for being “clean,” on the other hand, one crucial point is highlighted in the text: that these girls have failed in adapting to the current conditions and expectations of the time.

As I mentioned above, the films follow a narrative line in which all the girls, either naive peasants, or tough tomboys are the representatives of a life that is “not degenerated.” There is an apparent overemphasis on girls’ personal qualities and moral values, in a way that celebrates the way they live, and praises who they are. At this point, I will start with how the overemphasis on girls’ perfectness actually refers to a hypocritical discourse in the ways it is shadowed by an ambivalent narrative.

⁸² Kılıçbay and İncirlioğlu-Onaran, *Interrupted Happiness*, 244.

First of all, from the very beginning of the films, each of the girls is purposefully portrayed to be the loved ones of the films. In various ways, female protagonists are designed to be loved and praised by the spectators by means of both their moral qualities, and the way they live. In the opening scene of *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, we watch Naciye beating another woman in jail, yet we are quickly convinced that she is, indeed, not someone who is just an aggressive convict, but someone who fights against injustice. That is why this first scene, in which Naciye beats another convict, is followed with a declaration of her, screaming, "Do you think that you will be in charge of in this jail?" In this way, it is stated that Naciye is not beating someone for no reason, but for justice. In the following days in jail, she leads revolts against the bad food service, and becomes the ringleader against maltreating of the guardians; that is, she fights for everyone's rights. When she is threatened by the warden of the jail with solitary confinement, she does not hesitate to oppose him, clearly stating that he is free to do whatever he wants, but she "will do the right thing after all." Soon after, the other women in jail describe Naciye as "a tough girl, just like a man. She might be a little over-aggressive sometimes, but, she has a heart of gold." These are quickly followed by the information that she is not guilty but wrongly condemned to the death sentence in a way that stresses that Naciye, indeed, cannot be guilty. Leyla, as well, in *Tatlı Meleğim* is the most hardworking and passionate employee at her company. She is severely disgusted by her boss, and she is known by her family and by those in the firm for her "indifference towards the mirrors." She is also the "first secretary who has ever come to the work on time," and who actually works, rather than flirting with the bosses. Emine in *Tatlı Dilim* is not only a great teacher who values her students more than anyone; she is also the most beloved person in the village, who carefully takes care of any problems of anyone.

Along with this, it is also highlighted as an important message that these girls might be undervalued as "worthless peasants" in the eyes of the boys, but, that does not necessarily mean they are not valuable. Quite the opposite, they are actually so valuable that the boys, who have been victimized by social degeneration, cannot succeed to treat the girls in the way the girls truly deserve. It is stressed that this is a matter of perception of the values, which, at first, seemingly operate against the

men. In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, Murat comes to where Naciye lives in order to talk and convince her to agree to divorce. He needs to get divorced from Naciye so that he can marry Princess Nazlışah, who is actually Naciye. Yet, Naciye refuses to talk to Murat and he has to convince Sabahat, instead. Sabahat, Naciye's beloved neighbour and mentor, defends Naciye and their marriage, while she discredits the Princess Nazlışah. Murat, desperately in love with the Princess, cannot stand Sabahat's words and strongly opposes by stressing that "The princess is not ordinary. She is a princess." Sabahat answers: "You are being unfair. So is Naciye. She is *our* princess." Thus, in a further scene, Naciye asks Engin the same question in a way that provokes this point. While Engin is amazed by the beauty of the Princess, he compliments on the beauty of her eyes. Naciye asks: "What if I were not a princess? What if these eyes, maybe even more beautiful ones, did belong to a slum chick? Would you still be so sweet and warm to her?" Though the question is left unanswered by Engin, both Naciye and the audience very well know that Engin would in no way be as interested in her as he is to Nazlışah.

Along with the cases where the girls are praised directly for their personal qualities without any figure of comparison, it is also a frequently used technique to picture the girls in comparison with a degenerated model, which is usually the male protagonist himself, or the lovers of the male protagonists. In this way, by centering a figure of degeneration as the comparison element, the narrative is able to portray the girl as the preferred alternative to the degenerated model. In *Kezban Paris'te*, Kezban secretly eardrops to Erol, whom she is desperately in love with, and Nazan talking about life, love, and marriage, and sharing with each other what they expect from life. Erol complains about how "bored he is of this noisy city life," and shares with Nazan that he dreams about living in "a small house away from the city, in a quiet neighbourhood that has a garden with kids in it. And, a great love, for sure." Nazan, on the other hand, does not share Erol's excitement towards this dream. She believes that "a woman desires to dress beautifully, to hang out and travel, and wish to be liked and desired by the people around her." While Kezban is secretly listening to their conversation, the servant Kazım, who has been like an uncle to Kezban, also watches the three of them. He intervenes to calm Kezban: "Richness is truly defined

by the wealth in people's hearts, in their spirits, my darling, not by money. Look, Nazan will neither be happy with her husband nor be happy herself. It is because she does not know how to love people.” Here, Nazan is, by no means, underlined for her autonomous self by means of her personal misdeed or dissatisfaction, but highlighted for her archetypical representation of a social model, who is degenerated because of the effects of modernization. Up until this point, it is plausible to say that the narrative operates perfectly in favor of the girls. Yet, further analysis will show that it follows a complex frame of ambivalence. First, all the praise remain from the perspective of the lower class. The entirety of the identity, in the ways it will be projected as the perfectly transforming of the girls, one that will have the approval of the upper class, become possible only after she successfully completes the self-transformation. Second, there is a dominant discourse that flows underneath the text besides the overpraising of girls’ lives: the emphasis on woman’s weakness. As much as the girls are portrayed as golden-hearted angels, they are, more than that, highlighted as those who are actually too fragile to stand up alone, who are always in danger of getting hurt, and therefore, who need the constant protection of a merciful guardian.

The association of the women with weakness is, also, by no means unique to the movies of our concern. Manhood has long been associated with power, independence, and violence, while womanhood is considered in relation to submission and dependency,⁸³ since the predominant perception towards the woman has been to evaluate her as not an autonomous entity, but a self-sacrificing supplementary figure.⁸⁴ Nilgün Abisel offers that the emphasis on the weakness of the female characters is designed in an attempt to determine this very characteristic as the constitutive element of the women in Yeşilçam narratives. That is, by saying that a woman is, by nature, weak and desperate, the narrative is designated to appreciate the girl as long as they succeed to value their weakness as submission. Even the most powerful, most independent and tough tomboys in the films of our concern, those who have never bowed to anyone, do bow to the male protagonists’

⁸³ Arslan, *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil: Yeşilçam’da Erkeklik ve Mazlumluk*, 61.

⁸⁴ Bertay, Fatmagül: *Tarihin Cinsiyeti* (İstanbul: Metis, 2003), 157.

injustice and expectations. If necessary, they beg the men to not to leave them and choose to be patient with even the vilest treatment at their hands. Here, it is strengthened that what values the girls, is that they succeed to stay patient towards all the mistreatment of the boys, so that “she might be awarded little emotional victories towards the men, and, finally the crown of marriage, for sure, as a result of her patience.”⁸⁵ This emphasis on women’s weakness is of particular importance with regard to the hierarchical position of the women, that is, vis-à-vis those people towards whom the girl is positioned as “weak” inside the narrative. At this very point, along with the frame that signifies how much the girls are in need of protection, therefore, of an intervention for a change, there also operates a narrative that determines the prescription for the girls to follow while they experience their self-transformation. For this, the narrative is accompanied by the acknowledgement of the lower class towards the upper-class necessities of modern lifestyle, and, an embracing of the concepts of modern-upper codes and conduct. The girls and the servants are highlighted as being the members of the same class, namely, belonging in the “same world.” The girls are usually told to eat their meals in the kitchen with servants; they happen to spend their time in the same space as them. In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, Engin’s lover feels uncomfortable after Naciye refuses to leave and settles in the house. Engin comforts her by saying that she stays in the same house with him, but “where she deserves to be, in the kitchen with the servants.” In *Kımalı Yapıncak*, Kımalı Yapıncak and Avni are told to sleep in the same room, since such two poor lower-class people could not have a private life to protect from one another. In this period, the girls are loved and embraced by the staff member of the mansions. Furthermore, they are sincerely supported by the staff before, during and after the process of self-transformation. The maltreatment towards the girls is internalized by the servants, as a concern of empathy. In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, one of the servants criticized her boss for his mistreating Naciye and supports her by saying: “You are one of us, you are our person. It means that this insult is done to us.” In *Kezban Roma’da*, Kezban is told to settle in the loft by her uncle’s wife; the servants collectively work to clean and prepare the room for Kezban with their limited sources, to please and

⁸⁵ Abisel, Nilgün: *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar* (İstanbul: Phoneix, 2006), 137.

cheer her. While all these efforts, on the one hand are warming our hearts with their sincerity, on the other hand, they are depicted as inadequate, powerless, and inconclusive struggles of a kind but poor and inadequate lower class.

Servants, in this regard, function as the subjects of a buffer zone. They are cognizant of the upper-class practices, modern life necessities, and the fact that the girls are weak and incomplete in this portrayal since they belong in the same world. It is particularly notable that the lower class embraces these codes as a class consciousness. The lower class is typically defined with archetypical definitions of the upper-class in Yeşilçam narrative, but it is notable that members of the lower class itself tend to define themselves within the very frame. In *Hayat Sevince Güzel*, Ayşe's aunt tells her servant Peyker to prepare a room, which is in a pretty bad condition for Ayşe. Peyker, feeling ashamed for having prepared the worst room of the mansion, tells Ayşe that she wished she could do better than that. Ayşe comforts her: "You should have seen my room in the village. This room is a room of a palace for me in comparison with that one." They are, within their own gaze, "wretched people in the suburbs," "with very little power," as well as they are for the upper class.

In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, there is even a case where the servant has embraced the upper-class gaze so much that he attempts to teach the female protagonist a lesson on class-consciousness. Naciye is told to sleep in the loft by Murat, in an attempt to humiliate her, so that she might give up on insisting on her staying in the same house as Murat. She gets fascinated when she sees that the loft is "almost like a palace when compared to the houses in her neighbourhood." What is more interesting than Naciye's astonishment is the servant's reply to her, aiming to bring her into line: "You see, so is the difference among people. Now, do you understand why the gentleman treated you this way?" There are plenty of similar cases that reveal the common discourse among the lower-class that underrate themselves in comparison to the upper class, not necessarily with arrogance, but within the same critical point as the upper class have. In *Kezban Roma'da*, Kezban is invited by her uncle to a ball, where the male protagonist Erol will also attend. Kezban, feeling happy, prepares the most beautiful dress she has, yet she is not aware of the fact that her dress is not fancy

enough to wear to a ball. The servants do not want to hurt her by telling her that, but they feel worried since “this dress is so not proper for the ball. Poor girl, she will be embarrassed by all those rich people.” In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, Naciye is also invited to a formal party with her husband Engin, yet, she does not need to dress and prepare exclusively. The servant asks why “she has not dressed yet” because her appearance does not suit a formal party. She warns Naciye sincerely, telling her that: “You are not doing the right thing. I just do not want you to be humiliated in front of people. I am sure that all the other women dress up like a flower.” The central operation here is that the narrative operates as nothing but a reproduction mechanism of the hierarchical asymmetry between the woman as the inferior, and the man, as the superior.

At this point, it is important to mention *Kadın Değil Baş Belası* for its famous party scene and its aftermath. Murat has to get married in order to use the inheritance that passes to him. So, the family lawyer arranges a fake marriage between Murat and Naciye, who is sentenced to death. Soon after, Naciye is proved innocent and acquitted of the death sentence. Even though Murat does not want to stay married, Naciye, feeling desperately in love, tries to convince him to love her. One day, Murat’s lover arranges a party for Naciye and convinces her to attend. She intends to let Naciye behave like she always does, so that she will disgrace herself in front of all the guests. Naciye does not care how different and awkward she looks in comparison to the others in the party (figure 2.21). She talks and behaves as she always does, and Murat gets frustrated and takes Naciye out of the party. He starts to yell:

Murat: “Did you have to speak as you are in Kasımpaşa? Do you know how important those people are?”

Naciye: “I don’t care whoever they are! I’m the daughter of a launderer Hanife. What did I do to that made you feel ashamed? Did I damage your honor in any way? Did I do anything flirtatious to the men like all the other women in the room? Sure, you are right, I should have been like one of those fancy ladies with their painted faces. I should have been with the men, pretending to be dancing. I should have been living a lie, this is what you expect, what you deserve. I am honest and straightforward. I am not a rented person like you are!”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ In Turkish: “Bana ne, kimlerse kimler! Biz de çamaşırcı Hanife’nin kızıyız. Ne yaptım seni rezil edecek? Namusuna toz mu kondurdum? Öteki kadınlar gibi başka heriflere kaş göz mü sarkıttım? Başka



Figure 2.21. A scene from *Kadın Değil Baş Belası* (1968)

In the first instance, the discourse that Yeşilçam follows seems to side with the good-hearted, non-modern, traditional girls, and to criticize the modern figures for their illicit attributes. It seems as though Yeşilçam sides with the “non-modern” in comparison to the “modern” character. Yet the way melodramas operate within the narrative is an ambivalent one. First, Yeşilçam creates portrayals of what “modern” and “non-modern” are. To construct a narrative based upon the oppositions between tradition and modernity operates within “aegis of an ideology of modernity” since the meaning of both modern and non-modern are ideological constructions.⁸⁷ The narrative creates the “modern” always as an excessive figure, and keeps its main focus on how the upper class practices modernity in a “degenerate” way. Nurdan Gürbilek names this as the “mockery of the dandy” and analyzes this exaggerated use of narrative as “...an aspect of social control toward those not obeying communitarian norms, those deaf to people wearing shalwars and veils. It was a social control aiming to cast out the excessively Westernized elite in charge of modernization.”⁸⁸ This way, while on the one hand, it creates a critical ground for modernization, on the other hand, it reproduces the modernity as an inevitable social reality, in a way that accepts the necessity of a transformative agenda of a society that experiences an on-going modernization process. Dilek Kaya explicitly puts it as follows:

Overall, Yeşilçam melodramas constructed modernity as a desirable state, as a process that should be experienced, but one that required the remedial intervention of rural lower classes and their traditional ‘virtues’ and

erkeklerin kolunda dans polemiyle aşna fişne mi yaptım? Ama haklısın, size boyalı parlak elbiseli madiden karılar lazım. Yalan dolan lazım. Bizim özümüz sütlü be biz senin gibi para çocuğu değiliz!”

⁸⁷Madhav Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Ravi Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema*, (Himalayana: Permanent Black, 2010), 17.

⁸⁸ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 609.

'spirituality' in order to avoid social degeneration. In the end, urban upper-class characters end up with a 'new sensibility' under the influence of rural lower-class characters. In this respect, it could be argued that while constructing upward class mobility as a social utopia, Yeşilçam melodramas ideologically displace class conflict through cooperation between rural lower and urban upper classes. Thus, Yeşilçam melodramas create illusions of social harmony by exploring the possibilities of achieving a compromise between tradition and modernity.⁸⁹

2.1.3. Politics of Self-Recognition: Conceding of One's Own Inadequacy

So, what is the result of all this ambivalent narrative? At this point, I offer to keep my central focus on the common operation of the narrative that establishes a pre-determination towards female subjectivity in a way that generates the girls as subjects of subordination. In the movies of our concern, it is plausible to assert that female protagonists initially deal with a relevant sense of subordination as a part of their identity. In Yeşilçam melodramas, the conflictual relation between power and subordination is predominantly formulated through the class conflict between the protagonists, namely, their belonging in separate worlds. In our case, it finds ground through the construction of the gender, in the ways each gender represents one side of the dichotomy of modern upper class and traditional lower class. Here, an encounter with the male protagonists necessarily brings a sense of class-consciousness to the female protagonists, which functions as a particularly constitutive aspect of their self-recognition.

In this regard, women's subjectivity follows two constitutive axes: the first is the simultaneous feeling of inferiority, deficiency, and embarrassment that stem from the sense of subordination, and the other is the desire to be recognized and preferred in the eye of the superior. Here, the gaze of the man becomes the fundamental signifier that shapes the woman's knowledge of her self, centrally as a sense of embarrassment. For one who is coherently confident that she does not have anything to be ashamed of, should have nothing to be ashamed of. That is why it is plausible to say that the fundamental feeling that accompanies the embarrassment is acceptance, that is, the acknowledgement of the fact that the man might be right

⁸⁹ Kaya-Mutlu, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 420.

about what he says. At the very center of the woman's self-consciousness, there settles the sense of embarrassment, which is enacted by the initial subordination of the female characters, which is effectively strengthened by the narrative. The fundamental and final feeling that the narrative poses is to create the male protagonists as the inevitable masters and to reproduce their superiority towards the female by way of reminding us of the hierarchical structure of the relation between the two. In *Analar Ölmez*, Kenan rapes Kezban after he gets drunk in a wedding in Kezban's village. When he learns that he has a child from that night, he comes back to take his son to the big city of Istanbul.



Figure 2.22. A scene from *Analar Ölmez* (1976)



Figure 2.23. A scene from *Analar Ölmez* (1976)

In a very confident way, he tells Kezban “if she really cares about her son's future, then she has to let him take the child.” While Kezban is desperately begging him to take her, too, he strongly opposes, telling her that she “will go to waste in the big city,” that she will “fade away, just like a flower pulled off from its branch.” Kezban precisely knows her position before Kenan:

[She cries and begs Kenan] “Who am I to allow? You are a master. You do anything you wish. I am not your woman; I am your slave. I am not asking for anything but to be together with my son. I am only begging you to not to tear us apart.”

In the end, Kezban apologizes for her “ignorance” and is convinced to give Sezer to his father. As dramatic as the scene is portrayed, the central feeling projected is that Kezban has made a huge sacrifice for her son since she *knows* that Kenan is “doing what he is supposed to do” and she is not the one to “ask for permission” (figures 2.22 and 2.23). This is simply because Kezban considers Kenan her “master” and his son’s “mighty father.” When she bids farewell to Kenan and his son, she is convinced that she has done the right thing for her son by letting him go with his son, as a mother is expected:

[In front of the car, *Kezban holds her son for the last time before his father takes him.*]

Kezban: “You are going away with your father, my beloved son. Your father is taking you, your mighty father. I am so grateful that he accepted you as his son. Now, you will live in the big city like a lord. [*She turns to Kenan*] Please, tell him that I am dead. It is better to have a dead mother than to have a mannerless, ignorant one.”

After years, Sezer learns that his mother is not dead, but is separated from him by his father. When he travels to the village to find Kezban and take her to Istanbul, she does not accept: “No way! I am an ignorant peasant. If I were good enough, do you think your father would not have me as his wife? Do you think that your father is a bad man? Your father has done what he needed to. He has done the right thing, the good thing.” It is notable here, that Kezban narrates her own story to Sezer, as surrounded by all the agents of subordination. On the subject of how insidious the subordination works inside the psyche, Judith Butler mentions the way that narrative works when one tells her story. When Kezban remembers her own story as if she is not the one who experienced it but the one who narrates it, she recreates herself as a mere production of subordination. As Butler puts it:

The subject loses itself to tell the story of itself, but in telling the story of itself seeks to give an account of what the narrative function has already made plain. What does it mean, then, that the subject, defended by some as a presupposition of agency, is also understood to be an effect of subjection.⁹⁰

Kezban tells nothing but what she sincerely believes. It is plausible to say that the story is neither a fiction nor a lie, but an indicator of how the agency of Kezban is condemned to operate within the terms of subordination.

⁹⁰ Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, 11.

Similarly, Kezban in *Kezban Roma'da* acknowledges her aunt and her cousin to be right, after they declared that Kezban could not come to the party with them, since “she does not know how to talk and behave in a party with a group of kind people,” adding that “they cannot introduce her as their relative and disgrace themselves.” Kezban, on the other hand, does not feel angry, rather, she feels submissive, along with the feeling of embarrassment: “They did not find me worthy to take with them. Maybe they were right. How could they take me with that dress?” Leyla in *Fakir Kızı Leyla* also knows that she does not have enough quality to be a decent wife for “a man like Fikret,” regardless of how much she loves him: “I do love Fikret so much, but it does not mean anything since he hates me. He is right; we belong in separate worlds. I have worked very hard to win his heart, but I could not be successful. I have been taught in another way to make a man happy. What can I do? It is beyond my capacity to be the woman he wants. I knew that an ordinary peasant girl like me could not be a decent wife for a man like Fikret. Here, the state that is referred to as “a man like Fikret” places Leyla as a figure of comparison, one that works a matter of capacity, which incites Leyla to question her self-sufficiency.

Overall, women’s self-recognition is stigmatized with a central sense of subordination that jeopardizes their identity by encouraging the female protagonists to internalize that “they do not fit in” the man’s world, and moreover, that they are not good enough to be a part of that world.

2.1.3.1. How Female Identity is Jeopardized in Mirror Centered Scenes: “Has she never looked at the mirror?”

There are three scenes in the movies of our concerns, in which the female protagonists stand in front of the mirror and face themselves. In all three scenes, there are mirrors physically used and women are seen through the mirror. Here, mirror scenes represent a state confrontation in woman’s self-recognition in the way that the sense of subordination that surrounds her identity, is at its most vivid and inherent. I aim to analyze the mirror scenes in *Küçük Hanımefendi*, *Tatlı Meleğim*, and *Güllü*, in which the female protagonists face the inferiority of their subjectivities and how the self is jeopardized when they are situated in front of a superior model.

In *Tatlı Meleğim*, Leyla works in a beauty company with girls who are extremely good-looking, well groomed, and attractive. When she first appears at the job interview, she is told that she does not meet the expectations of the company, but the owner of the company, Murat, hires her anyway, “out of pity.” Soon after, Leyla falls in love with her boss but Murat, simply disgusted with her, does not even want her service as an employee. One day, Murat has to ask her to write down the advertisement text of their new product.

