

**YEŞİLÇAM IN LETTERS: A “CINEMA EVENT” IN 1960s
TURKEY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AN AUDIENCE
DISCOURSE**

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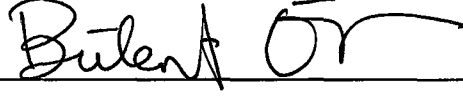
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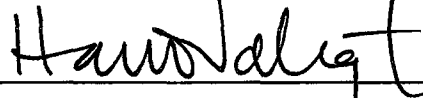
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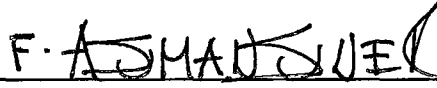
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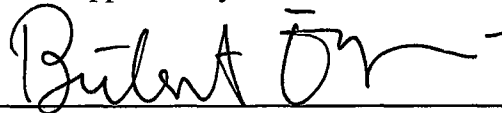
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ABSTRACT

YEŞİLÇAM IN LETTERS: A “CINEMA EVENT” IN 1960s TURKEY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AN AUDIENCE DISCOURSE

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Ph.D. in Art, Design, and Architecture

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June, 2002

This study examines “Yeşilçam event” in Turkish cinema from the perspective of an audience discourse that is reconstituted from the audience letters published in popular cinema magazines Sinema and Perde. Through a study of the letters, it is observed that neither Yeşilçam cinema that marks the 1960s can be reduced to a film industry nor the social experience of it could be evaluated in terms of a cinema-audience relation consisting merely of movie going and film viewing. The topics and the forms of expressions in the letters suggest that Yeşilçam was a “cinema event” diffused throughout everyday life especially through social images of stars and that the audiences had an important role in its (re)production and circulation outside movie theatre.

Keywords: Cinema as event, Yeşilçam event, Audience, Audience letters, Stars, Cinema magazines.

ÖZET

MEKTUPLARDAKİ YEŞİLÇAM: İZLEYİCİ SÖYLEMİ PERSPEKTİFİNDEN ALTMİŞLAR TÜRKİYE’SİNDE BİR “SİNEMA OLAYI”

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Bu tez, popüler sinema dergileri Sinema ve Perde’de yayınlanmış izleyici mektuplarından yeniden kurulan bir izleyici söylemi perspektifinden Türk sinemasında “Yeşilçam olayı”na bakıyor. Mektupların incelemesi, altmışlara damgasını vuran Yeşilçam sinemasının, sadece bir film endüstrisine indirgenemeyeceğini ve bu sinemanın toplumsal deneyiminin de, basitçe, sinemaya gitmek ve film seyretmekten ibaret bir sinema-izleyici ilişkisi olarak değerlendirilemeyeceğini gösteriyor. Mektupların içerdiği konular ve ifade biçimleri, Yeşilçam’ın, özellikle yıldızların toplumsal imgeleri aracılığıyla, gündelik hayata yayılmış bir “sinema olayı” olduğunu ve izleyicilerin de bu olayın sinema salonu dışında (yeniden) üretiminde ve dolaşımında önemli bir role sahip olduğunu gösteriyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Olay olarak sinema, Yeşilçam olayı, İzleyici, İzleyici mektupları, Yıldızlar, Sinema-magazin dergileri.

to Haluk



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1. INTRODUCTION

Robert Allen writes:

Except for the legendary viewers who dove under their seats at the sight of Lumiere's train coming into the station; the countless immigrants to the U.S. who, we are told, learned American values in the sawdust-floored nickelodeons of the lower East Side; and those who, to a person it would seem, applauded Al Jolson's 'You ain't seen nothin' yet' in 1927; film history had been written as if films had no audiences or were seen by everyone and in the same way, or as if however they were viewed and by whomever, the history of 'films' was distinct from and privileged over the history of their being taken up by the billions of people who have watched them since 1894. (348)

The concept "audience" in the quotation above refers to "flesh-and-blood" people. Being different from the concept "spectator", it lies at the core of a theoretical debate, which has started in the 1970s within cultural studies and joined by film studies in the late 1980s, but especially in the 1990s. As Annette Kuhn says, "spectator and audience are distinct concepts which cannot -as they frequently are- be reduced to one another" ("Women's Genres" 303). Beside the term "flesh-and-blood", theorists have used several other terms to distinguish "the audience" from "textual or theoretical spectator" such as "empirical viewer", "real viewer", "social audience", "real audience", "historical audience", "actual audience", "real readers", and "historically specific subjects". The variability of the terms suggests that the concept "audience" is a complicated one and it could only be defined with reference to what the concept "spectator" has been supposed to leave untouched -the "social", "actual", "historical".