[Leyla watches Murat with admiration and fascination as she writes down what he dictates]

Murat: All women are beautiful. Those who are considered ugly, in fact, resemble a land that hides numberless treasures inside them. Their actual value is incomprehensible unless they are processed. Our company Venus is in the service of all women. The women who use Venus beauty products are as beautiful as the Venus.

The following day, Leyla accidentally hears Murat talking to his partner about her: “I hired her because of pity. *[Murat’s partner sarcastically tells him to kiss Leyla, if he has so much pity for her.]* Kissing her? Oh, God forbid! I will never kiss her, even if you pay me thousands for it!” Having heard the conversation, Leyla feels extremely upset. When her cousin asks her to go out for a change, she asks:

Leyla: Would you not be bored of being with me? Would you ever ask me to go out if I were a total stranger? Would you not be ashamed of walking around with a girl like me? I am telling you that I am ugly! I am very, very ugly. Do not try to hide it from me.

Leyla’s cousin: Never mind! You are indifferent to the mirrors; you have been the enemy of the manhood forever. You have let go of yourself, of the world. If you would have wanted, you would be a perfectly charming lady.

Leyla leaves the room crying: I do not want; I do not want!

That night, Leyla cannot sleep. Erol’s voice, telling that he would never kiss her even if he were paid thousands for it, is echoed in the background while Leyla lies on the bed. Notably, she had never been ashamed of who she is, or of how she looks, before that day. In the opening scene, the scene shows Leyla eating a huge plate of pasta all by herself without caring about how she looks or if she would gain more weight. Her mother sadly watches her:

Leyla’s mother: Nowadays, girls are as thin as a branch of a tree. And it looks really good.

Leyla: They shall be far away from me! They all look like their stomach is stuck to their back. Who cares? I am happy with my body.

Leyla's mother refers to a series of new concepts with regard to the “beauty” of a girl, and of her body, in a way that signifies the current understanding of how a woman should look. Yet, Leyla does not care at all when she opposes this. Interestingly, in the following scene, she starts to question her beauty within the very same criteria that were once mentioned by her mother but with a significant change in the signifier. This time, it is the gaze of the man that turns Leyla’s head to herself in an alternative way. In what follows, with a glimpse of faith, Murat and Leyla have to go on a business trip together. Murat does not want Leyla to appear in the meeting with beauty experts because he simply is ashamed of having such a secretary:

Leyla, with excitement: I have never seen a beauty expert.

Murat, sarcastically: It is obvious that you have not! They would have displayed you in a museum if they saw you. You would understand what I mean if you have ever looked at yourself in the mirror.

Leyla walks up to her room and faces the mirror. She remembers what Murat said about her, and watches herself within the frame that he draws for her. Here, too, Murat’s voice is echoed in the background. For a time, she feels so disappointed and ashamed by what she sees in the mirror that she turns her back to her image in the mirror. At last, she sticks out her tongue towards the mirror (figures 2.24 and 2.25).



Figure 2.24. A scene from Tatlı Meleğim (1970)



Figure 2.25. A scene from Tatlı Meleğim (1970)

Similarly, in *Küçük Hanımefendi/Little Lady*, Ömer, a handsome young man, has to make an arranged marriage to Neriman, to save his family from their financial crisis. Neriman is desperate because her stepmother Fehime damages Neriman's mental health by giving her various pills in an attempt to defuse her and have the heritage on her own. An old mutual friend of Neriman's and Ömer's families arranges a marriage in order to help them both. Following the wedding ceremony, Ömer sees Neriman for the first time (figures 2.26 and 2.27).

[He loses his control out of rage and yells at his parents]

"No! This girl can't be my wife. Mum, is this who you consider worthy to be my wife? Shame on you! You have made me marry a monkey! Hasn't that stupid girl looked in the mirror even once before she came here?"



Figure 2.26. A scene from Küçük Hanımefendi (1970)



Figure 2.27. A scene from Küçük Hanımefendi (1970)

After the ceremony, Ömer's mother helps Neriman settle in her new room and rest. Neriman feels devastated after all the insults she was exposed to. Ömer's mother

leaves the room to let Neriman sleep and calm down. After she leaves, Neriman cannot stop crying. She looks at herself in the mirror. With all the things Ömer said echoing in the background, she looks at herself for the first time through a different perspective, through the judgemental gaze of Ömer. It is notable that this new level of self-awareness becomes so harsh for Neriman that she breaks the mirror (figures 2.28 and 2.29).



Figure 2.28. A scene from Küçük Hanımefendi (1970)



Figure 2.29. A scene from Küçük Hanımefendi (1970)

The same night, Ömer packs up his stuff and leaves the house, stating that “he will go crazy if he spends one more minute together with that freak of a nature [*referring to Neriman.*]” The scene is stigmatized with Ömer’s question: “Hasn’t that stupid girl looked in the mirror even once before she came here?” In this perspective, Ömer simply addresses the mirror as a signifier that reflects a certain social reality regarding the current expectations about a woman’s body. In this sense, Ömer refers to the mirror, as it would help Kezban build a decent sense of self-consciousness, one that would tell her whether she meets the expectations. Following Ömer’s leaving the house, Ömer’s mother wants to apologize to Neriman on behalf of Ömer:

[*Kezban constantly cries*]

Kezban: I am the one who is responsible for all of this. I should have known that no one would ever want to be with me. This is my destiny.

Ömer's mother: I would like to send you to a mental health clinic, but you don't have to unless you want.

Kezban: I do, ma'am. This is very kind of you. I might even change when I go there.

Ömer's mother: I do not care whether you change or not. I love you the way you are.

The use of the mirror in cinema as an initial matter of reflection and identification has been widely studied. In the movies I look into, the specific use of the mirror works as an indication of the melodramatic stylization that operates to intensify the inward gaze of the girls.⁹¹ The particular *mise-èn-scène* that places the girls in front of the mirror alone, notably, functions in a way that reveals the social implications of self-consciousness. Simply put, in each of the scenes, placing the female protagonists in front of the mirror is used as a case of confrontation, one that is dominated within the frame of a certain social reality. Each time, the common use of the mirror subsequently introduces the ideas of inferiority and duplicity, which commonly result in a sense of self-inquiry. In both the scenes, there is a mutual signifier that dominates the whole scene, that is, the humiliating voice of the man. Both times, we see the female protagonists through their reflection in the mirrors, as they are surrounded by the god-like voices of the male protagonists telling them they look ugly, unacceptable and unwanted. At the center of both scenes, the central focus of the scenes highlights two initial elements; the first, is the image of the girls through their reflection in the mirrors, and the other, is the voice of the men as the determinative signifiers that narrate the quiddity of the reflections. Here, the voice of the male protagonists merely works as an external narrator, it works as an initial voice that shape the self-consciousness. Central here is that the woman is nothing but what the men tell them they are. The voice of the men subordinates the entire subjectivity of the woman, in a way that regulates their whole self-consciousness.

Another remarkable point is that the females are, bar none, projected as clearly not powerful enough to stand against what subordinates them. Both Neriman and Leyla cry in front of the mirror when they remember what the males said about them.

⁹¹ Jackie Byars, *All That Hollywood Allows Re-reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 142.

Neriman even cries so much that she almost faints. This is simply because their agony is always accompanied by their inherent acceptance of the possibility that “he might be right.” That is, the girls experience and internalize feelings of deficiency and embarrassment that are determined by the men. Thus, both times again, the common closure of the scenes is stigmatized with girls’ initial rejection of their current image. While Leyla sticks her tongue towards her reflection in the mirror, Neriman breaks the mirror by throwing a vase towards her image in the mirror. Arslan states that at the very center of our national identity, there stand the feelings of deprivation and deficiency as the constitutive elements of national subjectivity.⁹²

Following the severe tension inside the scene, both the girls take their next steps with an inherent impasse of change. After she sticks her tongue towards her repelling image, Leyla immediately runs to look in French fashion magazines. She makes an intensive investigation through the magazines, covering a series of combination ideas, tips on how to lose weight and several ideas on hair and makeup. Neriman, on the other hand, gladly accepts the idea of staying in a mental care center for a while, with a hope that “she might change in there.” Umut Tümay Arslan explains this sense of impulse with the female desire to be recognizable and desirable in the gaze of superior, and it is this desire that replaces the severe embarrassment and sadness caused by their peasant identity.⁹³

The mirror that Güllü stands before is quite remarkable in this sense. The female protagonist Güllü in *Güllü* stands before the mirror two times in the film. The first one is shortly after the time she shamefully hides behind the curtain when Ahmet enters in, and Güllü confesses that she “feels naked, even if she has some clothes on.” Following this, we understand that Güllü has tried on one of the clothes that Ahmet has bought for her, but she could not feel comfortable because it is too short for her. She shamefully grumbles: “I do not want to be involved in such a civilization. I am dressed, yet I feel naked.” Ahmet steps in as a compassionate companion, as a wisdom teacher who knows how to be a modern woman: “If fashion requires walking

⁹² Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 80.

⁹³ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 102-103.

around naked, then you will walk around naked. This is a must of modern life.” In this scene, having been told to do “whatever comes from her heart,” Ahmet leaves Güllü alone to decide on her own whether she will choose to become a decently modern, urbanized woman, or will stay as Güllü, a poor peasant girl.



Figure 2.30. A scene from Güllü (1972)

After Ahmet leaves the room, Güllü stands in front of the mirror. We watch her face through the reflection in the mirror. She wears a piece of modern cloth, yet, she is not engaged with it. It is projected that she is at the edge of a transition, which does not only mean to change what she wears but a decision to change who she currently is (figure 2.30). The specific use of Ahmet departing from the room is a fiction designed to make us believe that Güllü is free and independent in making this decision. This is a manipulative discourse, which places the desire of Güllü at the center of the scene and uses this desire in favor of the narrative. The actual story behind the scene is that Güllü is not at all alone in front of the mirror, simply because her body is “surrounded by layers of gazes around her.”⁹⁴ While Güllü is left “alone” with a choice to make between changing into a modern woman and a staying as a poor peasant girl, she questions herself: “How do I feel? There are two Güllüs now. Is this the Güllü of Hamsiköy? I do not know how I feel. I am afraid.” While Ahmet is waiting for Güllü downstairs, Güllü leaves the room as a changed woman. As the camera focuses on her walking down the stairs, Ahmet watches her with admiration. It is projected that she listens to her inner voice, makes the right decision, and chooses to change.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 122.



Figure 2.31. A scene from Güllü (1972)



Figure 2.32. A scene from Güllü (1972)

The second time Güllü stands before the mirror; she is accompanied by Ahmet. Ahmet holds Güllü's hand with all the admiration he feels and walks her to the mirror: "You are not Güllü anymore, you are Gül. You are as beautiful as a rose. Look, at yourself" (figures 2.31 and 2.32). The voice and the gaze that dominate the scene are visibly present this time. Erol stands as an equivalent counterpart, as a lover who appreciates, not as one who judges her with his voice echoed inside the head of a woman, but one that appreciates her while she stands in front of the mirror. Moreover, Ahmet has rewarded Güllü with a new body and a new name, that is, a new identity. The death of Güllü and the birth of Gül is announced as a new start, and a pleasing one, by Erol himself. What is more, Güllü gives the decision of changing by herself, called by what "comes from the inside of her heart." In the following sequence, when Güllü asks Ahmet, whether she has succeeded in becoming "the woman he wants," it is revealed that Güllü is neither alone in front of the mirror, nor independent with regard to the decision she made.

2.2. Yeşilçam Melodramas and Melodramatic Engagement: Does This Only Happen in the Movies?

At this point, I want to focus on the ambivalence in our feelings towards the narrative, that is, the very gaze of us, as the audience. In Yeşilçam melodramas, spectators establish a remarkable internalization between the filmic narrative and social reality. That is to say, they do not only know more, they also feel more within the text. Spectators actively participate in the meaning not only in terms of production but also in terms of their reflexivity towards the text. Umut Tümay Arslan offers that spectators of Yeşilçam melodramas predominantly feel two prevailing senses towards the films: identification and distance.

The first is that the films elicit feelings of sincerity and intimacy, as it would be in remembering a warm memory. This memory, in turn, summons us to an earlier bond, which simultaneously brings back the feelings of despair and restriction. It follows a rather similar trajectory for the movies of our concern. We all watch the girls with admiration because all of the girls seem to be the embodiment of kindness, such that, we, as the audience have a hard time believing the possibility of a person being so pure, clean and unspoiled. On the one hand, the girls remind us of a beauty we have lost and forgotten; on the other hand, the fear of remaining like them threatens us underneath the text. We are aware of the fact that the girls are now in the city, and that no matter how fascinating the purity that comes from their peasant background is, they should no longer be dress and talk like peasants. Interestingly, while the films make us feel strongly opposed towards the men, simultaneously, they make us acknowledge that the man actually has a point. It is not easy to admit, but we have a hard time avoiding agreeing with the men.

The audiences' response is dominated by the fact that, if the girl continues to behave that way, to go to the party with that dress, our boy will, unfortunately, be embarrassed. It is notable that even if we always feel deeply sorry for the woman, we do not always stand by her side, as in the case of Yeşilçam. We all wish for nothing but her happiness; we think that if she changes with a little bit of effort, all the pain she suffers may come to an end. As much as we love the girls the most, we demand the hardest things from them. It is not in the body of the man that we look for the transformation, the fight, and rebirth, but in the woman's body. In fact, what is more hypocritical than the Yeşilçam narrative is our gaze, the view of the audiences. In this line of ambivalent feelings, I offer that both the gaze and the narrative constructed upon the women by Yeşilçam are hypocritical, within the influence of a certain ideological dominance in Yeşilçam narrative. Frederic Jameson offers that filmic narrative aims to construct an objective perspective towards events. Yet the production itself is inevitably ideological since the narrative functions with a central attempt "to solve social contradictions that cannot be removed, indefensible

tensions.”⁹⁵ Following this, keeping my main focus on the very emphasis of “ideology in production,” I aim to analyze the ways in which the films construct this ambivalent narrative towards the woman.

Ravi Vasudevan’s argument about Indian cinema, as a country which has experienced the modernization as an experience of belatedness, works perfectly for the Turkish case as well. He says that “the central here is the persistence of a melodramatic engagement which has often, if not always, been invested with ambiguities, nostalgic tendencies, and 'backwardness' in response to the ideologies, if not the experience, of modernity.”⁹⁶ Vasudevan highlights that melodrama, as a genre, is not simply a narrative form but also a performative culture, one which offers a critical position in the way it creates “melodramatic engagement” between the stories and the audiences. That is, it provides a basis for audiences to engage themselves socially by how the style, form, and spectator are positioned with a specific closeness to historical dynamics.⁹⁷ Umut Tümay Arslan offers that Yeşilçam melodramas have been the story of our nation, whose story begins with the experience of belatedness, of a feeling of insufficiency in the face of a dichotomy, namely, the dichotomy between East and West. It would not be wrong to say that Yeşilçam shares the same scenario as its audiences.

As the cinema of a country which is under the stresses of modernization’s outcomes, Yeşilçam finds itself between the same stresses.⁹⁸ Not only have the films themselves, regarding the stories followed this path, so too have the collective responses, critiques, and intellectual thinking towards the melodramas also followed the same path in an immediately apparent way. To put it more clearly, when we look at the memoirs of Yeşilçam directors, scriptwriters, scholars and critiques who discuss Yeşilçam, we see that they, too, follow this path of thinking and that they find themselves in the same dichotomy. In order to clarify my point, it would be quite

⁹⁵ Frederic Jameson, “Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Art” (London and New York: Routledge, 1981)

⁹⁶ Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public*, 19.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 19.

⁹⁸ Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey*, 2.

beneficial to mention how, on the one hand, Yeşilçam melodramas were highly criticized, while at the same time, they were highly requested, and welcomed by the audiences. Between the 1960s and 1970s, Yeşilçam was enjoying its golden years, yet, in the meantime, the melodramas of the time were highly criticized for being shallow, fabricated and repetitive, and Yeşilçam was even accused of imitating other cinemas and being incapable of creating a language for a national cinema with universal concerns.⁹⁹ Despite all the criticism, it is also a well-known fact that there was a high demand for these films from the public, and that, going to the movie theatres and watching and even responding to all those clichés on the screen was one of the most common forms of mass entertainment of the time.¹⁰⁰ Stories were accused of being “unrealistic”; the narrative form was blamed for following a certain path that comprises the repetition of specific, typical figures, dialogues, themes and stories; and the films were overthrown for relying on the same clichés and similar, over-the-top, stereotyped characters. Yet, they were accepted by most people and celebrated for being “from us.” Regarding “the commercialization and commodification of popular culture,”¹⁰¹ the audiences of melodrama cannot be regarded “as passive victims of manipulation but as active producers of meaning.”¹⁰² Nükhet Sirman and Zeynep Feyza Akınerdem assert that the demand from the public for melodramas, in spite of the intellectual critics, can be explained with the familiarity of the occurrences in the stories. As they discuss, melodramas are celebrated because of their similarity and familiarity via creating an intersection between the realities in people’s lives and reflections on the screen.¹⁰³ The seeming clichés of the melodrama narrative of Yeşilçam does, in fact, project the audiences’ reality. That is, the audiences share similar stresses with the figures on the screen. That is, the figures on the screen are the audience themselves, because the world drawn in Yeşilçam stories did not represent much of a difference from the audiences’

⁹⁹ Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 266.

¹⁰⁰ Kirel, *Yeşilçam Öykü Sineması*, 277-292.

¹⁰¹ Ulla Haselstein, Berndt Ostendorf and Peter Schneck, “Popular Culture: Introduction,” *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 46, no. 3 (2001): 332, accessed April 5, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41157662>.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Nükhet Sirman and Feyza Akınerdem, “Diziler Nasıl Yapılıyor / Yazılıyor? Nasıl Okunuyor?,” *Kumbara Sanat Araştırma Dizisi 2 İstanbul Amargi Feminizm Tartışmaları*, December 2012, 474-475.

worlds themselves. Vasudevan also remarks on the particularity of a public dimension towards melodramas and offers to:

consider the narrative conditions which allow for articulation of melodrama as a dynamic, expressive vehicle of meaning; in particular, the articulation of personalized contexts of home, family, and other fields of primary attachment, with public registers. In my understanding, the public field is constituted both by formal and informal structures of power, justice, social identity, and social mobility. In my premise this relationship provides for the expressive energies of the form, and is differently calibrated and organized in specific historical and political circumstances.¹⁰⁴

Hence, the deconstruction of a norm with respect to morality, as an emphasis in the story line of a melodrama, attracts attention. This is because people want to see and comprehend how the resolution of a societal disruption is shown by a new norm construction, even if it is only a film. Therefore, this connection reveals many dynamics in the society about both the production and consumption of melodrama, as well as interests and cultural codes and norms, that is, about the very “nature” of the social and its constituents, in terms of representation and reflection.

¹⁰⁴Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public*, 17.

CHAPTER 3

FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY: AN INQUIRY ON A BODY OF ONE'S OWN

"It is no use going back to yesterday because I was a *different person* then."

Alice in Wonderland

My main concern in this chapter is to analyze the female subjectivity in the movies, focusing on the self-transformation of the female protagonists, in relation to the questions of woman's position regarding the modernity, selfhood and nationhood. I aim to analyze how the filmic narrative is organised to give the man, an authority as the representative voice of the official state discourse, intimately related to the Yeşilçam's understanding of nationhood, and films' engagement in the process of "nation-building as a modernising enterprise"¹⁰⁵, emphasizing the place of woman as a central figure of modernity.

In this part, I aim to analyze the decision, the process, and the aftermath of the girls' self-transformation within the frame of two main axes. The first is the path in which the narrative creates a pre-determined pattern within a hypocritical discourse towards the female protagonists. The other is how the narrative creates a fantasy of entirety regarding the national identity, through the transformation of the female protagonists in a way that anxieties about the modernity are substantiated and resolved in her image.

3.1. Self-Transformation as the Third Way: Kill me, Heal me

The fundamental changing point for each story comes with the point when the girls are offered with another option, other than accepting the "miserable role" that has been operating for them. That is, rather than to give up and lose their loved ones; they have the option to fight, to change and become the woman that the man desires. This possibility of a third way is proposed at the point where the girls are the weakest and most desperate because of the humiliation of men, which has exhausted

¹⁰⁵ Vasudevan, *The Melodramatic Public*, 84.

the strength of the women and has left them helpless. The whole state of helplessness is based on the women's acceptance that they are weak, and inadequate towards the expectations of the men. In *Fakir Kızı Leyla*, Leyla confesses that she loves Fikret, but she does not have the adequate knowledge and capacity to make Fikret love her:

I love Fikret so much, but it does not mean anything since he hates me. I know he is right. We belong in separate worlds. I have worked a lot to gain his love, but I could not succeed. I have been taught in another way to make a man happy. What can I do? It is beyond my capacity to be the woman he wants.

The reason why the couple is impossible to be together is settled from the very beginning of each film. Having been covered with a saddening story, the fact that the union of the couple is an impossible one is simply based on a series of reasons. All of those are commonly rooted in certain differences between them, which are fundamentally evaluated as the women's inadequate capacity and performance to adapt to the modern way of living. In *Düğün Gecesi*, Zeki abandons Zeynep on the night they get married, leaving a letter that blames her for being like "a bear from the mountains." Zeynep explains the letter to her beloved servant Yusuf:

He has left to not to live together with a bear from the mountain, that is, with me! All my fault is that I am nothing like those women, that I do not dress like they do, dance as they do. He did not care at all how I live with dignity, how I decently take care of my home.

As much as Zeki confesses that he takes on all the blame for his action, the central idea here is that Zeki underlines Zeynep by way of centering what she lacks, and points out her as the actual responsible of this very impossibility. Similarly, in *Güllü* and *Dağdan İnme*, male protagonists abandon the female protagonists by leaving a letter that seemingly accepts all the guilt, yet, eventually highlights the inadequacy of the girls to create a sense of justification in favor of the male protagonists. What is notable here is that Zeynep acknowledges the reasons why it is impossible for Zeki to stay married to Zeynep, so are Güllü in *Güllü*, and Elif in *Dağdan İnme*. It also follows a similar pattern for the other girls, as well, either covered with a sense of pride or as a total submission. In *Kezban Paris'te*, Kezban desperately cries to Ayhan's grandfather, telling that she loves Ayhan very much, but "this does not mean anything because a man like Ayhan does not care about the love of a poor, peasant

girl." In *Analar Ölmez*, Kezban does not let Sezercik blame his father for leaving her. She believes that "his father has done what he needed to. He has done what he was supposed to, what was good for Sezercik" by leaving her since she believes that "she cannot be the lady of his house in this appearance."

The source of the problem is vividly clear from the very beginning, so is the remedy. In all the cases, having faced a certain degree of disapproval effectively shapes the self-recognition of the girls, in a way that starts with the acknowledgment of the reasons of disapproval, and continues with its transition into a sincere hope and effort to fix it. Rather than an actual resistance, a sense of refusal, or a prideful defiance, female protagonists notably choose to accept what they are told, that is, they choose to transform. The whole process, thus, is stigmatized with Gürbilek's interpretation that "the only one, who can heal a wound, is the one who causes the wound."¹⁰⁶ Notably, the girls do not only embrace the gaze that causes the wound but they actually internalize this very gaze. In slightly different contexts, they all act in a common way that agrees with the understanding, which considers girls' current identity as a deficient one, and follows by putting the necessary effort to recover from it.

This very portrayal, together with the hope to recover from it provides notable insights regarding girls' subjectivity. That is to say, female protagonists do not have the adequate power to evaluate their self in an autonomous way; rather, they establish a self-knowledge through an internalized gaze enacted by the man. The process, thus, necessitates an effort in order to be recognizable by the very gaze. Therefore, female protagonists need to surpass a certain process of transformation to be seen and recognized by the male protagonists. This will not only be a simple success, but also a way of demonstrating that the girls are worthy of being loved and approved, once they faithfully follow the necessary steps. This scheme simply addresses a frame of dependency, which initially concerns the construction of the identity, in the way that the subjectivity is constructed upon women's dependence

¹⁰⁶ Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark: Edebiyat ve Endişe*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004), 66.

on the men, one that constructs the women as one that asks for men's approval. At this point, Sabahat in *Kadın Değil Baş Belası* prescribes Naciye, when she crawls back to her neighbourhood after Murat fires her, which will be the common agenda for all the girls to follow:

This is the way it follows. You know, in Turkish movies, it happens all the time. The rich boy makes the poor girl cry her eyes out. Then the poor girl gets as stubborn as she can and decides to change. Once she learns a little bit of high society attitude and a little bit of manner, then the boy gives up.¹⁰⁷

The remedy, for this reason, is highlighted in the way it necessitates a fight. After Fikret and his friends humiliate her in the party, Leyla cannot stop crying, decides to give up and go back to her village. Uncle Ali encourages her to stay and fight:

Crying does not help you, but it only makes you lose your power to fight. If you fight, you can make Fikret fall in love with you. Trust me with that part of it. I will turn you into such a woman, that not only Fikret but every one of the men out there will fall in love with you. Just so you decide to change.

The process inevitably brings the question, at this point, is what all this fight is for? The films, thus, creates a discourse that the fight is given for the sake of a meaningful purpose, moreover, a sacred one.

Vivien Jones offers that the modern discourse models the woman as either a virgin, a mother or a prostitute, that is, a woman is judged and defined under either these three categories.¹⁰⁸ The representation of women in Yeşilçam predominantly operates within the same discourse. Female protagonists in the movies I look into are commonly presented as decent virgins, in the ways they are associated with the idea of purity and submissiveness. They never give up on the men they love; moreover, each one of them endures a painful process to win the love of their beloved one. This common approach towards the woman, that the girls accepting the role that has been operating for them reveals a fundamental operation of Yeşilçam narrative.

Nilgün Abisel puts:

¹⁰⁷ "Bu gibi davaların kandili böyle yanar. Yerli filmlerin hepsinde zengin oğlan fakir kızın burun direğini sızlatır, kız da inadım inat, biraz sosyetiklik, biraz da kibarlık öğrendi mi o senin oğlan pes eder."

¹⁰⁸ Vivien Jones, "Eighteenth-Century Prostitution: Feminist Debates and the Writing of Histories," in *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, and Corporeality* ed. Avril Horner, Angela Keane (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 127.

Turkish cinema demonstrates its predominant ideology upon the woman as follows: All has befallen to the female characters in Yeşilçam - either caused by the customs or of destiny- is horrible. Thus, it is impossible to not to feel pity for these women. Yet, this is actually the exact quality that values the woman: her potential to submit in all these terrible misfortunes. If a woman made a remarkable mistake, she might turn this around by keeping patient and performing the compromise that she is expected to. If she can be successful, she might be awarded little victories over the men and, finally, she might even win the gown of marriage.¹⁰⁹

The central idea with regard to the female characters is that their subjectivity is fundamentally attached to the idea of purity and submissiveness along with an initial emphasis on her subordinated role. What is referred to as “a remarkable mistake,” in our case, is simply the current inadequacy in women’s identity presented by the narrative. That is, films simply point out the fact that these women have failed to adapt to modern lifestyle, and caused a certain degree of distance between them and the male protagonists. In following a discourse that establishes the girls as those who are initially pure, submissive, yet, weak; the discourse generates the idea of the fight as what a woman’s initial role brings in order to help her value her subjectivity.

Surely, the discourse that encourages the girls to fight signifies a broader frame of interconnections with regard to the female subjectivity. Barbara Welter puts that the attributes with regard to womanhood are based on four principal virtues, which are piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. All four of the virtues determine the frame, which the woman is to be judged under, namely, mother, daughter, sister, and wife. For a woman, other than her inclusion in either one of these categories, “no matter whether there was fame, achievement, or wealth, all was ashes.” What Welter offers significantly is that the discourse highlights these categories as the sources of strength, which would promise a woman happiness and power.¹¹⁰ It is notable that the submission is processed as an initial virtue expected of women,¹¹¹ and it is strongly tied with power. That is, would not only value the woman, it would

¹⁰⁹ Abisel, *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar*, 137.

¹¹⁰ Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966), 152.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 4.

also promise a sense of agency, in the way it completes her identity with happiness and power.

At this point, the idea of the fight presumes in accordance with the cult of domesticity, which in general is referred to as “saving a marriage.” Here, the very idea of girls’ purity is accompanied by the holiness attributed to love and marriage, in a way that is strongly attached to woman’s body. Female protagonists, thus, fight for what their role presume, in accordance with Nezhir Erdoğan’s observation that in Yeşilçam melodramas, it is common to articulate the woman body as “a metaphor for postponement and sacrifice.”¹¹² In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, Naciye begs her husband not to divorce: “Kill me if you wish, but don’t make me divorce you! You can make fun of me, humiliate me! Don’t you see that I love you? I called you my dear husband; I am tied to you.” In *Analar Ölmez*, Kezban seriously struggles while she tries to keep up with all the process in which she has to learn a series of lessons to become a decent lady. When her son Sezer asks her to work a little more “for his sake,” she answers: “I would work all day, all night just to make you happy.” Though the narrative seemingly highlights the story as of a woman who sacrifices for the sake of his son, it has actually been mentioned in former scenes that the main goal determined by Sezercik is to reunite his mother and father, that is, by transforming Kezban into a woman that will be approved and loved by Kenan. The main intention is, however, revealed clearly in further scenes, when Sezercik confesses that Kezban needs to experience this process to “show herself and to reborn.” In *Hayat Sevince Güzel*, after Ayşe has been made fun of by a group of young people in a party, she begs her aunt to help her “get in a decent appearance, not for the sake of herself, but to not to embarrass her aunt.”

In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, on the other hand, when Naciye is humiliated by her husband Murat, it becomes a matter of collective pride. Murat fires Naciye from his house after she “embarrasses” him in front of his guests.

[Naciye comes back to her neighbourhood after Murat fires him. She desperately tells of what happened to Sabahat:]

¹¹² Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 270.

This is not only a matter of Naciye's honour only, but disrespect for the honour of all the neighbourhood. There is no way to accept such a treat. You see, they look down on Naciye, they humiliate, despise and roughly abuse her, and we will do nothing about it? This is a matter of homeland(*vatan davası*).¹¹³

This will further be highlighted with Sabahat's ultimatum to Murat, that "they might be poor of the outskirts, but marriage is a sacred institution for them."

The ways that the central motivation is represented might slightly differ from film to film, yet, it merges on the idea that in order to fade away the pain, the girls are left with the only choice of changing. The central idea for the change is predominantly portrayed as if the girls are motivated by a pursuit of a revenge, yet, the common and actual motivation in all of the films is to make the man regret his mistake, and, finally make him love and respect the woman. This simply means that all the girls are driven by a powerful urge to win men's approval and to change themselves in order to become the woman who deservedly serves men's desire. Regardless of how the main intention might seemingly differ, the whole process of self-transformation is regarded as a process of fixation.

The whole process is built with an aim to help the male protagonist realize his original self, disengage with all the degeneration he has been included in, and learn to value the female protagonists. The main intention, ultimately, is to establish a happy ending that covers the happy reunion of the couple. That is why, the whole plan is finalized with one last test, through which the male protagonist will prove himself to be well-informed and learned his lesson. In *Kezban Paris'te* Ayhan's grandfather, by referring to his grandchild Ayhan as "a jerk," he names the plan as the "operation to bring the jerk into line." Besides all the reasons that cover the main intention of the girls, it is to "smooth over everything" as Zeynep mentions in *Düğün Gecesi*.

¹¹³ "vatan davası", literary meaning "a case of homeland", highlights the case of Naciye as a matter of collective pride, just like as it would be in a fight for one's country.

3.1.1. The Process of Self-Transformation: “You will be taught all you need.”

Once it is clear that the pattern to be followed is a definite pursuit of a change, the films draw a common and fundamental frame with regard to the process that the girls need to follow in order to achieve their self-refinement, which is, to reach to “the ideal image of women that the Republican modernization process aimed to create.”¹¹⁴ This self-transformation necessitates an education process of Westernization, covering a series of instructions regarding how a modern, urban, sophisticated woman is expected to dress, talk, behave and live. Once the girls are convinced to change, all the movies point out the common trajectory for them to follow. The image that is referred to as the “ideal woman” is portrayed simply as the ideal image of man’s desire, namely, the woman in his dreams. In *Güllü*, Fikret has an accident and is rescued by Güllü. She takes great care of Fikret and helps him recover. Soon after, they become friends.



Figure 3.1. A scene from *Güllü* (1972)



Figure 3.2. A scene from *Güllü* (1972)

One day, while they are having dinner together, Fikret looks carefully at Güllü (figures 3.1 and 3.2).

You are a beautiful girl. I imagine you (as a woman) in the city; in mini skirts, mini shorts. You have your hair done by a hairdresser, your eyebrows shaped, you have put some makeup on. You would be such a heartbreaker. And your accent[should be fixed], of course.

He draws the very basic frame on how a woman in a man’s dreams is expected to be. On the same night, Fikret has a dream about Güllü, he dreams her in a fancy dress, as an extremely attractive woman. In his dreams, Güllü has been transformed into the exact woman he described earlier (figures 3.3 and 3.4).

¹¹⁴ Kaya-Mutlu, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 420.



Figure 3.3. A scene from Güllü (1972)



Figure 3.4. A scene from Güllü (1972)

That highlights the condition that the fight will be held on the battlefield of the men, within the rules of him. Zeynep in *Düğün Gecesi* formulates this process, after the night Zeki has abandoned her: “I will go deep into the world where he calls as civilization. I will do whatever it takes to learn that life. I will learn it all; their language, their jobs, the way they dance and wear; all of them.” Thus, the final target for the girls to reach the end of the education process is defined with various terms such as “a complete lady,” “*salon kadını*,” and “a fair lady,” all of which signify an archetype of a woman with modern manner and appearance. All the necessary steps to be “a complete lady” are counted inside the movies, highlighting that it necessitates a series of lessons such as “how a *salon kadını* should walk”, “to walk, sit and behave beautifully,” “to learn how to talk in a kind manner”, “how to dance like a swan” and so on. All of these, in all the movies without exception, use references from foreign sources.

The girls need to go through a series of intense private classes, predominantly from non-Muslim instructors or mentors, all of which are assigned to teach them a certain way of life. In *Analar Ölmez*, after her son convinces Kezban to change, he holds her mother’s hand and stands with her in front of a several people, who are introduced as the “best teachers in the city” and hired to teach her “all she needs”, which is mainly classified as “dance and music, good manners, aesthetics, culture, and elocution.” In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, Naciye’s neighbours put out all of their accumulation to hire teachers to teach them “how to say kind words” and “how to dance as if walking on the clouds.” In *Dağdan İnme*, Elif and her sisters take private classes in modern dance, ballet, karate and attend to a series of sessions for massage and personal care.



Figure 3.5. A scene from *Analar Ölmez* (1976)

The process of education and adaption is either “shown in a rapid succession of scenes or ignored entirely,”¹¹⁵ or portrayed as a process of a challenge, predominantly covered by elements of humour (figures 3.5). The girls try on the clothes they need to wear; yet, they “feel naked.” They try to learn how to dance, yet, they attempt to attack the teacher when the teachers hold their waists. They “feel embarrassed” while trying to perform a walk like a “fair lady.” They have humorous moments trying to pronounce words with an Istanbul dialect. In these cases, it is always highlighted that the necessity to learn these modern codes of conducts are privileged than the ethical values of the girls, all of which should stay belonged to their previous lives, and be eliminated in this process. The girls are constantly encouraged, predominantly by the servants, to embrace these necessities. For instance, they are encouraged to feel fine for one to hold her waist while dancing, because “she cannot dance if she does not let her partner hold her waist,” that they should do “whatever the modern life expects them to do, even if it is to walk around naked” and that they “should not be embarrassed.”

In the cases, which there is not an apparent teacher, instructor or mentor, the guide still points out a foreign reference. In *Feride*, her sisters take Feride to a series of centers, such as a beauty institute, a boutique, and a hairdresser, all of which is projected as the instant signifiers of a new way of living, modern lifestyle, which can only be found in the city (figures 3.6- 3.9).

¹¹⁵ Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 265.



Figure 3.6. A scene from Feride (1971)



Figure 3.7. A scene from Feride (1971)



Figure 3.8. A scene from Feride (1971)



Figure 3.9. A scene from Feride (1971)

Similarly, in *Sarmaşık Gülleri*, Necip's sister Betül helps Gülseren change into a "modern and mannered woman, who is not a Cinderella but truly a princess." The process of transformation is not detailly portrayed in *Sarmaşık Gülleri* as it is in *Feride*, yet, Betül informs her mother about the whole process of how they transform Gülseren:

All of my friends gathered in to found a union called "the union of making Gülseren beautiful." One of my friend's brother is a famous hairdresser and a makeup artist. One's father has a big dressing store. Another one's fiancée is a dance teacher. After all, well done Gülseren! She has been a wonderful modern girl much faster than I expected. She is not a Cinderella anymore; she is now a princess.

On the other hand, in *Tatlı Meleğim*, female protagonists Leyla holds the entire process on her own, by way of reading French fashion magazines in order to learn how to lose weight, to get in shape quickly, which outfit to choose and how to have her hair done (figures 3.10 and 3.11).



Figure 3.10. A scene from Tatlı Meleğim (1970)



Figure 3.11. A scene from *Tatlı Meleğim* (1970)

Besides the process of education, foremost the most important task is usually demonstrated by the appearance of the women, that is, how they look. Even in some cases, the transformation of the women covers only the change in appearance. Sürtik Bendiyan, a close friend of Neriman in *Küçük Hanımefendi*, underlines that “the outfit is the showcase of a woman”, and offers to “beautify” Neriman so that her husband “gets dumbfounded when she sees her.” In some cases, it is projected enough for the men to confuse their partner with another woman, only with a change in the outfit. In *Fakir Kızı Leyla* and *Kezban Paris’te*, male protagonists do not recognize their wives with the masks they are wearing on. In *Kezban Roma’da* Erol does not recognize Kezban, though she does not even have a mask, and only wears a fancy dress, telling that “he would have never forgotten such a beauty if he has seen before.”

In the final of the process, all the girls turn into the exact women that the men desire. Finally, at the end of the education process, all the girls complete their self-refinement with a complete adaptation of the modern Western manner. It is highlighted that they embrace the Western qualities as “not merely an added-on quality, but she has adopted it and merged it with her whole being.”¹¹⁶

3.2. Who is the New Woman after the Self-Transformation: “Güllü is Dead.”

Nurdan Gürbilek elaborates that a culture in the state of belatedness existentially deals in between “the desire to be the other and the fear of losing one’s self in the other.”¹¹⁷ That is, the cultural identity in Turkey deals in between two fundamental

¹¹⁶ Can Turhan Yalçınkaya, “Turkish Melodramas and Modernity” in Turkish Cultural Foundation retrieved from <http://www.turkishculture.org/performing-arts/film/turkish-melodramas-and-962.htm?type=1>

¹¹⁷ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 607.

axes. The one is the fear of not being able to catch up with the ideal model, and the other is to lose the original self inside the very model by excessively embracing it. In this sense, the fundamental crisis of Turkey's modernization experience has mainly been to create a modern national culture within the boundaries of a synthesis; one that does not erupt the original/national self, yet, still has successfully adapted to the ideal, superior model. Simply put, the main goal is to create a national sense of self that is untrammelled from the anxieties and fears in between these axes. The films, at this point, cover a significant importance in the sense that they operate as an era of expression through which the national sense of self speaks.¹¹⁸ Desires, as well as the anxieties and fears derived from in between these axes, is presented in the films through the representation of female characters. In this section, I aim to understand the woman together with her transformation and the reasons how the image of the transformed woman is articulated as the figure of a common resolution for the crisis in national identity in a way that serves a common relief, and functions as a key to the resolution.

It has widely been covered that the modernization project of the Republic needed a series of symbolic investment in the cultural field and, thus, attempted to create a number of new symbols and images in social and cultural life.¹¹⁹ Particularly in the face of paradigmatic social changings, as well as it has been for Turkey's modernization project, the image of the woman is regarded as the signifier of the current paradigm,¹²⁰ namely, the belatedness of national identity for our case. Thus, how the image of a woman is imagined and constructed in the narrative is closely related to the idea of belatedness in the sense that melodramas eventually narrate "the central fact of a culture."¹²¹ The peculiar condition of Turkey's modernization experience that is referred to as the central fact of a culture is that the project puts constant effort to preserve the identity "within the split of the national sense of self, the internal-external dichotomy that was ever present in the perception of the East-

¹¹⁸ Umut Tümay Arslan, "Sublime yet ridiculous: Turkishness and the Cinematic Image of Zeki Müren," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 45, no. 2 (2011), 188.

¹¹⁹ Arslan, *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil: Yeşilçam'da Erkeklik ve Mazlumluk*, 29.

¹²⁰ Berktaş, *Tarihin Cinsiyeti*, 150.

¹²¹ Brooks, *Melodramatic Imagination*, 9.

West question.”¹²² Yeşilçam narrative generates the modernization mainly as an external threat, which pins the internal as a place to be captured by the West. However, this does not simply remove the fact that the interior has an inevitable desire to follow the exterior. What Yeşilçam offers, at this point, is to narrate the desire for an interior that is unaffected by the exterior.¹²³ The representation of the female protagonists in the movies, in this sense, represents this central concern of the cultural identity. In the films, woman’s body is articulated as the body of the perfect synthesis for the nation, one that adopts Westernization in its unique way, a local and national way, eventually, one that sustains the perfect balance between traditional values and modern progress.

While he explains his concept of belatedness, Jusdanis offers that the experience of the belatedness necessarily brings a distance between belatedly modernized societies and the “western originals,”¹²⁴ which pins the belated ones as irremovably “incomplete.” This is not necessarily because the former “deviate from the supposedly correct path,” but because they perform the modernity as a form of adaption in a determined model that is assumed to be the ideal/superior. The incompleteness and backwardness become inevitable in this sense because belated modernization “cannot culminate in a faithful duplication of Western prototypes” since “the imported models do not function like their European counterparts. Often they are resisted.”¹²⁵

The encounter with the superior model that is referred to as a resistance, is a resistance inside the era of feelings, one that resists being erupted by an exterior pressure, while at the same time pursuing an irresistible desire for reaching to the very model. Jusdanis observes that this resistance derives its basis from the nationalist discourse that “allows modern individuals to deny their mortality in the

¹²² Arslan, *Sublime yet Ridiculous*, 188.

¹²³ Ibid, 189.

¹²⁴ With his words of choice: “Western originals and local realities” in Jusdanis, Gregory: *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture* (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 13.

¹²⁵ Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture*, 14.

face of change.”¹²⁶ This represents the constant tension of Turkish cultural identity which deals in between the desire to maintain the authority of the identity, and the fact that the natural progress of history inevitably condemns the identity to a position that it needs to change under the domination of a superior power. The image of woman settles at this very space of tension in cultural identity. Simply put, the image of woman signifies nothing but the current fundamental tension of the national identity, one that is fundamentally belated, dealing in between “the Eastern-related excesses that are wanted to be left behind, and Westernized excesses that are tried to be settled in balance.”¹²⁷

In this sense, the image of woman is assigned to be the signifier in order to create a “national self” that is not ethically erupted by a foreign ideal in the sense of the national values, yet, still succeeds to perform modernity in a unique way, the way it is desired by the official discourse. In this regard, female protagonists are attempted to be created as ideal women, those who represent the perfect synthesis between “traditional values that seem ugly and unacceptable anymore” and “modern values that cause social degeneration, and lead the society to a sense of imitation and excessiveness.”¹²⁸ This does not only signify the desire for a balance in the woman image only, it also points out the aim to build a national identity within a balance. That is, the image of the woman is designated to draw the boundaries of modernity within the frame as it is desired, one that eventually “promise unity, entirety, and meaning in the sense of the identity.”¹²⁹ It is notable that the path reaching to the entirety of the national identity starts with pinning the woman with one of the fundamental crisis of the national identity, namely, with a sense of incompleteness. Kaja Silverman offers that “the whole edifice of cinematic representation finds itself affected by a fundamental lack” that is inscribed into the filmic narrative through female body.¹³⁰ She elaborates:

The identification of woman with lack functions to cover over the absent real and the foreclosed site of production- losses which are incompatible with the

¹²⁶ Ibid, 165.