Parallel to film history's generally being history of films, film studies has long consisted of the study of films. When film studies was established as an academic discipline in the 1960s it consisted mainly of the study of "auteurs" and their films and film movements (Turner 196). This might be normal if we consider the fact that film had long struggled for gaining acceptance as being a distinct art form, and film studies, as being a distinct academic discipline. Allen explains that at the beginning of 1970s film history still was taken to mean history of films but "[n]ot all films, of course, just those films a teacher could nominate with a straight face as 'art' in defending his or her course to a colleague in art history or literature (347)."

"Auteurism" or the "auteur theory" remained dominant in film studies until mid-1970s. Allen characterizes the period after mid-1970s in film studies with the "reign of high theory" and explains:

All the cool graduate students were analyzing texts. Anyone interested in questions of history was clearly not with the program; and anyone interested in non-cinetextual historical questions -economic structures, the relationship between cinema and other forms of popular entertainment, technology, the organization of labor, or what might have gone on the billions of times the texts of film history were 'read' by viewers- was also damned empiricist! (347-8)

The 1970s witnessed the rise of the analysis of films as "texts" and the subject positions they create for the "spectator". The "spectator" was based on the notion of people as "subjects". It was not a flesh-and-blood person; it was "a subject constituted in signification, interpellated by the film ... text" (Kuhn, "Women's Genres" 305). The 1980s witnessed a shift from spectator to the audience especially within cultural studies, which is imported to film studies in the late 1980s and 1990s. Today it is possible to denote a specific body of work within film studies and cultural studies with the term "audience studies" and this study attempts to take part within that body of work.

It could be argued that film studies is in an age of self-interrogation. Even the title of a recent anthology reads Reinventing Film Studies. Robert B. Ray who has written a review for that book writes that the book “offers an implicit motto -Historicise!- another way of saying, once again, that everything, including presumably film studies, is socially constructed”. In fact the shift of the focus of analysis in the 1970s from “auteur” to the “film text” and “spectator” had led to “reinvention” of film studies, too. It seems to me that the shift from the “text” and “textual spectator” to the “context” and “audience”, which started in the 1980s but sprang to film studies only within the last decade, calls for a new “reinvention” in its focus on the social dimensions of cinema viewing.

1.1. The Purpose of the Study

In 1982 Abisel had pointed to the lack of sufficient studies and researches concerning the past periods of Turkish cinema (9-10). The fact that the same point was also made in 1999 by Kayalı (“Kültür” 140) suggests that this situation is a persistent gap within Turkish cinema studies and researches. In fact, as Kayalı observes, parallel to the rise in popular culture studies in Turkey there have been a growing interest in old films, especially the films of the 1960s within academic circles in Turkey starting from the 1980s (Sinema 67). However, although Yeşilçam films, especially melodramas, have become one of the most popular areas of study within Turkish film studies our knowledge about the sociocultural aspects of Yeşilçam cinema, which extend beyond films, is very limited. This study attempts to make a contribution to the literature on Turkish cinema, especially Yeşilçam, in this respect. Informed by the audience research and theory, this study engages in the social dimensions of the “Yeşilçam

event” in Turkish cinema history as well as in Turkish socio-cultural history with a focus on audiences of Yeşilçam cinema. Besides, the study investigates the possible value of using audience letters published in cinema magazines to explore the social experience of this cinema event.

The 1960s constitute an important period of Turkish cinema in terms of the number of films produced per year and movie attendance (Köker 135). Movie going in those years was the major outside activity in Turkish society, partially due to its lower economic cost compared to other social entertainment forms such as going to music halls. However it is more appropriate to conceive Yeşilçam cinema as an “event” beyond mere film production. The film industry in that period depended upon various other channels, which contributed to the promotion of cinema and its continuation in forms other than films. In other words an important part of the cinema culture was “extrafilmic”. Magazine journalism and star journalism were the most prominent ones among those channels that circulated the extrafilmic.