¹²⁷ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 86.

¹²⁸ Arslan, *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil*, 48.

¹²⁹ Arslan, *Sublime yet Ridiculous*, 186.

¹³⁰ Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 2.

“phallic function” in relation to which the male subject is defined. Film theory’s preoccupation with lack is really preoccupation with male subjectivity.¹³¹

In the movies of our concern, the image of the woman is stigmatized with the demonstration of a central sense of lack. The criticism of the women in the movies is basically a critique designated to demonstrate what the girls lack in comparison to a model assumed to be the ideal. To put it simply, the narrative towards the girls follow a common line that criticises her not based upon what she has, but upon what she does not have. Thus, the accusation of lack positions the woman from the very start as a comparative one in a way that points out to a persistent lack of her identity. Female protagonists in the movies are settled as the center of critics basically for a specific lack in their identity, that is, for not fitting in the image that is described to be modern, which points out that these girls are expected to imitate a specific model that is assumed to be the ideal prototype. The moving point, thus, is to portray the woman as a figure of comparison, highlighting what she lacks in comparison to this model. The lack that is referred to as the incompleteness of the female protagonists in the movies, indeed, represents the fundamental struggle of the cultural identity, namely, the struggle to close the distance between the self and the superior model. Laura Mulvey offers that “an idea of a woman stands as a lynch to pin the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as a symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the phallus signifies.”¹³²

Both the fundamental and the central traumatic point for the cultural identity is basically transmuted in woman’s subjectivity. In fact, in all the movies, what bothers the man truly is what the woman’s representation reminds him of, that is, the repressed tradition. Woman’s body, in the way it represents the sense of belatedness, yields out the “persistent lack, the irremovable deficiency, the unyielding inadequacy” in cultural identity.¹³³ In this regard, woman’s body is pinned as both the signifier of backwardness and, simultaneously as the potential body for

¹³¹ Ibid, 2.

¹³² Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 83.

¹³³ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 599.

the perfect synthesis. The body that is inscribed to represent the belatedness, is simultaneously articulated as the body of resolution through the context of transformation.

Here, the idea of self-transformation and the process that comes with it, those assigned to be compulsory and instrumental, turn into a determinative signifier that undertakes all the meaning inside the story. The transformation of the girls is referred to as the death of the former one, and the birth of the new one. Sabahat in *Kadın Değil Baş Belası* announces it as “Çengi Naciye has passed away, from now on, you are Princess Nazlışah.” The “death” of Güllü is quite remarkable in this sense, in the way that the call for her death is announced by the male protagonist himself: “Güllü is dead now. From now on, there is Gül.”

The transformation is commonly articulated as a story of an accomplishment, a victory, and a rebirth. This particular emphasis to evaluate the story as a victory as such reveals further importance in sense of cultural context. That is, the successful accomplishment of the girls inside the frame determined by the narrative eventually presents the national self that the official discourse of the modernization process aimed to create. Thus, how the image of the woman is imagined and constructed in the narrative is closely related to the idea of belatedness in the sense that melodramas eventually narrate the central fact of a culture. Peter Brooks articulates “however sophisticated we have become, the appeal of the melodramatic remains a central fact of our culture.”¹³⁴ In this sense, what the narrative establishes as a victory reveals the same central fact of our culture, that is, our need for the illusion of a national modern synthesis. In this regard, I offer to read the state of rebirth, one that is acclaimed as the entirety of the national identity, along with Homie Bhabha's concept of mimicry. I particularly aim to understand the roots that claim to represent unity for national identity, in the ways it lies back to a nationalist reflexivity towards a foreign intervention.

¹³⁴ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, ix.

If we go back to the very start, we see that the basic premise towards the girls' transformation here is that they are basically applauded for successfully performing a faithful imitation of the foreign model. Basically, these girls copy a series of behaviors, and a certain appearance determined based on a certain model. The set of instructions is served by the narrative in a way that defines the frame of how a modern woman is expected to be. That is, the women that are described as "modern" are presented inside the films in various ways by the narrative. It is sometimes the women in the movies, usually those around the male protagonists, sometimes those in fashion magazines as it is in *Tatlı Meleğim*, but certainly, a specific woman that fits in this very frame, as defined by the narrative. That is to say, these women are simply presented by the films as the ones that the female protagonists are expected to imitate. Bhabha offers that the act of mimicry is an essential and problematic result of colonial subjection in the sense that the colonized is simply expected to imitate the superior model, but it is always condemned to a sense of incompleteness regarding the distance between the self and the superior model.¹³⁵ His essential argument is that mimicry is an unintentionally reflexive act in the sense that the colonized may rarely realize that she undermines under the influence of a powerful system of normalized/idealized knowledge enacted by the superior model. Considering the case in the movies of our concern, the narrative claims to represent the changing woman as a perfect synthesis between national identity and modern interactions with preserving the identity from any damage caused by the foreign, yet, it disregards the ruling dominance of superior power and knowledge as the determinative effect of the transformation. The body of the woman with its transformation, thus, represents a conflict position, which Bhabha defines as "the body that loses its representational authority."¹³⁶ The body of the transformed woman, which is inscribed to be the perfect synthesis, indeed, represents nothing other than the normalized subjection of the woman by way of deploying idealized information. Furthermore, the image of a woman, one that is assumed to reach to the ideal, indeed, is a product of a conflictual compromise:

¹³⁵ Homie Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 90.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 92.

“Within that conflictual economy of colonial discourse, which Edward Said describes as the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination - the demand for identity, stasis - and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history - change, difference – mimicry represents an ironic compromise.”¹³⁷

As he puts, the concept of mimicry results from the conflictual era of the constant tension between the traditional power’s desire for constant authority and the domination of the natural progress of history. The ground that the colonial mimicry lays out is derived from these conflictual axes. Bhabha argues that the colonial power has “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.” That is, the superior model attempts to improve and develop the inferior model by way of transforming it into his account, yet, still necessarily maintains a certain distance between them, as a matter of authority in the hegemonic hierarchy. Simply, the inferior model transforms into one that imitates and resembles the ideal model but never is quite the same. That is why the imitated model is itself the representation of a certain difference. It is ambivalent, as Bhabha offers, because “it continually produces its slippage, its excess, its difference.”¹³⁸ Mimicry eventually operates in favor of the superior regarding the inferior is always pinned as the one who “appropriates the Other as it visualizes power.”¹³⁹ While on the one hand, it generates the inferior as a reproduction of the colonizer power, on the other hand, it simply creates an illusion of victory for the inferior culture. It simply creates a fantasy of victory for a society in the pursuit of the entirety, one “that has come to accept its insufficiency before a modern one presuming to be superior, and a culture that has adopted an infantile role when confronted by foreign ideals.”¹⁴⁰ Female protagonists, in this sense, work as a common representation of this fantasy in the ways they fulfill both the need of an ideal prototype for the imagined and desired community, and of a hope that this fantasy indeed a possible one.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 86.

¹³⁸ Bhabha, 86.

¹³⁹ Bhabha, 88.

¹⁴⁰ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 599.

At this point, if this portrayal is simply an illusion, rather than a victory, then why is all this celebration? I offer that the idea of a perfect synthesis, which makes us believe in a complete, undamaged national self, is simply an illusion. It is an illusion that helps create a fantasy inside which the cultural identity fulfills its desire that covers the process as one that poses a sense of victory, rather than an inherent failure. This realm of fantasy puts forwards the reel and imaginary peculiarities of Turkey's modernization experience in the ways it operates "beyond interpellation."¹⁴¹ That is, the national model, as it is imagined, succeed to create a sense of fulfillment that "has enabled us to see how the failure inherent in interpellation, the failure of power to fix the subject completely, is concealed by fantasy."¹⁴² The sense of illusion operates in the era of fantasy, within a complex structure in which the "external voice of power is transmuted as it is internalized by subjects."¹⁴³ As Butler addresses as the most insidious working of it, power operates in the era of psychic:

The interpellation of the subject through the inaugurative address of state authority presupposes not only that the inculcation of conscience already has taken place, but that conscience understood as the psychic operation of a regulatory norm, constitutes a specifically psychic and social working of power on which interpellation depends.¹⁴⁴

The common resolution of the narrative for the female protagonists operates within this regulatory space of social power. That is, the narrative runs a hysteric reversal in woman's subjectivity, one that poses an illusion of safety for the identity, and of happiness and power for the women. The body of the woman is first pinned as the virtuous, yet victimized; then, she has been subjected to a hysteric reversal and is rewarded, even honored with a set of signifiers that reveal the public sense of acceptance.¹⁴⁵ It is notable that in each film, female protagonists reunite with the male protagonists as the final and ultimate reward. The films offer a sense of agency to the female protagonists; however, the illusion of agency represents a fundamental ideological deception. In the end, the woman that is inscribed to be the promise wholeness for the national identity, in fact, represents the imaginary, fictional, and

¹⁴¹ Arslan, *Sublime yet Ridiculous*, 190.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 186.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 186.

¹⁴⁴ Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 113.

mythical foundations of modern, national culture,¹⁴⁶ which necessarily guarantees the patriarchal authority to last/proceed. The reason that the realm of fantasy centrally operates as an inherent reality is simply that it serves certain spots of desire within the era of psychic. It enables a society to proceed its internal power mechanisms to function thanks to this very era. In this sense, it is plausible to handle the issue as a reflexivity related to the demand of authority and the fear of castration, which is rooted in nationalist defiance, as Jusdanis offers:

Though people are confronted with the achievements of other societies, past and present, nationalism allows them to forget contingency, to ignore that they are part of history, that their story is one among many and certainly not the greatest, and that their culture, the most intrinsic experience of themselves as social beings, is not natural but invented.¹⁴⁷

Reproduction necessitates a sense of guarantee in patriarchal boundaries. The transformation serves as a familiar reproduction within the boundaries of a patriarchal order, in which the limits are determined simply according to the man's desire. Gönül Dönmez Colin states, that:

The woman is presented as what she represents for man, not in terms of what she *actually* signifies. Her *discourse*-her meanings, as she might produce them- is suppressed in favor of a discourse structured by patriarchy in which her real signification has been replaced by connotations that serve patriarchy's needs.¹⁴⁸

So, it is plausible to say that this "new woman" necessitates guaranteeing a series of values that guarantee the safety of the patriarch, that is, the conventional/traditional form/state of authority. The simplest, this illusion is what the cultural identity is in need of. The demand for keeping the rebirth of the woman within the limits of patriarchal boundaries is a matter of authority that prevents the identity from castration, which simply guarantees that the local authority is not crushed by foreign intervention.

¹⁴⁶ Arslan, *Sublime Yet Ridiculous*, 186.

¹⁴⁷ Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity*, 165.

¹⁴⁸ Gönül Dönmez-Colin, "Women in Turkish Cinema: Their Presence and Absence as Images and as Image-Makers," *Third Text* 24, Issue 1 (January, 2010): 91–105.

3.2.1. The Aftermath of the Self-Transformation: “Nothing has changed, other than what I am wearing”

Steve Neale offers that the narration in melodrama “involves the production of discrepancies between the knowledge and point of view of the spectator and the knowledge and points of view of the characters, such that the spectator often knows more.”¹⁴⁹ For the movies of our concern, woman’s self-transformation brings in the sense of ambiguity, which as well might be referred as a discrepancy. As well as the girls turn into fabulous women who are appreciated by everyone, there still stands a series of questions to be answered on whether they are as pure as they had been, or they will eventually fall into the trap of degeneration, like the men. Considering the fact that the foremost anxiety of the national identity is the national self-being threatened by a foreign ideal, the change of the girls poses a questionable state that jeopardizes social consciousness after all. At this point, the films operate within two initial points of illusion; one is to establish a discourse that “nothing has changed other than the girl's outfits,” and the other is to highlight the change as it is a personal development.

In *Güllü*, Güllü feels happy and pleased after she has transformed into a beautiful young lady, yet, her friend Ali utterly disagrees with her because of this doubt. He seems quite angry and disappointed when he sees Güllü transformed into a “city woman.” In further, we understand that Ali has loved Güllü as she was “a pure and innocent peasant girl,” yet, now he looks at “a woman whose shape is destroyed.” He yells at her while she stands in front of her photograph of her former look: “[Referring to the city life and people in the city.] This is what we do! We destroy one’s humanity. We destroy her shape, and we pollute her soul. Tell me, where is that once pure and innocent girl?” (Figure 3.12).

¹⁴⁹ Steve Neale, “Melodrama and Tears,” *Screen* 27, Issue 6 (1986), 7.



Figure 3.12. A scene from *Güllü* (1972)

Ali's question points out a number of initial insights regarding what cultural identity faces. First, he represents the severe social anxiety of losing the national self while pursuing a desire to catch up with the superior model. As I have discussed earlier, Yeşilçam melodramas construct an ambivalent discourse towards modernization. On the one hand, they construct modernity as the desired state, while simultaneously criticizing it as a cosmetic imitation of the Western¹⁵⁰ and threatening for traditional social and cultural traits. That is, films operate a critical discourse on modernization, but towards the modernization that the narrative itself creates. The central emphasis refers to one of the most fundamental anxieties of the cultural identity that the self would be destroyed by the "ills" of Western modernity. This surely brings in the initial hope that the national model will be one that is not affected by the very ill effects. Thus, the narrative, on the one hand, highlights the modernization in the way it is presented by narrative, on the other hand, it generates a discourse that "nothing has changed" in the girls after their self-transformation is completed. That is, the narrative creates an era of fantasy that the social degeneration which has transformed the man into a snob, will not affect the girls, because, nothing has truly changed in them. The constant expression that the girls have not changed fairly signifies an attempt to "manage and eradicate feelings of social anxiety and despair in a particular period." The films create a common illusion of agency, that is, the illusion of a victory gained before the very West, one that the cultural identity is in a fight with.

¹⁵⁰ Kaya-Mutlu, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 419.

In *Düğün Gecesi*, Zeynep comforts her servant Yusuf that “it is only the appearance” that has changed, and her heart is still “as steady as a rock.” In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, Murat struggles to believe that the woman he knows as Princess Nazlışah is actually his wife, Naciye. While Murat tries to understand how this much of change could be possible, Naciye explains that she has “sculpted a little bit, but everything is the same as it has always been.” Similarly, in *Kezban Paris’te*, Ayhan cannot believe when the woman he falls in love with in the party is revealed to be his wife, Kezban:

Ayhan: Look at yourself, look how much you have changed. You were not like this before!”

Kezban: Nothing else has changed, other than the clothes I am wearing, but you have never bothered yourself to see me for who I am.

Therefore, after the self-transformation is successfully completed, it is constantly emphasized that it is only the appearance for the girls that have changed, and nothing more.

On the other hand, a sense of self-inquiry, as well, is inevitable. As much as the girls are portrayed as they have embraced their new identity as a whole being without any trouble in adapting, it is also being questioned in the films, predominantly by the female protagonists themselves, whether these new women are still who they were before, or they have completely changed by sacrificing their former identity. Güllü asks herself in front of the mirror, “Who am I really?” and she confesses that there are now “two of Güllü.” Kınalı Yapıncak, while trying to detain herself from giving up her fight for revenge and forgive Engin, gripes to Father Avni: “Let’s say I forgive him, then how about that poor girl who has been raped and humiliated? How can she forgive?” Naciye feels sad and disappointed when Engin falls in love with Princess Nazlışah, without knowing that she is Naciye: “It is not me that he has fallen for, it is the outfit.” Leyla gets frustrated at Fikret: “You have loved not me, but loved the woman that is artificially created for you.” The central question here is, if nothing has truly changed, as it is claimed, then why the girls feel split or in betrayal to their former identity? It is obviously clear that the girls have been subjected to a considerable amount of both physical and moral changes. That is why the girls cannot stop questioning themselves within a sense of split. In this regard, the second

operation of the narrative is to highlight the transformation of the girls as a personal progress, but not a harmed one. After the girls complete their self-transformation process, it is notable that the central feeling projected upon the result is that all the girls are proudly welcomed as if they have accomplished a victory. The result is mainly evaluated within a discourse that places the change further than a successful accomplishment of a task, but a state of success and victory that arouses the feeling of admiration. As much as the upper class has predominantly been handled within a critical discourse, the modernization of the girls, which means the inclusion of the girls to the very class, are considered a pleasing development, a victory projecting a sense of pride, not only by the male protagonists, but also by the lower class figures in the movies. Servants, who are usually active participants in the transformation process, “cannot take their eyes off of the girls,” or “feel proud of what the girls have achieved.” In *Kezban Paris’te*, Uncle Kazim looks at Kezban with admiration and tells that “he wouldn’t believe that a woman can be so beautiful, even in one’s dream.” This accomplishment is celebrated, at the most, by the lower class by way of pinning the change as a state of success, and attributes the result to the girls’ potential. The overemphasis on the girls’ perfection is replaced at this point with the discourse that attributes the perfectness to their potential for the current transformation, which equally pins the result as the good processing of the capacity. After Uncle Ali sees Leyla in a fancy ball costume, having completed her transformation successfully, he gets so emotional that he almost cries: “What a beauty! I am so proud of you. I knew that such a beauty was lying beneath your pure heart, the first time I saw you.” Similarly, in *Kezban Paris’te*, Ayhan’s grandfather feels proud of Kezban after she transforms, and flatters her by telling that she reminds him of his wife’s memory of their young ages: “Believe me, I knew that there had been hidden such a beautiful soul under this beautiful face.” Necip’s sister in *Sarmaşık Gülleri* mentions of Gülseren to her mother: “I truly appreciate Gülseren. She has successfully applied everything we have told her to do, everything we have taught her to do. She is a very talented girl. She has become a perfectly modern young lady, much faster than I have imagined.” In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, after Naciye meets Murat as Princess Nazlışah, she feels frustrated towards Murat being incredibly impressed by the Princess. She grumbles to Sabahat:

Naciye: It makes so much sense to say “*ye kürküm ye*”¹⁵¹ It is not actually me, to whom he has fallen in, but my outfit.

Sabahat: No, my darling. The outfit only helped him open his eyes. It is actually *you* that he has fallen for.

Naciye cannot help but question the fact that Engin does not love Naciye for who she is, but for what she transformed into. This sense of duplicity brings a sense of self-inquiry for Naciye, that whether it is still possible to stay as Naciye after the transformation. Sabahat, however, comforts her by underlining that changing her outfit refers to nothing but an external change, precisely. What Sabahat precisely states is that Naciye can still be who she is, as long as she succeeds to preserve her original self.

The discourse aiming to construct the conviction that “nothing has changed, other than the girls’ outfits,” and the discourse that attempts to establish a legitimate ground for the new women, are in a constant clash inside the films. The narrative deals with this inquiry within two axes. First, the highlight of the film is that the transformation is only a matter of appearance, not one that erupts the moral peculiarities of the female protagonists. Second, is that the narrative is dominated by a sense that the girls experienced a personal development, which is considerably efficient to cover over the doubts, derived from the process. The overall aim of the narrative, thus, is to create an illusion of agency for the cultural identity, that it is possible to create a self-modernization without disturbing any moral attributes.

3.3. Self-Transformation and Desire: How Desire Follows the Glittered Capital

In each film, each of the girls experiences a determinant moment with the boy that results in with the decision to change. As I mentioned earlier, the decision is usually projected in a way that is surrounded by a sacred concept. The place of desire, however, remains rather veiled in this portrayal. That is, films are not designated as stories of women who start their journeys to experience the process of transformation for the sake of the transformation itself; rather, it is highlighted that

¹⁵¹ An idiom emphasizing that not one’s personality, but one’s appearance collects all the credit in people’s eyes.

the transformation is an instrumental compulsion. The central question I aim to ask here is whether the point of transformation is that of a compulsory one. What if the girl wishes to transform, not only for a sacred purpose but also for the possibility of becoming “the woman,” who is loved and desired by the men, along with all the promising brilliance of the modern life? Needless to say, female subjectivity in the movies of our concern is evaluated as the site of production regarding the modernization project. So is the desire of them. Here, I aim to understand the ways how the female desire is regulated by the narrative along with questions regarding the subjectivity and social norms.

I have discussed in earlier chapters that the question of identity in the context of belatedness is inevitably surrounded by the senses of fear, anxiety, inferiority, and forbidden pleasures. This problem is of crucial importance when the woman’s desire becomes the central concern.¹⁵² Laura Mulvey offers that the “woman’s desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound”¹⁵³ Female desire, thus, is presented in a conflictual discourse in Yeşilçam narrative, concerning the ways it is created, conflicted, and resolved. The question to be asked here is, who is the woman as the representative of a “bleeding wound” when her desire is the central concern? It is difficult to say that the narrative follows one exact pattern with a single-lined perspective in Yeşilçam melodramas. It is also challenging to mention of a one-way desire, which is assigned separately and exclusively for the woman, and for the man. Rather, in looking Yeşilçam, it is plausible to interpret that both the desires of men and women follow ambivalent routes, though in relatively different contexts, yet, in a way that are designated to merge eventually on what the modernization project itself desires. Simply, both the male and the female protagonists in the movies are united in what the official discourse creates as its desire for modernization.

In the movies of concern, the desire of the female protagonists is processed as the desire for recognition. The transformation is pinned as the very part of the desire, in

¹⁵² Çetin Sarıkartal, “Voice of Contraction: Melodrama, Star System, and a Turkish Female Star’s Excessive Response to the Patriarchal Order Voices,” *Performance Research* 8, no.1(2003): 85.

¹⁵³ Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 834.

the ways it is settled as a central tool for the path towards the path for recognition. This can be detailedly explained with Lacan's one of the most well-known maxim, one he places on the basis of his understanding of identity, that the desire is not autonomously of one's own, but of the Other.¹⁵⁴ In a Lacanian sense, it is demonstrated that the fundamental drive in desire is the desire for recognition: "the desire for recognition dominates the desire that is to be recognized, preserving it as such until it is recognized."¹⁵⁵ That is, the desire no longer enables an autonomous question when one asks, "What do I want?", yet, it is always shadowed by the dominance of "what the Other desires."¹⁵⁶ Here, the picture is revealed in the sense that the signifier referred to as the "Other" refers to the regulatory power of the social expectations, which is utterly interpellated by the scheme drawn by modernization experience. Umut Tümay Arslan agrees with Lacan's point, interpreting that the desire, in the way it reflects broader relations of social power, has left the question of what the Other wants, inside the traditional world of meaning in an irreversible way. So, for one to question her own desire, she always faces a set of ambivalent feelings, surrounded by questions that inevitably ask for what the society wants.¹⁵⁷ At this point, the signifier of this set of expectations is represented to be the man's, which determines the woman's subjectivity as stigmatized with the question "What does the man want/ask me to do?" This can be shown as the reason why all the girls either come up with or embrace the idea of transforming when the male protagonists humiliate them. It is notable that, most of the time, this follows a rather reflexive and natural way of comprehension in a way that knows what the man, eventually the society, expects from the girls. The mirror sequence in *Güllü*, and *Güllü's* decision that is referred to as the result of "what comes from her heart," is firmly shaped by this very interpellation of the same question:

[Güllü chooses to change after Fikret tells her to do what comes from her heart and appears in a modernized, transformed appearance. Fikret is amazed by how much Güllü has changed.]

Fikret: Güllü is dead already. From now on, there is Gül

Güllü: Do you think it is good this way?

¹⁵⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Norton and Company Publishing, 1998), 235.

¹⁵⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (New York and London: Norton and Company Publishing, 1999), 431.

¹⁵⁶ Jacques Lacan, *My Teaching* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 38.

¹⁵⁷ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 89.

Fikret: Are you not happy/pleased?

Güllü: I am! I have never been so happy in my life before.

Here, the prevailing condition in the previous scene is revealed with the question, which derived from and is directed to the same subject, when Güllü asks Fikret “Have I become the woman you want me to be?” Both the source and the direction of the question is the same subject here. Simply, the gaze from whom we ask for recognition is always the gaze of the superior. In this portrayal, desire always moves within the boundaries and barriers of the social power of regulation.¹⁵⁸ This is particularly designated as a result presented by the narrative that generates the female desire as one that follows man’s lead in the way it reveals the hegemonic imbalance between the sexes. As Laura Mulvey puts:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/men and passive/women. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on the female figure, which is styled accordingly. The impact of the women can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. She holds the look, plays to, and signifies the male desire.¹⁵⁹

Though she mainly discusses the male gaze in the sense of spectatorship, with a central focus on male pleasure in looking, it is plausible to mention that the narrative, as well, is designated to follow the same trajectory for the male and female protagonists in the movies, both by means of the identification, and organization of the stories. As she also offers, “the cinematic text is organized along lines that are corresponding to the cultural subconscious which is essentially patriarchic.”¹⁶⁰ The scheme given is essentially dominated by preexisting social patterns in which the female desire initially obeys the desire of the man. This is necessarily related to the fact that the normalized knowledge to be followed, speaks through the voice of power:

It is the social power that speaks through the woman body. Power is scraped into the woman's body and speaks through that. The periphery (*taşra*), which has been represented by the woman, is always a part of patriarchal fantasies. The woman, who is rescued by modernization, is always subjugated to modern patriarchal discourse. Such that, the woman is marked as the one that imagines, desires and enjoys this passive position of dependency.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 89.

¹⁵⁹ Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 837.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 833.

¹⁶¹ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 110.

This surely describes what power does to a subject, by way of internally pressing and relegating her. Butler, as mentioned previously, offers to handle this scheme of dependency as an initial matter of subjection. In following Foucault, she describes that the female subjectivity is formed within the boundaries of subjection, one that paradoxically initiates one's agency. Butler puts:

We understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the beings that we are.¹⁶²

Butler remarks a conflictual state of identity, at this point, as she offers that the subject is passionately in need of this sense of dependency for her very existence. She points out that the subjects fundamentally consist an attachment to her superior in a way that also regulates the trajectory of her desire. Ultimately in each of the film, the trajectory of the female desire moves towards the superior model, to whom the subjectivity is attached. Nurdan Gürbilek analyzes:

Desire always goes after capital from the periphery toward the homeland of capital, toward glittering goods and dazzling objects. In fact, it is this very distance—distance to the capital of desire—that makes modern provinciality what it is. There is never an autonomous and self-sufficient province that can “go back to itself”; on the contrary, the province is always what is provincialized, seized, and seduced by the “superior” other.¹⁶³

Finally, the common story of the female protagonists is that of an inferior's desire for inclusion, who “is captivated by the lights of the city.”¹⁶⁴ Central tension for the female protagonists arises in the conflictual era in between the feeling of inferiority in the eyes of the superior, along with the fear of not being recognized and approved, and the desire to be recognized and approved by the superior.¹⁶⁵ This tension becomes one of the founding constituents in woman's subjectivity. In the ways it has been produced by the narrative, victimization of the female protagonists generates an era of desire, one that desires for an imaginary realm in which the girls are no longer objects of humiliation, and the difference is removed completely.¹⁶⁶ At this

¹⁶² Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 2.

¹⁶³ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 620.

¹⁶⁴ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 110

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 96

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 81

point, it is easier to understand how the transformation has been designed in the narrative in a way to be perceived with joy and pride by girls, after all. We have already mentioned that the self-transformation of the female protagonists is considered a pleasant event by both the lower class and upper class. Notably, it follows a similar route for the female protagonists in a considerable amount of the films. I offer to focus on a series of scenes at this point. In *Dağdan İnme*, Elif and her sisters learn that they are inherited with a huge amount of money from a long-gone relative. Elif immediately decides that she will use the money to transform into a woman that Vedat would be impressed by, not one that resembles a “bear down from the mountains,” so that she will be able to take her revenge after Vedat’s abandoning. Elif follows the similar process as all the other female protagonists, including private classes on dance and sports, and a series of sessions on personal care and appearance.



Figure 3.13. A scene from *Dağdan İnme* (1973)



Figure 3.14. A scene from *Dağdan İnme* (1973)



Figure 3.15. A scene from *Dağdan İnme* (1973)

It is notable that Elif and her sisters celebrate the successful accomplishment of their process of transformation by tearing apart the pictures that represent their old appearance, dancing with joy and screaming “*yaşasın, yaşasın, yaşasın!*”¹⁶⁷ (Figures 3.13- 3.15). Elif and her sisters have real fun during the process of transformation. It is usually valid for most of the girls while they are transforming. Regardless of how much the process is portrayed with various challenges, it is always depicted positively. This surely reveals regarding the trajectory of the desire. On the one hand, it surely points out the fact that inclusion into a certain social category guarantees a sense of recognition. However, this does not alone explain how the social norms are internalized by the subjects. It firmly operates within a sense of inculcation of conscience as a “psychic operation of a regulatory norm, constitutes a specifically psychic and social working of power.”

Furthermore, it is important to note that the transformation, together with the consequences it brought, is always designated in a way that serves audiences’ point of view. In *Kıralı Yapıncak*, once poor, humiliated Kınalı Yapıncak transforms into a fancy woman by the help of an unexpected inheritance and come back to her aunt’s mansion as Leyla, as the new owner of the mansion. This reverse in the roles, reverse in the figure of power explicitly serves the audiences’ desire, particularly female audiences’ desire. Laura Mulvey observes that there are two initial standpoints in melodrama. One is the dominating point of view of the female protagonists, which mainly operates as a source of identification.¹⁶⁸ Though she adds that this perspective does not ultimately initiate the narrative, it surely acts a machinery of internalization for the female audiences. For Yeşilçam, Nezih Erdoğan offers that the agenda of upward mobility “provides the ground upon which melodrama plays and activates its machinery of desire.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, successful transformation of the female protagonists in the movies serves as a possibility of identification in the era of desire. Erdoğan puts:

¹⁶⁷ An expression of joy, roughly meaning “yay!”

¹⁶⁸ Laura Mulvey, “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama,” in *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film 1987*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), 76.

¹⁶⁹ Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 266.

Possibilities of identification in these films are a matter of justifying the audience's (especially female audience's) desire for and wish to be desired by the upper-class Yeşilçam melodramas thus offered a sense of legitimacy to the squatters who had migrated from rural areas.¹⁷⁰

Ultimately, in each of the films, modernization process, in the ways, it is represented through a certain process of transformation, performs two conflictual roles simultaneously. It operates as both the causative of the desire led by modernization itself and, as the one, which provides the illusion of completeness of the very desire. That is, despite all the ambivalence within the narrative, what Yeşilçam offers, all in all, is to construct modernity as a desirable state.¹⁷¹

3.3.1. How desire is outlanded in dream sequences: “We have lived a love like a dream.”

In the sense of desire, I aim to analyze the dream sequences in *Kezban Roma'da* and *Kıvalı Yapıncak* in the ways both the films offer notable insights concerning how the female protagonists' unconscious follows a certain pattern towards the modernization. In both the films, female protagonists see a commonly similar dream in which they imagine themselves as beautifully dressed-up, modernized women, dancing with the male protagonists. I aim to analyze the sequences in the ways they project how the female desire in a way that reveals notable insights concerning the social unconscious.

In *Kezban Roma'da*, Kezban has to move in her uncle's house in Istanbul when her father dies. Her uncle's wife and his stepdaughter Nazan are quite disturbed with this new guest. One day, Nazan takes Kezban to the beach club with her and introduces her to her friends as their new servant from the village. Erol is one of Nazan's friends who come to the beach on that day. The second time Erol and Kezban encounter takes place on this beach. When Erol sees Kezban, he does not recognize her, thinking that she is one of the employees of the beach, asks for a bottle of clean water from her (figures 3.16 and 3.17).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 266.

¹⁷¹ Kaya-Mutlu, Dilek, *Between Tradition and Modernity*, 418.



Figure 3.16. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 3.17. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

Kezban remembers Erol immediately and feels devastated by the fact that he did not recognize and thinks that she is a servant in the club. Erol feels guilty and shy when Kezban says that she does not work here, but he still does not remember who Kezban is (figures 3.18 and 3.19).



Figure 3.18. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 3.19. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

After the incident in the beach, Kezban is surrounded by the sorrow of realizing that she, indeed, does not belong to a shared picture with Erol, because of the difference

between them. This moment operates as a reminder of where she truly belongs to, indicating a state of self-recognition:

[Kezban talks to Uncle Kazım after she listened to Erol and Nazan talking]
Kezban, crying: I should have never left my village, I would have been happier that way. As the days pass, I understand the fact that I will never be able to keep up with the life here, and that I will be despised for being the daughter of a poor fisherman, more and more every day. *[She tells Uncle Kazım that she has known Erol from a wedding back in her village and she has hosted him in her house. Today, she has seen him again in the beach club, but he did not remember her.]* He thought I was a maid working over there. He was right. His life is so different from mine. How can he remember a poor, peasant girl like me he saw months ago!

Having learned the way she looks in the eyes of Erol, has awakened the feelings of embarrassment and inferiority in Kezban's self-recognition. Though she acts entirely different in front of Nazan's friends while they are making fun of her appearance, she cannot help herself feel the same way as them, regarding this time, it is Erol's gaze. On the same night, Kezban sees a dream that she is transformed into a beautiful woman with a fancy dress, dancing with Erol in a beautifully decorated room. The scene is accompanied by the song "we have had a love, almost like a dream." It is no coincidence that either the time, nor the space, or the context of the dream follows a common way towards Erol. Her dream is interrupted by Nazan's throwing a piece of cloth on Kezban, for her to iron.

On the other day, Kezban enters in the kitchen dancing with joy, "Guess where I am going! You could no way guess! My uncle will take me to the ball tomorrow, too. I will attend to a ball for the first time in my life" Here, the agenda of attending to a party is a part of Kezban's dream. The third time they encounter is when Kezban joins to the masquerade ball that she has mentioned, all transformed, and dresses like a "fairy girl" with the help of all the servants in of the house. The servants of the house join in Kezban's dream by making it possible. Without knowing who she is, Erol falls in love with Kezban at first sight, yet, it is actually not the first time he has seen her. In the ball, Kezban and Erol dance all night long. While dancing, Erol feels himself inside a dream, which is soon to be revealed as the same dream that Kezban had. Notably, what enables it possible for Erol to share the same dream with Kezban is the

transformation of her. Similarly, in *Güllü*, Ahmet joins in the *horon*¹⁷² with Güllü and his servants, after Güllü is successfully transformed and “become the woman he wants.” (Figures 3.20 and 3.21)



Figure 3.20. A scene from *Güllü* (1972)



Figure 3.21. A scene from *Güllü* (1972)

Similarly, in *Hayat Sevince Güzel*, it is no coincidence that the scene when all the town joins in a collective dance performance with Ayşe, is not before, but after Ayşe successfully completes her self-transformation. Commonly, the welcoming of the girls comes with the fact that they all come to terms within the frame drawn by the male protagonists.

After Kezban comes back from the party, she clearly knows that what she comes back to is the very reality she belongs in:

[After the ball, Kezban lies on the bed with her party clothes, crying. Uncle Kazım enters in]

Kazım: Are you crying? You have not changed your clothes. Are you not glad that you went to the ball?

Kezban: How wouldn't I? I have lived a night that I will never live in my life again. [She confesses that she is in love with Erol]. But, there is such a huge gap between us. There is no way for us to be together. I do not regret that I have gone to the party. I will live with the memory of this night, for the rest of my life.

For Kezban, it is clear that the party can only be a pleasing memory, which she will remember for the rest of her life. She lives a severe sadness and disappointment towards the fact that Kezban and Erol cannot be together, since “there is such a huge gap” between the two. The party night demonstrates for Kezban that they can share the same dream with Erol, only if Kezban were a woman who fits in in Erol's world. The dream that Kezban had earlier turns into a real moment, particularly by virtue of

¹⁷² A traditional folk game played in the Black Sea region.

her transformation into a modern lady. The dream, thus, Kezban desires for is that she is recognized and loved, so that the couple's love is not an impossible one. This simply addresses that the "huge gap" between them is closed, which is only possible with her step further towards Erol's life.

In *Kıvalı Yapıncak*, after Kıvalı Yapıncak has to move in her aunt's house, she witnesses a party on the night she came. Earlier that day, she was not welcomed by her aunt and was treated roughly here; her aunt cuts her long beautiful hair and makes her live in the outbuilding together with the gardener Avni. On the party night, she watches the party behind the window of her room, watches her cousin Vedat and his lover kissing and laughing, and fancy guests, all dressed-up in fashionable costumes, drinking whiskey and having fun together all night long. As the scene goes by, we hardly catch a sign of a feeling in her face that would give a clue about what she thinks, yet, it is projected that she has just started to face a certain degree of alienation. The same night, Kıvalı Yapıncak sees in her dream that she is one of those women in the party, those who dress up like a lady, who can dance. She evens herself, evens the two separate worlds by simply crossing the edge towards Vedat's picture. She turns into a woman who does not have to be in the storehouse, who can be in the party, who can dance and who can charm Fikret. The dream of Kıvalı Yapıncak is interrupted with a slap of her aunt, that is, the reality. In further scenes, Kezban is raped by Vedat and is fired from the house by her aunt after claiming that she is pregnant. In what follows, Kıvalı Yapıncak is inherited with a huge amount of money, succeeds to transform and come back for revenge as Leyla. This time, Vedat dances with Leyla for real this time, after she tells him: "I want to dance." She, indeed, wishes to dance since the moment she had the dream. Here, as well, the self-transformation of Kıvalı Yapıncak has been the signifier that made it possible for her to live her dream as a real moment.

The interpretation of the dreams in the psychoanalytic investigation of the unconscious has widely been studied. Freud's interpretation of dreams remarks that the dreams operate within the unconscious with a central attempt of "wish-fulfillment," that is, to resolve any sense of conflict, while Lacan stresses the

importance of the effect of repression. In his re-working of Freud's theory of unconsciousness, he clarifies that it is impossible to mention of an unconscious without a broader relation of repression.¹⁷³

In the sequences of our concern, both the female protagonists see a similar dream, which commonly addresses a precise desire for upward mobility to a modern world. The idea of transforming into a modern woman, who is well known to be the one that appeals the male protagonists' attention, constitutes the core of the dreams. Both the girls dream about a moment of aspiration, inside which the certain lack in their identity is fulfilled, the distance between her and her object of desire is closed, and they are united with the male protagonists as surrounded by a happy love story. The concept of lack is always a matter of desire. In both the dreams, the idea of transformation certainly brings a wish fulfillment of a desire of the girls. Notably, in both of the films, the girls see the dream, not before, but after they have faced a certain degree of humiliation by the male protagonists. At the center of the encounter, there stands the girls' acknowledging the fact that they belong in "separate worlds," simply because that the girls are incompetent towards what the current conditions necessitate. It is both very plausible, yet, very notable that the step taken for a resolution is one that follows a line from the girl to the boy, from the inferior to the superior. Each of the dreams signifies a clear desire for a sense of rising to the male protagonist's world, and it operates as an initial part of the female desire, as it is surrounded by a love story.

3.3.2. Kezban as an Alternative Way of Reading the Desire: "You are not a schoolgirl anymore."

Among the movies of our concern, the movie *Kezban* differs with a point from the rest in the sense that the female protagonist, Kezban, follows a rather different path while she experiences her self-transformation. Rather than an attempt to pursue revenge from the male protagonist, Kezban follows a process of self-transformation,

¹⁷³ He offers that rather than the a repression of feelings, dreams hides a fundamental core, which he names "navel", which is beyond interpretation.

which is generated as a form of natural adaptation to the city life and highlights the process as a progress of personal development.

After her husband abandons her, Kezban's mother hides the fact that she was pregnant when he left her. After she passes away, she leaves a letter behind, confessing him that he has a daughter named Kezban. Introducing himself to Kezban as her long gone uncle, Ali offers to take her with him to İstanbul. The night they arrived at the house in İstanbul, they coincide with a huge party held by Kezban's sister, Jale, in the garden of their mansion. The story of Kezban starts with an unpleasant encounter on that night. She is clearly not welcomed by her sister and her friends. Indeed, Jale's friends harshly make fun of her clothes, her looks, and where she comes from. Particularly, Ayhan, in front of all the guests, makes fun of Kezban and encourages everyone to do so.

The other day, Kezban joins in a boat tour together with the same group. The humiliating attitude from previous day continues, yet, Ayhan, feeling regretful about what he has done, defends Kezban at this time. However, after what happened in the party, Kezban has sworn that "she will never forgive him for her entire life." In both scenes, Kezban is particularly highlighted for her prideful defense towards the snobbish arrogance of the people who disrespect her for her peasant background. Kezban is, too, humiliated by the male protagonist and his friends; yet, she does not pursue a revenge of any kind. Instead, she pridefully embraces her background as a peasant girl, even, she sublimates the non-modern way of living in comparison with the life in the city. The night she is made fun of as an object of mockery, her defense is almost pedagogical: "It is not a fault to be a peasant. Indeed, I am proud of being a peasant. I do not think that there is anything to be ashamed of in my clothes, either. I do not think I am in an odd shape; I think you are the odd ones." Kezban and Ayhan, in this sense, perfectly portray two of the main axes of Turkey's modernization process:

The dichotomy of 'East and West,' the asymmetry between it, along with the difference that emerges from this very asymmetry, absorb the feelings that are resulted in with the experience of modernity, and the questions about the

self. This difference is embedded as bragging and arrogance in the center/city, and as self-contempt or pride, in the periphery/village.¹⁷⁴

In what follows, Kezban goes to the boarding section of Saint Benoit High School, and Ayhan is accepted by a medical school in Europe for his medical expertise. Before leaving Istanbul, Ayhan goes to Kezban's school to visit and apologize for her, yet, Kezban still has no intention to forgive him. She does not to meet him in the guest room; she only watches him leaving the house with the flowers she brought for her. It is worth considering that, Ayhan does not wait for Kezban's intervention to regret his mistake, yet he tries to apologize to Kezban for two times before he leaves. From this point on, Kezban's process of adaptation continues in a way that she transforms into an attractive, modern lady, one that is followed separately from Ayhan.

By the time Ayhan has been in Europe, Kezban graduates from the high school and meets Faruk, an architect working with Kezban's uncle, who soon becomes her closest friends. One day, Faruk asks Kezban if he could draw a picture of her, and Kezban gladly accepts.



Figure 3.22. A scene from Kezban (1968)



Figure 3.23. A scene from Kezban (1968)

Faruk spends a long time drawing Kezban, while she stands on a tree posing for him with a shy smile. After he finishes his sketch, we see that he draws Kezban all different from what she looks like. The picture is of a woman wearing a fancy outfit, with a feminine haircut and poses almost as if she is a professional model. Kezban feels surprised towards what she sees:

Kezban, surprisingly: But, this is not the way my hair looks like. And, you have drawn my clothes all different, too.

¹⁷⁴ Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları*, 93-95.

Faruk: “Don’t you have any respect for the imagination of an artist? I have drawn you the way I wish to see you, not the way you currently are. You also need to put some makeup on. You are not a schoolchild anymore; you are now, a young lady.

Kezban, cheerfully smiling: I liked this dress! (Figures 3.22 and 3.23)

She feels a little shy, yet, seems pleased towards what she has seen, and confesses that she “really liked this dress.” Here, what pleases Kezban, ironically, points out the very same set of expectations as she faces at the night she stands in the middle of a party as an object of mockery. Following this scene, as consecutive images, we see Faruk taking photographs of Kezban in various places and wearing different outfits (figures 3.24-3.27).