The 1960s were also the golden age of the thoughts on Turkish cinema (Kayalı, “Kültür” 145). Most of the concepts such as “social realism (toplumsal gerçekçilik)”, “people’s cinema (halk sineması)”, “national cinema (ulusal sinema)”, “revolutionary cinema (devrimci sinema)”, which reflected different points of view of critics and intellectuals in cinema circles in Turkey about Turkish cinema, were formulated in this period. Major debates of the period that were carried out in cinema journals (e.g. Yeni Sinema) and cinema sections of political journals (e.g. Akis, Yön, Ant) focused on Yeşilçam films and the general nature of Turkish cinema as well as its status in relation to other domains such as European and American cinemas. These debates

referred to the audience indirectly while arguing about the “cheap and bad pleasures” promoted by Yeşilçam films; in other words, just to argue that Yeşilçam films were the “wrong kinds of texts”, which are “oppressive, constraining, mainstream, commercial” and have wrong kinds of effects on the audience and society at large.¹ As it is also argued by several critics of the period the audience was treated as a homogenous, stable mass both by filmmakers and critics.²

When we look at the books on Turkish cinema history written so far we observe that they are mostly organized in terms of films, genres, and directors.³ The limitations of these books have already been mentioned by other researchers among which Kayalı appears to have a special place with his more specific and organized criticisms.⁴ Kayalı has explicitly stated that “Turkish cinema history should be rewritten” (Sinema 59). In particular, he has pointed to the influence of the “subjective mentality” and “political perspective” of the writers of cinema history (i.e. Nijat Özön), which have resulted in the exclusion of certain subjects, films, and directors from Turkish cinema history (Sinema 70). However, although Kayalı points to an important problem in the field, it must be noted that he still conceives Turkish cinema history mostly as a history of films, directors, directors, and genres. This study prefers to approach 1960s Turkish cinema by following Rick Altman’s conception of “cinema as event”, which

¹ Here I use Jensen and Pauly’s remark on the opposition between the “right kinds of texts” and “wrong kinds of texts” formulated in literary criticism (159). This opposition seems to lie on the basis of debates on Turkish cinema in 1960s.

² See Nijat Özön’s “Yerli Filmler ve Seyirci”, Hasan Gürdal, Davit Fresko, and Suat Karantay’s “Türkiye’de Sinema Seyircisi”, Atilla Dorsay’s “Sinema Seyircisi”.

³ See, for example, Nijat Özön’s Türk Sinema Tarihi published in 1962, Giovanni Scognamillo’s Türk Sinema Tarihi published in 1987, and another Türk Sinema Tarihi published in 1998. However Mustafa Gökmen’s Başlangıçtan 1950’ye Kadar Türk Sinema Tarihi ve Eski İstanbul Sinemaları, published in 1989, which looks at Turkish cinema as a social/cultural event from a wider perspective needs to be considered as an exceptional example.

⁴ See especially the chapter entitled “Türk Sinema Tarihlerinin Sınırlılıklarını Aşmanın Yolları” in his Sinema Bir Kültürdür.

he forwarded in 1992 as a “new way of thinking about cinema” (2). This conception is based on several criticisms directed to the “text-oriented” film scholarship in general. The treatment of cinema as a series of self-contained texts, divorced from material existence, the limitation of the treatment of audience to the experience of film-viewing, the consideration of contemporary culture in so far as it constitutes the subject matter of a film are among the characteristics of that scholarship, which Altman aims to challenge (1). The text-oriented approach to cinema, Altman explains, treats each film as a self-contained text, constituting the center of a system in which related concerns such as production, reception and culture revolve around the text “like so many planets” (2). Within such a system text, production, reception and culture are all assumed to be closed in them with no interchange. Moreover the text’s outside is determined according to a solid ordering in terms of closeness to the text. The order is in the form of text-production-reception-culture. In opposition to such an understanding of cinema Altman prefers to conceive cinema as a “macro-event” involving several “cinema events” in which the individual film serves only “as a point of interchange between other elements” (2-3). The most important characteristics of cinema as event is, Altman implies, “interchange”, in that

the cinema event is constituted by a continuing interchange, neither beginning nor ending at any specific point. No fixed trajectory characterizes this interchange, nor is it possible to predict which aspect of the system will influence which other aspect. (4)

Parallel to Altman’s conception this study conceives Yeşilçam as an event. Conceiving cinema as an event implies that just as cinema event cannot be limited to film production the social experience of that event cannot be limited to mere film watching. Philip Corrigan remarks that cinema sells a habit more than individual films, in other words “there is more in cinema-going than seeing films” (31). In a similar vein John Ellis writes:

Cinema is enjoyed whether the film is or not ... , and often people 'go to the cinema' regardless of what film is showing, and sometimes even with little attention of watching the film at all. Cinema, in this sense, is the relative privacy and anonymity of a darkened public space in which various kinds of activities can take place. (Visible Fictions 26)

This argument implies that the position of the person in the movie theatre might not be “always and only that of an interpreter”.⁵ We should also acknowledge that the experience of cinema event could not be limited to inside movie theatre, either. Just as “audiences don’t just ‘happen’ upon the cinema” (Barker and Brooks 137) they do not cease being audiences as they leave cinema.