Figure 3.24. A scene from *Kezban* (1968)



Figure 3.25. A scene from *Kezban* (1968)



Figure 3.26. A scene from *Kezban* (1968)



Figure 3.27. A scene from *Kezban* (1968)

Kezban, indeed, *does* like the dress and the hair that Faruk’s imagination has chosen for her, that is, she embraces the way that Faruk desires to see Kezban as not “a school girl,” but as “a young lady.” In the pictures floating, we see Kezban posing for Faruk in various places, with various outfits, all of which represent an ideal image of what a modern, educated young woman is expected to look. Even the modern use of a scarf is included in the scene, that is, not in the way Kezban used to wear it at the night she comes to İstanbul from her village, but in a way that properly suits to a fancy lady, as she is now.



Figure 3.28. A scene from Kezban (1968)



Figure 3.29. A scene from Kezban (1968)

The transformation is not limited with images of Kezban in fancy clothes, yet, accompanied with a visual representation of her playing tennis, and swimming in a pool with swimsuits (figures 2.28 and 2.29).

After several years, Ayhan comes back from Europe. The night he comes back, he meets with his friends. Kezban, also, is in the same nightclub with them, yet this time, she is not the humiliated, braided peasant girl with an old-fashioned coat, but is a fancy lady who has fun as much as the others. Ayhan watches her dancing with Faruk, all happy and charming, and all “changed so much” than the last time he has seen her.



Figure 3.30. A scene from Kezban (1968)



Figure 3.31. A scene from Kezban (1968)

Kezban is portrayed as a very coherent element of the party, who does not seem to have any trouble fitting in the portrayal (figures 3.30 and 3.31). She neither tries to make Ayhan feel jealous nor acts a role as a part of a plan. She seems that she accomplished her complete adaptation, on the contrary to the night when she feels like she would “never succeed to adapt to this life.” On the other hand, Ayhan cannot hide his feelings, since the last time he saw Kezban, she was a “sweet and little

schoolgirl,” yet, he finds her as “a glamorous young woman with a completely modern look, who would take any man's breath away.”¹⁷⁵

While Ayhan was away in Europe, Kezban has been through a process that ended up achieving to reach “a charm that takes men’s breath away,” remarkably, in a way that does not happen by virtue of Ayhan. As much as Kezban seems different than the other female protagonists in the sense that she does not pursue vengeance, that she does not pin Ayhan as the object of vengeance, I offer that Kezban by no means demonstrates a groundbreaking difference from the other female protagonists. She, too, as well as the other girls, feels afraid and worried towards the very changes she has to face, surrounded by the same concerns:

[The night she comes to Istanbul, after the party incident, Kezban cannot sleep. The other day, she gets up quite early and runs into her aunt in the yard of the mansion. She looks desperately sad.]

Kezban: I think I will never succeed to adapt to this life.

Aunt Fazıla: You have to forget about this idea first. If you attempt to go back, it means that you accept the defeat.

Kezban: I have lost all my power to fight after the encounter on last night.

Aunt Fazıla: If you really want, you can close the gap with your beauty, elegance, and intelligence in a short span of time. I will help you with this.

Though the narrative does not centralize Ayhan in Kezban’s story as an object of desire, it still puts Kezban in jeopardy, in the way she is faced a considerable amount of a social changings that she has to deal with. That is, she does not fight with a man for revenge, but she gives a fight for herself, against the fact that crossing from the village to the big city, inevitably brings a series of consequences. Though the sense of incompleteness remains rather veiled in Kezban’s story, it is irremovably one of the consequences. Kezban, in this regard, points out a process of modernization, one that should eventually and naturally experience, rather than one that is enacted by a man’s ruling or covered with a seemingly ethical divined purpose. Another fact is that Kezban, as well, is subjected to the same state of subordination though her story is dominated by the discourse that portrays Kezban as she is happy and satisfied with

¹⁷⁵ “The last time I saw you, you were a sweet, little schoolgirl. Now, I am standing here, looking at you, a glamorous young woman with a completely modern look, who would take any men’s breath away.”

what she chooses by herself. Ultimately, it is generated that what Kezban has experienced is nothing but a personal development for her own sake, called by her own choice.

Kezban also differs from the others in the way that Kezban is supported by not the lower class, but the members of the upper class. Her compassionate aunt and her friend Faruk encourage her for nothing but the necessity to fight, adapt, and change, in a very nice, kind and reasonable way. It is strongly underlined that Kezban has made a perfectly reasonable choice by choosing to change. Overall, Kezban represents a perfect representation of the idea of the perfect synthesis. She is the only character who is highlighted by her successful school life and her hardworking character among the other movies of our concern. Apart from the other female protagonists, the agenda of education in an academic sense is included in Kezban's personal development.

CHAPTER 4

FATHERS AND SONS AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE SNOB: MASCULINITY IN CRISIS

“If, as Freud suggests, character is constituted by identification—the ego likening itself to what it once loved—then character is close to caricature, an imitation of an imitation.”¹⁷⁶

“It has been impossible to confess; no one has been truly honest. Nothing is as it seems, yet, it insists on seeming that way. That is why everyone, eventually, turns into a caricature of what he imitates, of what he claims to be.”¹⁷⁷

Yeşilçam melodramas, specifically the ones of 60s and 70s, particularly place sexual difference, namely, gender conflict at the center of the narrative. That is, the movies discuss the broad meanings of being a man or a woman, as it constitutes the core of the narrative, revealing its patterns through the central relationship of male and female protagonists. This peculiarity walks us through how the formation of male and female identities is a matter of mutual conflict, as well as how a cultural text deals with the story in terms of filmic representation and cultural context.

My main concern in this chapter will be to analyze the man as the constitutive and transformative subject of woman, particularly keeping my main focus on the common features and acts of the male protagonists in the sense each one represents the archetype of a snob. The figure of snob in the melodramas of our concern stands for two initial reference points regarding the cultural identity and the modernization experience. The first is the controversial position of superiority of the male protagonists over the females, and the second is the politics of excessive representation of the male protagonists as a snob. Thus, I aim to analyze the man as grounded in two objectives. First, is to lay out a general framework regarding the snob as an archetype, and question the veiled details of his identity, in the way that

¹⁷⁶ Adam Philips, *Terrors and Experts*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 77.

¹⁷⁷ Bülent Somay, “Bir Garp Mukallidi Züppe’nin İtirafı” *Defter*, No:43 (2001): 39.

it hides particular references of a belated modern. Second, I will focus on the critical representation of the snob in the movies, aiming to understand what Yeşilçam narrative pursue by representing the snob in an excessiveness.

4.1. Emergence of the Snob: The Story of a Loss

The lost objects are the only ones one is afraid to lose.¹⁷⁸

Christian Metz

In all the movies of our concern, male protagonists represent a common archetype of a snob. They are commonly described as those who have excessive bounds with the European, namely, modern lifestyle and values. They are typically portrayed with negative conventions such as being arrogant, pedant, and insolent. They are neither honest, nor reliable. They are, commonly, sons of wealthy and traditional families, but, they are not reconciled with their traditional backgrounds, that is, being a member of traditional families. Moreover, they usually feel ashamed by their families' traditional leanings. They are often well educated, mostly graduated from schools in Europe, but do not usually work, rather, they live as heirs. Moreover, they are neither grateful, nor careful yet, they are quite lazy and wasteful towards the money of their families. Instead of working, they live a life "under the attack of desire"¹⁷⁹, devoted to money, luxury and material pleasure. Their portrayal of everyday life is highlighted in the way how they spend their days in crazy parties, surrounded by alcohol, dance, blondes with mini-skirts, and luxury cars. Families are quite concerned that their sons will be wasted in the idle life they have been living. For the families, it works as a prescription to encourage their sons to marry to a decent girl and settle down. They wish that they marry to a well-behaved girl, change the way they live, and go back to their "original self"¹⁸⁰. In what follows, either as a

¹⁷⁸ Christian Metz, *The Imagery Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1977), 80.

¹⁷⁹ Umut Tümay Arslan. "Gecikmiş Modernlik, Ulusal Kimlik ve Türk Sineması" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation) in Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Üniversitesi Radyo Televizyon Sinema Anabilim Dalı, Ankara, 2007, 54.

¹⁸⁰ Gürbilek elaborates the term "original self" in order to highlight the idea of an origin for national identity, particularly for the nations who are in between the experience of revising the national identity under a series of new circumstances.

result of families' compulsion, or of a financial difficulty, male protagonists come to a point where they become the subject of a compulsory relationship with the female protagonists. The most essential reflex, in a way that reveals their characteristic traits, come out at this very point. That is, marriage agenda, the possibility of women's participating in men's life as a "woman" in terms of a romantic relationship, is perceived as a border violation that threatens the boys. The snob harshly opposes to the idea of marrying to a peasant girl. The idea of marriage is handled with a common reaction of opposition and dislike regarding the female protagonists, which is cluttered around the idea of girls' not being good enough, not fitting in the snobs' lifestyle. In much of the cases, they even cannot help themselves feel disgusted by the girls, stating that they are not worthy of neither the boy or the modern life in the city. It is sometimes projected as they are having a hard time naming what is truly wrong with the girls, it is usually manifested as a problem of girls not fitting in the world they live. That is, they do not satisfy with the current image of the girls in comparison to what they desire. Following the common trait, female protagonist experiences a self-transformation and succeeded to charm the men, that help them reach the end where all live happily ever after.

Female protagonists are handled nearly as objects of gaze inside the narrative whose peculiarities differ from one gaze to another. That is, female protagonists are praised for their innocence and decency by those around them, and/or by the families of the male protagonists themselves, while on the other hand, they are harshly judged by the male protagonists. Central here is the highlight that the girls are evaluated with a particularly judgemental gaze by the male protagonists out of a single reason, that the male gaze had been shaped by the interpellation of the superior model.

In *Kadın Değil Baş Belası*, Murat (Engin Çağlar) has to get married in order to use the inheritance that passes to him. So, the family lawyer arranges a fake marriage between Murat and Naciye (Türkan Şoray), who is sentenced to death. Soon after, Naciye is justified to be innocent and acquits of the death sentence. The night when she is released, Naciye goes to Murat's house with a great eagerness, thinking that there is not an obstacle in front of their marriage any more. But, Murat clearly

declares that this marriage can no way be a real one. She follows after Murat, climbs all the way through the house's roof to enter his room and desperately begs him to love her, to give this marriage a chance. Murat stands as steady as a rock, Naciye does not see why she repels Murat this much.



Figure 4.1. A scene from Düğün Gecesi (1966)



Figure 4.2. A scene from Düğün Gecesi (1966)

Trying to convince him that she is not actually an invaluable, repellant woman as he sees, she tells about how precious she is in the eyes of the men in her neighbourhood:

You are such a fastidious! Why can't you like me? You do not like me, but I am hell of a woman! All the men in my neighbourhood have huge crushes on me. When I pass through the street, there is not a single man who is not fascinated by my beauty. The grocery, factory laborers, storekeepers, even the students, everyone. Even officer Recai proposed me, he would divorce his wife with three kids, if I said yes. (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

Murat will never be convinced, neither will Naciye. A while later, after a night when Murat clearly states that he is ashamed and disgusted of her, Naciye decides to transform, take her revenge and gain Murat's love. By the help of her neighbours' financial and moral support, Naciye takes various classes to become a woman who can impress Murat and returns as Princess Nazlışah.



Figure 4.3. A scene from Düğün Gecesi (1966)



Figure 4.4. A scene from Düğün Gecesi (1966)

Murat, enchanted by the beauty of her, falls in love with the Princess at first sight. The other day, Murat and Princess begin to travel İstanbul together, he cannot stop complimenting to her, while they are sitting together in a fancy bar, he says: “Your eyes are so beautiful.” Having known the answer very well, Princess asks: “What if I were not a princess? What if these eyes, maybe even more beautiful ones, did belong to a slum chick? Would you still be so sweet and warm to her?” (Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

It is the main point concerning the archetype of snob in the movies of our concern is that they strongly dislike the girls despite the fact that almost all of the female protagonists are loved and admired by those around them. The question is, then, why Murat is repelled by Naciye, while on the other hand, “the grocery, factory laborers, storekeepers, even the students, everyone in the neighbourhood” are ready to die for her? Put in other words, it is not Naciye that has changed, but it is the gaze that evaluates her. Then, what does Murat’s gaze further refers to? What is the difference between the way Murat sees Naciye and the way those in Naciye’s neighbourhood?

With half an eye, it is conceivable to make a quick judgement and read the overall picture as man’s hegemonic authority, that is, man’s priority over the woman. Though it is partially true since Yeşilçam narrative eventually speaks with a male-

dominant undertone, a further reading will easily take us to a point that the seemingly authority of the man is, in fact, a conflict one.

Male protagonists approach the females within a certain point, which is to examine the girls in terms of their ability to fit in modern lifestyle. Here, each male protagonist behaves as if he is the representative of modernity, that is, he is the creator, not one that adopts it. Nurdan Gürbilek argues that snob provides a broader framework to discuss belatedness in the way he embraces the modern codes and conducts as if those are his very own values. That is to say, snob deals within a complexity of a sense of belatedness while he blames the woman for being “peripheral, provincial, underdeveloped, and inadequate.” Though he is not the original creator of the modern codes and conducts, but one that adopts them from who originally create them, a snob internalizes those values. So that, he acts in a way that attributes himself the superiority to criticize ones that have not been able to keep up with the historical process in the way they do. It is constantly emphasized inside the narrative that the male protagonists are not Westerners by origin, yet, they happen to trapped in a sense that they are. The fundamental emphasis on a common trait among male protagonists in the movies is that they are carried away by the foreign ideals, and feel disdain for his historical/cultural background. It is emphasized that the excessive engagement with the foreign ideals result in with being ethically spoiled. Thus, they are repeatedly accused of being “spoilt”, of “losing their traditional moral values”, “being disengaged with their origin” because of their unconditional admiration of the Western culture. In *Düğün Gecesi*, Zeki feels extremely uncomfortable when his father forces him to marry Zeynep, the daughter of a peasant family, who he sees as “a bear from the mountains”. Zeki’s father complains that his family is not worth a respect for Zeki any more, after he experiences the life in Europe. He says “I have sent my son to Europe, now, he does not appreciate us. He is ashamed of his own origin¹⁸¹.” Similarly, in *Kezban Paris’te*, Ayhan’s grandfather wishes to arrange a traditional wedding ceremony for Ayhan and Kezban. Ayhan, finding himself in this compulsory agenda, does not want to get married with a traditional party, and he

¹⁸¹ In Turkish “asil” signifies a similar reference put by Gürbilek.

cannot perform traditional dances. His grandfather insists on the idea of having a traditional wedding party for Ayhan and Kezban, "...an old style, the way our fathers did. Not like snobs, but like our fathers, our grandfathers. Do not tell me that you cannot keep up with these dances, aren't you my grandson? Are you denying who you actually are?" They are estranged from their society's traditional values, and disinterested in their national history, because they simply find their culture deficient, and their tradition inadequate. They are so carried away by the Western values accompanying modernization, that they have lost their original self, inside the foreign ideal. This separation trails them to a point where they abandon cultural/historical heritage, that is, national identity that is inherited to them.

They purposefully establish a certain distance with their "insufficient" culture of theirs, and establish an independent identity, hoping that this would enable them unchained from the old fashioned expectations of the "traditional father". It is on the basis of the fundamental understanding of the snob, that the self is never an autonomous entity, yet, is always "...what is provincialized, seized, and seduced by the "superior" other."¹⁸² The snob emerges on this very line of interpellation, that is, he loyally responds to the interpellation of the superior other, namely, the modern West and internalizes the values and expectations of this world with a great eagerness. As Bülent Somay stresses, that would inevitably bring a sense of hysteria as the fundamental conflict of the snob, that is, his desire is truly the desire of other, namely, the superior West.

This peculiarity of the snob further presents the core of the male identity, that is, male identity in this case is constructed upon his positional inferiority before the superior model. Having embraced this infantile role before the West, they devotedly learn what to desire and how to desire from the one who is presumed to be "complete" and "ideal". The position of the snob is, thus, grounded on a sense of illusion that the snob himself is also complete and ideal as the superior model. Yet, a snob does not pay enough attention to the fact that how this process of "self-

¹⁸² Gürbilek, *Dandies and Original*, 620.

development” in fact is established in such a problematic way, that positions him to an eternal inferiority, that he is sentenced to be lacking in front of the superior model. It is out of the same reason, that a snob considers himself authorized to judge those who have not experienced the similar sense of self-development in the way he has, for being inadequate and lacking. Snobs in the movies of our concern, following the same trail, do not hesitate to make fun of a peasant girl when she joins a party with her scarf and shalwar. The basic premise here is that the snob criticises the women for being a failure in the pursuit of modernization, that is, he cannot stand the fact that she has failed to succeed what he succeeds to complete. This sense of authority lays on two objectives simultaneously: denial of a paradigmatic loss and the desire to maintain one’s previous authority.

The birth of the snob is basically associated with the Westernization process that started with the defeat of the Ottoman against Europe and the emergence of the West as a superior model, which is followed after the loss of domineering power. Covering a process that is surrounded by the feelings of inadequacy and incompleteness, the national identity surrenders to the acceptance of the Western values as the new path of desire.¹⁸³ First, one should understand the social and cultural circumstances in which the snob emerge. Jale Parla defines this slippery slope of snob in *Babalar ve Oğullar*, referring to the term “fatherlessness”, signifying how the loss of the traditional father authority has become a determinant point in the establishment of man’s identity. While she analyzes the born of the Turkish novel in Tanzimat era, Parla uses the term “fatherlessness”. Saying that Turkish novel is born into a fatherlessness, she does not only attempt to remind that the first Turkish novels were about fatherless boys, but also to emphasize the fact that the children of this belatedly modernized were harshly lack of a father authority.¹⁸⁴ To put it another way, this interpretation is not only a valid one in terms of literary analysis, but also a significant point in consideration of man’s position in the face of modernization. At first, the lack of the father authority, the refusal or the suppression

¹⁸³ Arslan, *Gecikmiş Modernlik, Ulusal Kimlik ve Türk Sineması*, 47.

¹⁸⁴ Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1990), 15. See also Gürbilek, Nurdan: “Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel”, 600-609.

of the father sound as if this loss is a door to relief and freedom for those who had been under the authority of a powerful father. On the other hand, the denial of the father left the man lonely, powerless and insecure. In the absence of a power that surrounds and protects his integrity, this deprivation makes him feel dizzy across this new victory of independence. While on the one hand he feels unchained, on the other hand, the ground he had long been holding on gets slippery, and he feels weaker and less belong each time.¹⁸⁵ It is this very slippery ground on where he fights to establish an entity, in between ambivalent feelings of power and insecurity, independence and deprivation at the same time. The story of the snob, thus, starts with a paradigmatic loss, which makes him merely subject of a privilege/authority, but a subject of a loss-one that he insists on the fact that it is lost. On the contrary to one would expect, the story of the snob further deepens as a story of one's being unable to confess the loss.¹⁸⁶ This sense of rejection is perfectly explained by Judith Butler with her articulation of Freudian sense of melancholia. Melancholia is basically defined as the denial of a certain loss, which further refers to deattachment with the object of loss. Butler attracts attention to how this object of loss retains as part of both one's psychic life with a projection in social life. She basically puts that the social regulation of the internal world of one, namely, psyche, is structured around a sense of ambivalence out of the fact that the psyche is eclipsed in melancholy. She argues how melancholy offers identical references in terms of social identity:

The account of melancholy is an account of how psychic and social domains are produced in relation to one another. As such, melancholy offers potential insight into how the boundaries of the social are instituted and maintained, not only at the expense of psychic life, but through binding psychic life into forms of melancholic ambivalence.¹⁸⁷

For the account of snob, loss of a certain state of authority comes along with a series of illusion, all of which overall constitutes the male psyche. The first is to deny that there is an actual loss, which is further binded with two simultaneous set of illusion. One is that the snob believes in a fantasy that he succeeded to pace with the historical circumstances put by the newly presumed superior model, which he is connected

¹⁸⁵ Berktaş, *Tarihin Cinsiyeti*, 151-155.

¹⁸⁶ Umut Tümay Arslan offers to read the story of the man as the story of one's being unable to confess the loss; Arslan, Umut Tümay, "Gecikmiş Modernlik, Ulusal Kimlik ve Türk Sineması", 352.

¹⁸⁷ Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 167-168.

with a sense of unconditional admiration. This will bring a sense of being approved by the superior model, disregarding his positional inferiority before the very model. Second, which derives its basis from the latter, is that the snob establishes a new sense of authority over the women. Having been empowered by the illusion of his superior's approval, the snob attributes himself a positional superiority over another and makes him feel that he can run his previous authority over a newly created inferior. Fatmagül Berktaş explains this state of mind with man's need to feel that there should still be things does not change even under these rapidly changing circumstances. Therefore, he insists on the idea of reproducing the old patriarchal ideology, in accordance with the new conditions in order to create a "new woman" image under its own control and to prove that he is, indeed, still competent enough to run his authority.¹⁸⁸

It goes without saying that the scene reveals hidden patterns in the way the snob projects a certain crisis to the woman's body, that further refers to the reflex of preserving one's power and authority. Male identity deals in a sense of hegemonic masculinity¹⁸⁹ in the case of man's desiring, commanding, and, eventually giving her a new shape- despite woman's seemingly victorious success in the end of the story. In the aftermath of man's authority, there is an irreversible clouding over the man surrounded by a series of cultural and social fears and anxieties. Substantially more than being an authority or a priority, this knot hides the very secret story of a belated man. Snob is simply the very other of his superior, and, he mirrors this sense of inadequacy to the non-modern female protagonists by speaking the language of the very superior as if it is his own voice.

4.1.1 Caricaturization of the Snob: How the Snob is a Victim?

Representation alone is highly controversial. Edward Said points out an initial problem regarding the concept of representation in *Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors*:

¹⁸⁸ Berktaş, *Tarihin Cinsiyeti*, 151.

¹⁸⁹ Joane Nagel, "Erkeklik ve Milliyetçilik: Ulusun İnşasında Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Cinsellik," in *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006), 65-103.

Each of the four main words in the title of these remarks inhabits a rather agitated and somewhat turbulent field. It is now almost impossible, for example, to remember a time when people were not talking about crisis in representation. And the more the crisis is analyzed and discussed, the earlier its origins seem to be.¹⁹⁰

The analysis regarding the snob, thus, does not end with a single-sided critic of excessiveness. The figure of snob is not only remarkable regarding its singular representation of excessiveness, but also notable in the way it is represented in a particularly excessive way in cultural texts, namely, in Yeşilçam melodramas. In all the movies of our choice, the male protagonists are typically excessive, Westernized snobs, who act, love, hate and desire excessively. It is a fact that the snob himself is an entity of excessive feelings, thoughts and actions with a series of textual explanation of its own. On the other hand, there stands another question regarding how the representation of the snob is established in this very excessive way, predominantly, in a way that caricaturizes the snob by highlighting what he overembraces.

The snob is not someone who only imitates the Western, but someone who imitates it excessively, not within a reasonable amount but in an unlimited way/with an unconditional admiration. He does not only desire the other's desire, but exaggerates that desire by over embracing it. As it stands, critique of snobbism is mostly a critique of excessiveness.¹⁹¹ It further signifies the critique of Turkey's modernization that is jeopardised between two fundamental axes rooted in Turkey's modernization experience, that is, two enormous threats regarding the cultural identity. One is to fail in catching up with the superior ideals, the other is to lose the original self inside the very ideals.

Şerif Mardin explains the excessive representation of the snob, namely, the mockery of the snob, with a formulation of "Bihruz syndrome" and marks it as one of the roots

¹⁹⁰ Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors," *Critical Inquiry* 15, no.2 (Winter 1989): 205.

¹⁹¹ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 608.

of Turkish nationalism and the strength of national independence.¹⁹² He argues that Ahmet Midhat Efendi creates Bihruz in order to make an initial point regarding the modern initiatives during Tanzimat. Mardin discusses that Ahmet Midhat himself was a defensive of modernization, yet, he finds it crucial to draw certain limits regarding Westernization in order to prevent the national identity from completely being damaged by a foreign model. Ahmet Midhat, thus, underlines that advantageous effects of modernization, such as technological advances, financial advantages, even moral qualities such as working ethics should be embraced, but not in an unconditional way. As cliché as it sounds today, Mithad's points basically represents that of all who advocates modernization initiatives as long as they are held in a form of synthesis between the undeniable necessity of change and national culture, in order to prevent the national identity from completely being destroyed. It is inevitably followed by the fundamental emphasis on a cultural identity that succeed to pace without totally damaging the "original self." So that he basically creates Bihruz in order to exaggrate his point as he believes to be the heart of the matter for national identity.¹⁹³ That is, he initiates the figure of snob as it is almost a guide not to be followed which would turn the society into a mass of snobs.¹⁹⁴ That is, the snob as a caricature works in a specific way that poses an excessive portrayal of a certain concern. It is basically a guide that demonstrates the way that should be avoided, so that it enables the way for an imaginary local identity without a damage. The snob has undertaken a pedagogical function in the way it is represented, intending to create a balance, to sustain the "border administration" between tradition and modernity by formulating the type as the user's guide of "what one should not follow". That is, the representation of the snob, as he is almost a caricature, functions by a particular attempt that aims to minimize the conflict between the traditional, insufficient local self and the excessive, immoral snobs. It is to draw attention to the possibility that these two can compensates each others' lacks, and most importantly, to keep the Westernization ideals alive, within the limits of a synthesis between the

¹⁹² Şerif Mardin, "Tanzimat'tan Sonra Aşırı Batılılaşma," in *Türk Modernleşmesi Makaleler IV* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1991), 81.

¹⁹³ Ibid, 60-66.

¹⁹⁴ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 615.

local and the foreign.¹⁹⁵ Mockery of the snob, in this sense, represents “...an aspect of social control toward those not obeying communitarian norms, those deaf to people wearing shalwars and veils. It was a social control aiming to cast out the excessively Westernized elite in charge of modernization.”¹⁹⁶

The snob turns out to be the reference of a sense of extreme-desire which is pinned as necessary to be kept under control, that of which would burn and destroy the national identity otherwise. This enormous threat regarding the national identity is mirrored in the excessive representation of the snob by portraying him as object of fear. That is, it is implicated that snobbish desires towards the modern life would obviously drag the society down into an end, which overall implicates the necessity of a brake. The necessity of the brake regarding this extremeness is pictured as the snob himself. Gürbilek argues that:

...the story of snob, which turns himself into a caricature in the pursuit of foreign desires, is the story of fear of self-destruction caused by cultural hybridization, worrying about deterioration caused by delayed modernization in the powerless empire lands.¹⁹⁷

By offering to exclude the snob out of the society’s structure, Yeşilçam narrative offers to fill the void that has left after the snob, by creating a new woman. As I will try to analyze detailly in the following chapter, this new woman does not only experience a perfect amount of self-transformation/self-modernization herself, she also tames the man by providing a guide for the right way of modernization.

4.2. An Analysis on the Male Protagonists in *Kezban Roma’da*, *Sarmaşık Gülleri*, and *Hayat Sevince Güzel*: Is it Possible to Mention an Exceptional Man?

The couple of first times I watched the movies, there were three of them that confused me about how I should place the male protagonists inside the analysis. While all the male protagonists in the movies are highlighted for representing a common archetype of a snob, the men in the following three significantly differ from the rest: Erol in *Kezban Roma’da*, Necip in *Sarmaşık Gülleri*, and Ali in *Hayat Sevince*

¹⁹⁵ Ekrem Işın, *İstanbul’da Gündelik Hayat* (İstanbul: YKY, 2004), 129.

¹⁹⁶ Gürbilek, *Dandies and Originals*, 609.

¹⁹⁷ Gürbilek, *Kör Ayna Kayıp Şark*, 51.

Güzel. They do not follow same characteristic trails of a snob as those in the other movies, rather, they are highlighted for their moral values, social ethics such as being kind, hardworking, loyal and decent. They do not behave the same way as other men -unlike those in the rest of the movies- they do not humiliate, disgrace or insult the female protagonist. In this part of the chapter, I aim to analyze these three male protagonists, in the ways in which they differ from a snob, yet, highlighting the ways they come close to a snob and offering that all the three have failed in putting forth an exceptional story.

Kezban Roma'da starts with a series of photographs of a small town in Black Sea, accompanying the voiceover of the male protagonist, Erol. He starts the film as if he is telling a story: "This is a small Black Sea town where God bestows all kinds of beauty. Our story begins on a warm summer evening, with a wedding in this charming town. As in every story, our story also has a young, beautiful and very kind heroine. Her name is Kezban." The movie starts with the sound of an impressive young man from the big city, talking about a small village and its people, sounds almost as if Erol is in a documentary, presenting a land far away, where he visits as a "tourist". (Figures 4.5-4.7)



Figure 4.5. A scene from *Kezban Roma'da* (1970)



Figure 4.6. A scene from *Kezban Roma'da* (1970)



Figure 4.7. A scene from *Kezban Roma'da* (1970)

Erol is one of the groom's friends from Istanbul. He is a good-looking, well-behaved, successful young man, and all the girls in the wedding welcome him with admiration, watching him secretly behind the window, and whispering each other how charming he is. He sits right next to the groom and is at the center of attention on that night, as being the "groom's friend from Istanbul." Kezban is also one of the girls who is clearly impressed by his charm (figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

On that night, Kezban serves for the guests, she sings a song, where all the guests have joyful time, including Erol. Erol feels very happy for being a part of this picture, he cheerfully watches the wedding, and acts very gentle, friendly, caring, respectful to Kezban. He feels thankful for her services, he compliments her singing (figures 4.9- 4.14).



Figure 4.9. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.10. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.11. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.12. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.13. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.14. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

Throughout the night, Erol behaves nothing like a snob, rather, he is portrayed as a kind, decent guest who truly enjoys the wedding ceremony. Another highlight that is simultaneously represented is that Erol is, first and foremost, a guest. That is, he is a stranger; one that does not belong to either the ceremony or the village. The night ends up with Erol's staying in Kezban's house where the two have a chance to talk (figures 4.15 and 4.16).



Figure 4.15. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.16. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

After Kezban moves to Istanbul, Erol and Kezban encounter for two more times, one is in the beach¹⁹⁸ and the other, is when Kezban joins to the masquerade ball that Erol arranges, all transformed and dresses like a “fairy girl” with the help of all the servants in of the house. Without knowing who she is, Erol falls in love with Kezban at first sight, except that, it is actually not the first time he has seen her.



Figure 4.17. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.18. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.19. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

¹⁹⁸ This part is analyzed in Chapter 4 detailly.



Figure 4.20. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

Erol: I did not know that a fairy girl was also invited to the party. Can I learn who this beautiful girl is, who dazzles my eyes?

Kezban: Is it so important for you to know who I am?

Erol: Yes, because one wants to get to know such a fascinating beauty, that he cannot have a chance to see, even in the dreams.

Erol and Kezban dance all night (figures 4.17 and 4.18). After time goes by, Kezban asks Erol if he gets tired from dancing all night long. Erol, answers her:

“I have such a strange, so indescribable enthusiasm in my heart that I am afraid my heart will not be able to stand this much. Did I even live before I knew you? I feel a very strange pleasure that I do not know until now, a very strange excitement that makes me forget all about my self. If this is what is called love, that means I have never tasted it until this day. Tell me who you are, where did you come from?” (Figures 4.19 and 4.20).



Figure 4.21. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)



Figure 4.22. A scene from Kezban Roma'da (1970)

Erol is clearly different from the people around them, with his own words, he is “too romantic for a business man.” One night, he confesses to Nazan, who is in love with him, that he is “bored of this noisy city life, as a matter of fact,” that he dreams about

living in “a small house away from the city, in a quiet neighbourhood, that has a garden with kids in it and, a great love, for sure.” On that night, Kezban secretly watches Nazan and Erol talking (figures 4.21 and 4.22). Her heart is broken, she listens to the man she desperately loves, which she knows that would be an unanswered love. While she watches Erol with tears, servant Kazım sees Kezban. She tells Kazım that she met Erol back in her village, but he did not remember the next time he saw her: “He thought that I was a service girl working out there. He was right. His life is so different, how could he remember a poor, peasant girl like me he had seen months ago?” Kezban, indeed, highlights what Erol was driven by, back in the beach club. Though the fact that he is a nice, kind, decent man, he, as everyone would, thinks that if a girl with that outfit stands in a beach club, she must be one of the service girls of the club.

The relationship between Kezban and Erol is constructed within the limits of a certain hierarchial difference. That is, as one that is between a charming young man from the big city of İstanbul, and a peasant girl from a small town of Black Sea. The relationship, thus, does not present any challenge of any degree since it simply poses how an inexperienced young girl would naturally be amazed by a charming stranger from the big city. The scene, thus, secures the positional superiority of Erol while simultanously reproduce Kezban as an inferior figure. On the contrary, the boy behaves with friendship and sincerity, while the girl behaves with kindness and hostility. What should be highlighted is that, it takes Kezban to transform into a lady of manners in order to charm Erol. Simply, Erol’s attention or affection towards Kezban remains at the level of interest towards an inferior “other”, does not pass the line towards a romantic interest for a woman.

In *Sarmaşık Gülleri*, Necip and Leyla encounter on a rainy day, when Gülseren faints in front of Necip’s house, which formerly belongs to Gülseren’s family. Gülseren's father, Vecdi, marries Ümran after the death of his wife. Ümran and her daughter Betül behave quite badly to Gülseren. They sell the mansion where Gülseren and her father live together, with all the memories of Gülseren, and move to a “modern” villa. Necip, who bought the mansion of Gülseren’s family, accidentally finds Gülseren's

diary and learns about all the pain she has been in. Necip's sister Vildan and Betül are friends, this way, Necip gets closer to Gülseren's family. Necip, beyond being kind or nice, sacrifices his time, money and life in order to help Gülseren and finally marries her. Gülseren, without knowing that he wants to marry her not because of love, but because of mercy and pity, tells how much she loves Erol, on their wedding night. On the same night, Gülseren learns desperately that Erol does not love her as a woman, but cares about her as a sister. He declares that he resembles her to a kitten, who is weak and in need of protection.



Figure 4.23. A scene from Sarmaşık Gülleri (1968)



Figure 4.24. A scene from Sarmaşık Gülleri (1968)



Figure 4.25. A scene from Sarmaşık Gülleri (1968)



Figure 4.26. A scene from Sarmaşık Gülleri (1968)

Necip: I used to stay in a small dorm room during my school years. On a rainy night, I found a kitten in the water that was crawling to death. I brought it to my room. He fought with death for days. He was snuggling into me with warmth. Then the sun rose, the kitten healed. One day when I came home, I learned that her owners had taken her away.”

Gülseren: I'm not a kitten. You saved me on a rainy night like that kitten, but I love you. You love me, too. That's what you told me.

Necip: That was an innocent lie that the chief doctor taught me to tell. I have been lying a harmless lie for your good.

Gülseren: Why did you marry me? Why did you let me love you then?

Necip: Poor child. My little girl. You are a kitten. You needed a merciful and strong guardian. Your father is sick and weak. He could no longer be a guardian for you. That's why I am here. We are not married; this is an official mask of my role as your guardian. After that, my only wish is to raise you as a strong and conscious individual.

Gülseren: I do not want mercy, I'm sick of being pitied.

Necip: You have taught me so much. You have taught me to live like a human, to help a person and to have mercy for a person. We will continue to have a relationship with you in the affection of a brother and a sister (figures 4.23-4.26).

In the meantime, Gülseren’s stepsister Betül, who is in love with Necip, secretly listens to this conversation. Necip, advocates Gülseren and makes a comparison between Betül and Gülseren:



Figure 4.27. A scene from Sarmaşık Gülleri (1968)

Necip: What is wrong, what is missing, what is lacking in Gülseren?

Betül: Her femininity, of course! Gülseren is a wild flower. A flower that looks good from afar, but smells awful when you touch it closer. I know you have never loved her. You have been embracing her only with a simple sense of mercy and you will waste your entire life to protect her.

Necip: You may be beautiful, Betül. You can have all the blessings of your femininity. The only thing missing, is your humanity. Maybe you are a flower

that looks beautiful, but you are a flower that does not have any smell when one touches. You are a blurry, useless flower. (Figure 4.27).

It is a fact that Erol truly appreciates and admires Gülseren for her personal qualities. He even stands for Gülseren against Betül, highlighting what Betül does not have in comparison to Gülseren. It is not a very common use in the movies of our concern that the male protagonist defends the female protagonist against a potential femme fatale by stressing that “exterior beauty by means of femininity” is invaluable in comparison to “inner beauty”. Yet, despite how protective and admiring Erol is, towards Gülseren, it still necessitates Gülseren to experience a self-transformation in order to charm Necip in terms of a romantic attraction. Thus, Necip, failing to recognize her, falls in love with Neriman, right after she is transformed into a well-dressed, charming lady. It is a simple case of mercy and guardianship, that is between Gülseren and Necip. Necip resembles Gülseren to a kitten who is in need of a merciful and strong guardian, which clearly attributes him the clear role of guardianship. He appreciates Gülseren, he even defends her against Betül, but clearly not in a way that he appreciates a woman of his taste. Guardianship, in this respect, is quite of a safe position for a male character, where he maintains his authority while recreating the female character as an object of protection.

Ali in *Hayat Sevince Güzel*, encounters with the female protagonists Ayşe on a train trip for the first time, where the two take the same train to go where Ayşe’s aunt and Ali live in. Ayşe has to move in with her aunt after she loses her parents, and Ali travels to his home for summer break.



Figure 4.28. A scene from *Hayat Sevince Güzel* (1971)

Ayşe is portrayed as the centre of attention in the train. She is not in the middle of a party scene, but surrounded by people mostly from lower class, who partially judges her with a sense of humility, if not mockery. The central here is that Ayşe travels in a public train for the first time, that is, one of the places “with its own rules and procedures.”¹⁹⁹ She is reminded that she is not allowed to carry on a dog with her on the train, since “every place has its own rules and procedures.” She particularly deals with a general sense of public eye that reminds her the general procedure of carrying along a dog in the train (figure 4.28). In what follows, she cannot object to the train officer when he takes her dog off the train, since she is recently told to do what it necessitates in this new space with its new rules.

After Ayşe moves in her aunt’s house, a group of young and rich of the town invite Ayşe for a party. She attends to the party with her local outfit since she is told that it will be an entertainment night. She is threatened with a severe sense of mockery, as she is almost an object of display. She answers all the cynic questions of those in the party regarding her clothes, her accent and her peasant background with all her naiveté. (Figures 4.29- 4.31).



Figure 4.29. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)

¹⁹⁹ She is reminded that she is not allowed to carry on a dog with her on the train, since “every place has its own rules and procedures.”



Figure 4.30. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)



Figure 4.31. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)

Soon after, she notices Ali inside the crowd, and waves at him, while he answers her with a shy nod (figure 4.32):

Ayşe: Hey, hello! Did you not remember me? We were on the same train, and then I saw you once again in marketplace. Why are standing so silent? What happened? Are you looking down on me because I am a peasant girl?

Ali: No, Ayşe! I am not. Hello to you, too.



Figure 4.32. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)

It is a part of Ayşe's self-consciousness that she admits herself to be a peasant girl, and face a certain degree of humiliation along with it. It is hard to swallow for a decent young man like Ali to confess that he indeed creates an emotional distance towards Ayşe, for the very fact that she is different than him. He cannot simply confess that she is not good enough for either Ali, or for the party. Ali, as well as the

rest, grasps Ayşe for her difference, as an object of comparison in a way that her insufficiency is highlighted. The first time Ali sees Ayşe, he thinks that she is a very nice, inexperienced person with very little knowledge regarding the new world she enters in. It would not be too wrong to say that Ali develops an interest for Ayşe that is nearly orientalist. When Ayşe greets him in the party area with her folk costume on, he stops for a brief moment of hesitation. He is a decent young man who would never be a part of unkind contempt as such, yet, it is his very fact that makes him hesitate for a brief moment before greeting her back. The following scene, Ayşe performs a local dance which is followed by even a greater humiliation by those in the party. Ali steps in this time and stands against his friends in the party. He declares to those in the party:

Ali: No matter what, you have no right to look down on her, to insult her. You cannot look down on her just because she is a peasant girl.

Ayşe: Let them make fun of me, entertain themselves. It's not like they are going to roll out the red carpet for a poor peasant girl like me.

Ali: If you do not leave here immediately, then I will look down on you, and I will never greet you again.

The scene is quite complicated since it is stigmatized by Ali's stressing of Ayşe's peasant identity. Ali's advocating of Ayşe indeed covers Ali's foremost acknowledgement that starts with deannunciation that "even if Ayşe is a peasant girl." It is almost a part of a play that is set to prove Ali's dignity, wisdom and humbleness towards the obvious absurdity of Ayşe. He is a good-hearted young man, who looks nothing like his spoilt friends, and helps Ayşe stop fooling herself.

Though not in a conventional way, film's narrative still attributes the hegemonic superiority to Ali, which starts from the first scene we see Ali and is strengthened in the party scene. That is, it is neither Handan, nor the unwelcoming crowd in the party, but Ali, who makes Ayşe stop "fooling herself" and leaves the party. It is, truly, Ali's threatening her that he will "look down on her", that he will "not speak to her again" unless she goes with him. Ali is the one with the answers that calms down Ayşe. Ali states that she has a hard time understanding why his friends behave in this way:

Ali: It is just the way some people behave, consider them a bunch of spoilt young children of rich families.

Ayşe: But you are a rich guy, too.

Ali: Well, I am sorry, I put it in a wrong way. It is not a case of wealth or poverty, this is a case of etiquette/manner.

The scene has almost nothing to do with Ayşe, rather, it is almost designated for Ali to portray his moral decency. Despite how kind and decent Ali is, he is eventually the one that instructs, decides and eventually, the one that Ayşe obeys to, the one with whom Ayşe leaves the party.

The same night, Ayşe begs her aunt to help her “get in a decent appearance, not for the sake of herself, but to not to embarrass her aunt.” She stresses that she would never ask something like this her own happiness, but she is taught with a tough lesson that she cannot behave the same way as she did before in the village. The following day, her aunt takes Ayşe to shopping, where we see the transformation completed inside a single sequence. She steps out of the store as dressed up as a modern young lady and her accent disappeared completely. She is highlighted with her confidence and how powerful she feels after she changes.



Figure 4.33. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)

She even silences the servant Fatma, who cannot help herself telling how beautiful Ayşe becomes, responding “Shush, Fatma! I already know that.” Ayşe, here, does not behave as one that is forced for a change for her aunt’s sake, but one that truly enjoys the transformation she experiences (figure 4.33).

The first time Ali sees Ayşe after she changes, he cannot hide how surprised he is, telling that she has “changed in an unbelievable way.” He gives her a look from eye to toe and does not hesitate flirting with her, neither does Ayşe (figures 4.34- 4.36).



Figure 4.34. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)



Figure 4.35. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)



Figure 4.36. A scene from Hayat Sevince Güzel (1971)

If we are to remember that Ayşe aims to pursue a transformation “not for her own sake, but for her aunt’s dignity,” the transformation implies a deeper demand when Ayşe asks Ali whether he likes her new look. As much as Ali tells that he “liked the way she was before, too,” there is a certain difference between his interest towards Ayşe in the first time he sees her, and the one after she is transformed. To me, both Ali and Ayşe voices not what they actually think, but what they are expected to express in terms of the melodramatic context.

These three movies differ from the main trait in the way that the male protagonists are not stereotypical snobs as in the rest of the movies. Yet, I offer that they come very close to those since they inherently operates the similar state of mind in terms of hierarchical difference between female and male protagonists. Though each of the

encounter between the girl and boy in the three is marked with kindness, decency and protection, it still operates within the terms of a certain hierarchical difference. That is, neither of the three represents a portrayal for a heterosexual relationship between two equals. Rather, it is fundamentally highlighted that before further transformation, none of the female protagonists is possibly an object of love and desire for the man.