It could be said that Yeşilçam of the 1960s sold the habit of movie going, too. However it seems to me that Yeşilçam event and the audiences’ relation to it cannot be reduced merely to film watching nor can it be to the performance in the movie theatre, which extends beyond the film on the screen. Just a familiarity with the Turkish popular cinema magazines of the 1960s would support that impression. It is possible to consider those magazines as an alternative exhibition place for Yeşilçam and the image of Yeşilçam they suggest is not made up of only films.

Allen and Gomery remark that, in the case of United States, "movie-going ceased being a habitual activity and became a less frequent but more carefully planned outgoing", in other words, “[g]oing to the movies" became "going to see a film" with the emergence of television (157). This observation points to the importance of the historical and social context in which movie going experience take place. Barker and Brooks write:

⁵ Here I am referring to Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott’s argument that “the position of the reader is not always and only that of an interpreter” (63).

Just because film is *visual* in its medium, does not mean that our encounter with it is primarily to do with a *way of seeing*. It is not the medium which determines the manner of response, but the place of that medium within a social and cultural circuit, and the tasks given to that medium in the life of that society. (136)

Similar observations could be made for movie going in Turkey, too. The cinema event that existed in the 1960s probably does not exist today. However the relations characterizing it may be continuing in other contexts.

Although this study considers the audience as an important constituent of the cinema event and it acknowledges the potential contributions of considering cinema in terms of the question of reception, it does not aim to attribute the audience a privileged status among other participants of the Yeşilçam event. Rather it aims to ask what a movement from the film text and spectator to the audience, more specifically audience's relation to Yeşilçam event, can enable us to "say" about that event, which we have not been able to say when we have been merely focusing on the film text and spectator. The image of Yeşilçam from the perspective of industry and films could be different from the image constructed in its reception. Yeşilçam is neither this nor that image but all at the same time. Janet Staiger writes that "the history of cinema might very well be radically rewritten if you pursue it, not solely from the perspective of the production of films, but equally from their reception" (Interpreting Films 12). This might be true of Turkish cinema, too. Writing such a history goes beyond the scope of this study. However it is hoped that this study could point, at least, to some aspects of Yeşilçam event, which remained invisible in the history of Turkish cinema, by focusing on the relation of audiences to that event, in other words, by looking at Yeşilçam event from the perspective of its reception by audiences. The objective in this study is to explore what makes Yeşilçam cinema meaningful to audiences by focusing to the

social experience of Yeşilçam event. Yeşilçam cinema here is conceived as a cultural product that is collectively shaped by those in the film industry and audiences. What we call the audience is not simply people who consume Yeşilçam but who also (re)produce it through the place they give to it within their lives and social experiences.

There have been a few researches and studies on cinema audiences in Turkey.⁶ However there has been no academic research in cinema audiences of the 1960s. This study aims to fill an important gap in this respect. However the reader should not expect an exhaustive account of Yeşilçam audience. It seems to me that this is not possible not only because of the lack of official records and published material, but also, and more importantly, because of the methodological questions and problems facing such a project. There are no clear cut answers to questions such as “where is the audience”, “how to reach them”, “how to approach them”, “how to interpret the information obtained from them”. Although this study engages in audiences of a local cinema, namely Yeşilçam, and thus aims to contribute to the literature on Turkish cinema at first hand, it could also contribute indirectly to the literature on the audience in general, and cinema audiences in particular, with the implications of its research methodology.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

⁶ See Hilmi A. Malik's Türkiye'de Sinema ve Tesirleri, Osman Şevki Uludağ's Çocuklar, Gençler, Filmler, several public surveys conducted by Yedinci Sanat journal in 1970s, Nezih Erdoğan's “Üç Seyirci: Popüler Eğlence Biçimlerinin Alınlanması Üzerine Notlar”, Fida Film Sinema Seyircisi Profili '91.