Raewyn Connell remarks that there is a personal level of patriarchy, which perfectly fits in the working in the movies of our concern in the common context.²⁰⁰ That is, the majority of the male protagonists in the movies represent an agency of power at first instance, by way of mostly their financial strength, namely, their positional superiority regarding their class. Yet in the cases of these three, it does not follow this characteristic trail, rather, male protagonists do not deal with their upper class identity, in the way snobs do. Here, Connell points out that patriarchy in a personal level does not necessarily mean that “the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are always the most powerful people.” Necip, Ali and Erol are not highlighted for their power, but for their success in dealing with the power in a modest and decent way. Connell adds: “They may be exemplars, such as film actors, or even fantasy figures, such as film characters. Individual holders of institutional power or great wealth may be far from the hegemonic pattern in their personal lives.”²⁰¹ That is, hegemony does not necessarily comes out along with a visible shape of violence, yet, it represents an initially presumed hegemony that presupposes one’s authority over another. Therefore, it is not always a physical form of violence, or a verbal insult that shapes the female protagonists’ destiny in the movies of our choice. The reality of the hegemony, in these cases, is presented as an inherent state of dominance, one that is not even recognized by the male protagonists themselves in the first level, but runs inside the unconscious.

²⁰⁰ Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 41.

²⁰¹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.

4.3. Hegemonic Masculinity: A Happy Ending for the Boys

It has always concerned me how the male protagonists are possibly awarded with a happy ending, covering both the transformation of the female protagonists into one of his dreams and a reunion with her. Though on the one hand the male protagonists are portrayed as those who have excessively bounded to the West, therefore, those who have been spoiled/damaged, the narrative sides with the male after all in the way it establishes the ending totally in favor of the male protagonists.

Nurdan Gürbilek offers that each cultural product is created within an *endişe*. This anxiety does not only refer to a textual concern, yet, it is always accompanied by social and cultural anxieties that are experienced simultaneously by the shared consciousness. Beyond being accompanied, these anxieties are shadowed by a broader sense of fear, that is, the possibility of losing the original self, which further symbolizes the fear of losing the authority.²⁰² It goes without saying that the anxiety above mentioned, is a masculine anxiety. Umut Tümay Arslan and Fatmagül Berktaş highlight the situation that both the type of snob, and the critics towards the snob has been considered an issue regarding the man's identity.²⁰³ Though it is the common attempt to project the anxieties associated with the modernization process to the woman identity, it is actually the man, who has been the first one that is hailed by the desires of the modernization. Interestingly, in the last instance, what melodramas offer to soothe, will be this very set of "masculine" anxieties. Thus, I offer that the representation of the male protagonists challenges itself, in the way that on the one hand a snob is subjected to endless critics regarding his excessive desire towards the West, but on the other hand he is initially re-created as a subject to whom the hegemonic masculinity is attributed to. Regardless of how spoiled the snobs are Yeşilçam narrative eventually sides with the male protagonists in the way it maintains hegemonic masculinity and the subordination of female subjectivity.²⁰⁴ This is constructed in a series of ways in order to construct the positional superiority of the male protagonists.

²⁰² Gürbilek, *Kör Ayna Kayıp Şark*, 54.

²⁰³ Berktaş, *Tarihin Cinsiyeti*, 151-155.

²⁰⁴ Insubordination of the female subjectivity will further be handled in the following chapter.

Hegemonic masculinity here is to analyze the male dominance inside gender relations, in the way that the concept “embodies a currently accepted strategy,” which initially points out “the overall subordination of women and dominance of men, namely, patriarchy.”²⁰⁵ Laura Mulvey notices out the use of the psychoanalysis theory in film analysis as a “political weapon, demonstrating the way the uncscious of patriarchal society has structured the film form.”²⁰⁶ She offers that particularly in melodrama, narrative is often restricted to a formal mise en scène that reflects the dominant ideological concept of cinema, which fundementally adresses the “socially established interpretation of sexual difference which control images and spectacle” in favor of the male dominance.²⁰⁷ No need to argue that the cinematic narrative, as well as the world system itself, ordered by sexual imbalance. That is, cinematic narrative, particularly melodramatic narrative reflects the sexual imbalance already at work that intersects/interacts with various contradictories. Particularly in melodrama, it always restricted itself to a formal mise en scene reflecting the dominant ideological concept of cinema.²⁰⁸

The concept of ‘hegemony’, deriving from Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.²⁰⁹

In *Analar Ölmez*, male protagonist Kenan sees Kezban while she is singing in a wedding ceremony in a small town where he owns all the farms around and considered a “*agha*” (figures 4.37 and 4.38).

²⁰⁵ Connell, *Masculinities*, 74.

²⁰⁶ Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 833.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 833.

²⁰⁸ Mulvey, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 834.

²⁰⁹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 77.



Figure 4.37. A scene from *Analar Ölmez* (1976)



Figure 4.38. A scene from *Analar Ölmez* (1976)

He is impressed by her beauty and rapes her in the following morning. Raweyn Connell argues that sexual desire is often considered biological and is tended to be excluded from social theory. Yet, she encourages to ask political questions regarding the sexual desire if by any means it poses social dominance of the male.²¹⁰ Sexual desire here undoubtedly poses a certain degree of power rather than a romantic attraction. Kenan is impressed by Kezban's beauty and femininity, yet, certainly not in a way that attributes her any sort of agency as a woman. Rather, he entirely avoids the agency of Kezban and embodies the whole superiority of the relationship, meaning that he defines the limits of this relation centered around his domination over Kezban. That is, he has the power, thus, he has the power of raping her without acknowledging further responsibility, which simply desire is surely attached to a tremendously strong sense of power.

In what follows, Kezban gets pregnant and gives birth to a baby boy. Kenan is later informed about the baby by one of his servants, who truly cares about Kezban.

²¹⁰ Connell, *Masculinities*, 74-75.



Figure 4.39. A scene from *Analar Ölmez* (1976)

After he learns about the baby, Kenan immediately intervenes to take the baby back to İstanbul and raise him in better conditions provided by the city life. While he struggles to convince Kezban, the scene is stigmatized by not only the filmic representation of Kenan as an agent of power, but also by how Kezban underlines Kenan as an agent of power. That tremendously portrays how the powerless Kezban is helpless in front of the power of Kenan. While she is begging him to let her stay with her son, she constantly underlines Kenan's positional hegemony, by greeting him as "her lord" and defining herself as a "slave of him" (figure 4.39).

Kezban: Who am I to allow? You are a lord/master. You do anything you wish. I am not your woman, I am your slave. I am not asking for anything but to be together with my son. I am begging you to not to fall us apart.

She clearly puts that it is not a matter of right for her, but a matter of Kenan's mercy. That is, she can only beg for his mercy, not that she has an agency to put forth an agency regarding her son's future:

You are right, my lord. You shall tolerate my ignorance, forgive me. You are asking for[doing] the right thing. All right, then take him with you.

Kenan here is to represent nothing but an agent of power. By all means of power, he is the one and only that decides who to like, who to have and leave, without acknowledging responsibility of any kind.



Figure 4.40. A scene from *Analar Ölmez* (1976)

Years later, Kezban's son Sezercik finds his mother and convinces her to pursue a revenge with him. Kezban sees a portrait of Kenan hanging on the wall, responses: "Your father has not changed a bit. He still looks great, may God protect him."²¹¹ (Figure 4.40). The power, in this regard, is not easy to challenge with, once it is constructed and internalized by the female protagonist. Raweyn Connel marks the power relations as the main axis of power in the contemporary understanding of the gender order, which she argues that it results in as "the overall subordination of women and dominance of men, namely, patriarchy."²¹² By all means, male protagonists in the movies of our concern are established as the agents of power inside the world created.

Each movie includes clear moments in which the male protagonists lose credit for many moments, for a series of reasons. Yet, this still does not terminate the male character neither inside the films, or for the gaze of us. Because it is not always and only the male character himself that speaks up the male voice, but *the* male voice itself. For instance, in the case for snob, the snob goes beyond being an authoritarian voice most of the time, considering the overall critics regarding his identity. But the male voice is always a dominant one, that is constantly applied by either a male character, of an institution, of the state, eventually, the official discourse itself. It is the very reason why the male protagonists define the limits regarding the woman's destiny.

²¹¹ Kezban resembles Kenan to a lion, referring to his strength, and her admiration towards him.

²¹² Connell, *Masculinities*, 74.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

POLITICS OF A HAPPY ENDING: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FORGIVE?

Though the general advice while writing a thesis is to consider it a process in which the feelings should not be involved, I need to confess that it has been a quite emotional process for me. The movies I have watched, over and over again, have revealed so much more than I could ever expected. I have seen and been convinced perfectly that there is not a single issue that Yeşilçam deals with, and the society did not. I started this study by asking what stories of a society truly tell, regarding the cultural identity. Stories are pieces that one tells of herself. Thus, I aim follow the traces of self-knowledge of a culture inside the cultural stories. This process has shown me that every single issue that has been a case for Yeşilçam, has truly corresponded to a place inside our cultural memory. What I ended up believing is that each single emotion inside the films; whether it is a tear, or a laugh, none is single, but all is collective.

This study comprises of five chapters, including the Introduction, Conclusion and three main chapters. The introduction chapter provides the framework of the study, which is based upon four main footholds: Belatedness, Postcolonial Psyche, Melodrama, and Gender and Identification.

Turkey's modernization experience has been the main trigger of the analysis. I elaborated Turkey's modernization experience as the central paradigm in Turkish collective consciousness and address it as was experienced as an experience of belatedness. Saying that this historical phenomenon is further an issue of identity, necessitates to handle the following questions: What does it mean to be late in terms of culture? How belatedness is a hierarchical matter? How belatedness is a matter of identity/ a matter of selfhood? This simultaneously brings the necessity to examine how the selfhood is built and expressed in cultural material, since Yeşilçam is one of the ways that selfhood is revealed over the narrative. Therefore, the part about the

belatedness is followed by the questions regarding the postcolonial roots this state of identity. I handle how selfhood is expressed in this regard, along two main axes. The first axis refers to the power-knowledge relation, meaning that the knowledge of the subject is created within the webs of a world, one that had already been *worlded* by the webs of power. The second axis analyzes how the selfhood is a matter of subordination. That is, I analyze selfhood in the way it is created as a form of subjection, which initiates the subordination of the subject.

Melodrama has been the third foothold. It has, by all means, functions as a surrounding state of both narrative and cultural expression. In this study melodrama is handled as the genre, the language and the memory in the way they are tied to current cultural state. Deeper analysis revealed how melodrama is strongly tied to social reality and melodrama's cultural significance and ideological effectivity as an aesthetic form. Psychoanalytic convergence of the genre has been a fundamental point, in the ways it reveals that melodrama operates less a genre, than an imaginative mode. In this sense, the effective relation between melodrama and modernity has been the roof of the analysis. Beside the academic explanations regarding the genre, melodrama has also been evaluated in the ways it is perceived by the audiences themselves under the heading of "Melodramatic Engagement."

The last point has been "Gender and Identification." The main theme seemingly and naturally offers a specific theme about a female character, but it turns out to be a reciprocal matter when it comes to analyzing gender. Remembering that "identification, in any ways, follows gender," the process in which the sexual difference is produced as a hierarchical matter. Discussing female subjectivity always comes with the never-ending politics regarding her representation. This has been one of the main bases and results of the study. In this regard, Yeşilçam has been analyzed, through the given theme, in the ways how sexual difference is handled in the narrative. The analysis of the films in this specific regard mainly gathered around the positional authority of the male in narrative and the projection of the male lack onto female characters.

None of the footholds above dominates one another. Yet, as the study proceeds, I witnessed personally that they build and explain one another. The main aim of the thesis, thus, is to build a scheme of intersection through these four main footholds and try to understand what Yeşilçam melodramas tell in as the very junction point of these fields.

The study starts with evaluating modernization experience a central paradigm in Turkey's cultural mind. That is, rather than framing the modernization within the limits of a historical phenomenon, I focused on the effects of modernity in a social and cultural context by investigating cultural fragments to follow the influences on social unconsciousness and cultural mind. Modernization experience has mainly been a process that aims to re-construct the society according to modern understanding implied by European counterparts. This refers to a further frame that divides society as one that is ahead, namely, modern ones; and those that has been back dropped in comparison to modern ones. This scheme carries the analysis to the era of feelings, rather than the era of history. That is, modernization does not only include a series of developments to be followed, but brings a sense of inferiority while following a presumed superior model. At this point, I benefited from the concept of belatedness in order to clarify the origin and persistence of problems regarding the modernization experience. The concept mainly suggests that societies which experience modernity after their European counterparts experience the process in a form of historical break, rather than a historical continuity. The process, thus, further means that namely belated societies have to acknowledge a presumed European superiority and cultural identity's inferiority. That is, cultural identity has to deal with the modernization process as a problem of one's own lack in front of the superior model. Belatedness, then, functions as a state of mind, as a way of perception that forms the self as one who imagines oneself as "peripheral, provincial, underdeveloped, and inadequate" in front of a presumed superior.²¹³

²¹³ Connell, *Masculinities*, 74.

As seen, this closely concerns the understanding of the self. Here, studying the effects of modernization from this perspective necessitates a further understanding within a postcolonial context. I handle this part as laid on two main points. One concerns the linear and classic relationship between one that effects and one that is effected. That is, the relationship between the superior and the inferior model. The second is that how the self itself initiates the very process by creating a sense of inferiority in front of a presumed superior, namely in a form of subordination. It initially refers to a broad framework of relation between power, knowledge and subjection between the superior and inferior. This framework operates as a process of subordination for the inferior model, inside which the knowledge regarding the selfhood, the identity, the culture, and the memory is crushed by a single, postcolonial constituent. What I offer is that the self should be analyzed through the stories in which the self is expressed and revealed thoroughly, whether it is intended or not. Studying specific cultural material, namely, melodrama is crucial since “the appeal of the melodramatic remains a central fact of our culture.”²¹⁴ The operation that is referred to as the central fact of a culture, is the way how the cultural identity deals with the sense of inferiority in front of the superior model. Melodrama’s ideological effectivity, reveals the ways in which the cultural memory and the subjects are constructed within the webs of domination and subordination. The way that the subject of subordination is expressed in stories, is put by Butler as follows:

The subject loses itself to tell the story of itself, but in telling the story of itself seeks to give an account of what the narrative function has already made plain. What does it mean, then, that the subject, defended by some as a presupposition of agency, is also understood to be an effect of subjection.²¹⁵

Modernization is a process with two simultaneous aspects. One is that the cultural identity deals with a sense of inferiority regarding the ideal model. The second, is the process of modernization and the social changing comes with it, that cause a series of impacts on societies’ cultures and the way they live and think. The most visible outcome of these impacts is that the modernization results in a series of dichotomy inside the society, namely, modern/non-modern, lower class/upper class,

²¹⁴ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, ix.

²¹⁵ Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 11.

Eastern/Western and so on. This dichotomy has been apparent in a wide range of cultural forms, particularly in Yeşilçam melodramas of 1960s and 1970s. Nezih Erdoğan states that Yeşilçam formulates this difference as follows: lower class/rural = East/local culture vs upper class/urban = West/foreign culture.²¹⁶ In the movies I analyze in this thesis, this severe dichotomy is mirrored in the representation of the relationship between the protagonists who belong to “separate worlds.” When we examine the elements, it is possible to draw the conceptual map in the movies of our concern, as below:

Table 5.1. A Conceptual formulation of what protagonists represent in the narrative

THE BOY[NEMESIS]	THE GIRL[SIDEKICK]
WEST[ERN] CULTURE MODERN URBAN UPPER CLASS CORRUPTION	EAST[ERN] NATURE TRADITIONAL RURAL LOWER CLASS MORALITY

The dichotomy between the protagonists is soothed by creating a compromise between the protagonists through the female protagonist’s self-transformation. This compromise further means that the girls achieve in adapting to the modern codes and conduct, that is, they are re-constructed as figures of synthesis between modern and traditional, Western and Eastern. Boys, on the other hand, pay their due to be forgiven and come to terms with girls’, by filtering their identity from excessive elements of modernization. Woman’s self-transformation, meaning that her successful adaption to modern understanding, is the defining moment for both the protagonists and for the narrative. It simultaneously changes the characteristic of the protagonists and the course of events.

²¹⁶ See. Erdoğan, *Narratives of Resistance*, 265.

Table 5.2. A conceptual formulation of what female protagonists represent before and after the self-transformation process

WOMAN BEFORE THE SELF-TRANSFORMATION	WOMAN AFTER THE SELF-TRANSFORMATION
EAST[ERN] TRADITIONAL NATURE RURAL LOWER CLASS MORALITY	FIGURE OF SYNTHESIS BETWEEN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East and West • Tradition and Modernity • Nature and Culture URBAN UPPER CLASS MORALITY

Who is Receiving the Message?

It is the very nature of the cultural products that their main issue is, one way or another, the social reality itself. What I am particularly interested in this study is the way how they deal with it. As I discussed in detail in earlier chapters, I handled Turkey's modernization process as the central paradigm in Turkey's cultural mind, one that occurs as a result of central break. That leaves the cultural identity in between two fundamental axes. The first is the fear of not being able to catch up with the ideal model, and the other is to lose the original self, inside the very model by excessively embracing it. Throughout the thesis, I have witnessed that Yeşilçam has dealt with this break in a way that covers the reality and deny it. This denial further represents the urge to create an original, national self, which succeed to avoid the social degeneration. What melodramas offer in the end, is to build a new woman, a new man, that is, a new way to re-create the cultural identity.

Jackie Byars argues that the endings "always call attention to the overlay of narrative and social coding."²¹⁷ How to end a story, that is, how to solve a case is supposedly one of the most important key points in telling a story. Yeşilçam melodramas predominantly ends with a happy ending, in which the couple from "separate worlds" reunite. The happy ending itself is controversial, because happy endings are quite

²¹⁷ Jackie Byars, *All That Hollywood Allows: Re-reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama*, (London: Routledge, 1991), 16.

political in the sense that unless one of this couple crosses to the world of the other. The ending does not suppose an actual reunion, in this sense, but poses a severe state of admiration of girls' inferiority before the male protagonists. The humiliated woman character is included in man's environment by not only sacrificing her former identity, but also by reaching to a level of consciousness with regard to her former and new identity. I would have to say that it is the women that is addressed to receive the message given in the narrative. A happy ending is possible only by way of changing the woman in a way that transferring her into man's world. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith argues:

The happy end is often impossible, and, what is more, the audience knows it is impossible. Furthermore, a 'happy end' which takes the form of an acceptance of castration is achieved only at the cost of the repression.²¹⁸

That is, woman's body becomes a field of repression in the way that the problems regarding the traditional identity is not truly solved, but covered with an illusion. On the other hand, it should be considered that men are subjected to a degree of regulation, too. Yet, a real fight with the self, has never been a case for the male protagonists. After all, the message is given as sealed inside the female representation and addresses the whole society, which is in constant dealing with the effects of modernization. That is, to point out for each one of the men and women in the society how to complete the transition as subjects that succeed to modernized properly.

At last, it would be fair to mention the limitations and potential alternative perspectives regarding the thesis. This study may have cover and extend to various contents in terms of material, geography, and time era. Yet, it has serious limitations due to being a master thesis. That is, my study covers a specific era and a specific group of films, but the core question/problem of the study is not indigenous to neither Yeşilçam, nor 1960's Turkey. That is, despite offering precious insights regarding the national identity, the main issue held in the thesis is not a national,

²¹⁸ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (1992) "Minelli and Melodrama," in *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* ed. Cristine Gledhill (London: BFI Publishing, 1987), 73.

regional or restricted to a certain past, but it is timeless and universal. When we talk about various forms of disparity between man and woman, it is a fact that woman- one way or another- is destined to be placed inferior to man. It is fair to say that the story changes face, but yet remains still as a constantly reproduced issue throughout time and space.

In this sense, there are many other cultural materials that could provide valuable analysis regarding the theme of this study, as well as Yeşilçam has. Turkish series, in my opinion, would be one of the best fields to study on female representation and current and ongoing expectations and formalizing attempts regarding women. Besides that, if we are to talk about 60s, cultural fragments from newspapers, advertisements, magazines covering various topics could and should be viewed in this sense.

A comparative analysis between films and those who create them, would be another field of study. A series of interviews with directors and script writers, together with their statements such as memoirs, articles or interviews published earlier would be very beneficial in terms of understanding the place that melodrama occupies both as narrative and cultural expression.²¹⁹

It would offer a significant vision to ask the same questions to other world cinemas, specifically those who experience the modernization as an experience of belatedness. In this regard, I benefited particularly from two scholars; Matsushiro Yoshimoto from Japan and Ravi Vasudevan from India. They both provide perspective for my understanding of the relationship between melodrama and belatedness, in a way that attributes melodrama a cultural characteristic. As well, this can also be considered in sense that our theme has many potential aspects and open to different readings in terms of culture and geography.

²¹⁹ I should thank Özge Özyılmaz Yıldızcan for drawing my attention to this point.

It would not be fair to mention movies that succeed to force the limits of female representation such as *Sultan* (1978), *Vesikalı Yarım* (1968), *Gelin* (1973), *Düğün* (1973), and *Diyet* (1974). I believe that it is not only valuable to mention for what they have succeed, but it is also important to be able to talk about an alternative, dissenting female representation in Yeşilçam.²²⁰

For the last words, I would like to end my thesis by trying to answer what I asked when I begin to this study. That is, if it is ever possible to create an identity freed from traumas? I believe, it is not. Yet, I strongly believe that, if it is ever possible to create a self of one's own, it starts with admitting that the identity does not have to be an entirety, a perfection but have to be embraced with all the wounds it has.

²²⁰ I should thank Umut Tümay Arslan Yeğen for drawing my attention to this point.

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