There has been an explosion of studies relating to audiences since the 1980s. In fact these studies, the majority of which focused on television audiences, need to be considered parallel to the “culturalist” project of the 1970s which was motivated by a reaction against what was called “textual determinism” in media and cultural studies.⁷ In the late 1960s and 1970s it was the concept of “ideology” which mostly informed cultural theory. Parallel to that media was conceived as an ideological apparatus producing particular meanings that would serve to support existing economic, political and social power relations (Ang, “Culture” 241-2). In other words it was assumed that representations in media products shaped “the way people see and experience the world, themselves and others in the world” and thus contributed to the reproduction of social relations of power (Donald 114). Therefore textualist approach, which was motivated by ideological criticism, did not focus on the actual responses or readings of audiences but on the textual production of a position for reading or “spectating” (McDonald 190), which could also be described as “the implied reader, the model reader or the preferred reader” (Bennett 219). In the 1989 special issue of Camera Obscura devoted to the conception of female spectatorship

Mary Ann Doane wrote:

I have never thought of the female spectator as synonymous with the woman sitting in front of the screen, munching her popcorn ... The female spectator is a concept not a person. (qtd. in Stacey, Star Gazing 23)

Similarly Stephen Heath argued:

It is possible with regard to a film or group of films to analyse a discursive organization, a system of address, a placing -a construction- of the spectator... This is not to say, however, that any and every spectator -and, for instance man or woman, of this class or that- will be completely and equally in the given construction, completely and equally there in the film; and nor then is it to say that the discursive organization and its production can exhaust -be taken as equivalent to -the effectivity, the potential effects, of a film. (qtd. in Bennett 219)

⁷ These issues will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

However we can argue that textual approach contained “masked claims” about what the reader/spectator does with the text, or to be more exact “what the text does with the reader” (Barker and Brooks 141).

The 1980s marked a shift from “textual” reader/spectator to “actual” audiences among certain scholars. This shift was partially due to the popularization of the Gramscian notion of “hegemony”, which was brought on the agenda in 1970s by British cultural studies as an alternative to Althusserian notion of ideology to come up with a “broader” understanding of “cultural practices”. The concept “hegemony” emphasized the importance of “consent” in cultural domination and gave room to the possibility of “negotiation” and “resistance”. One of the distinguishing characteristics of audience studies was their “ethnographic approach” towards media/audience relationships, in that they tried to study media uses, functions, and meanings within the everyday lives of audiences. The use of ethnographic forms of research such as participant observation, interviews, letters, and questionnaires was a common way to examine audiences’ own account of their relation to the media in everyday life. As a result of considering the act of media consumption together with the “context” in which that act occurs and focusing on audiences’ own accounts of their consumption of the media, the ethnographic audience studies constructed an image of the audience who not only actively negotiated meanings preferred by media texts but also whose media use could not be limited to mere interpretation of the meanings in media texts.

Ethnographic approach to media/audience relations has been subjected to various criticisms. The “theoretical poverty”, “uncritical celebration and mystification of

popular culture”, the “unproblematic position of the researcher” vis-a-vis his/her object and subjects of study were among the major problems associated with that approach. However one of the most specific arguments about ethnographic studies was while it was trying to avoid “textual determinism” it resulted in a kind of “audience determinism”.⁸ This argument seems to be the first challenge waiting any prospective researcher in audience studies. Any audience study, which forwards its aim as “knowing the audience” before everything else, could be criticized for falling into “audience determinism”. However it does not seem that the ethnographic studies aim at simply “knowing the audience”. Actually it seems to me that their purpose is rather to show that the audience is never alone with the text. This is because “other” social and historical structures and discourses, and social relations continuously intervene. It seems that audience research so far consists of an expedition to determine what these “others” making up the “social” and “historical” are, rather than to find and know the audience per se. In this sense perhaps it is more appropriate to call these studies “context-based” rather than “audience based”. At that point two questions come to the fore: 1. What constitutes a context? 2. How much context is enough? We cannot undermine ethnographic studies’ struggle to widen the meaning of the term context, but we cannot ignore their continuous struggle to frame it, to make it visible and distinguishable, either. Much of these studies have reduced the context to home, household, family, or neighborhood. Another characteristic of these studies is that they mostly focused on the female audiences’ experience with the media under question. It must be the result of these two factors -the way context and the

⁸ I understand “audience determinism” as the claim that “if you know the audience of a particular media then you know that media.”

audience are dealt with- that much ethnographic research have resulted in an emphasis on the question of gender.

Yeşilçam cinema, being located within the domain of popular culture, can be considered as a treasure for ideological analysis. Films contribute to the circulation of meaning in society and, therefore, we cannot ignore the importance of “textual analysis”.⁹ However this study does not give credence to the necessity of adding yet another one to numerous studies of Yeşilçam that are conducted from this perspective. Focusing on the question of reception it aims to present a new perspective to Yeşilçam event. However the study does not prefer to follow ethnographic approach, either. This is not because cinema audiences from the past are inappropriate for an ethnographic project in terms of access to the audiences, but mainly because of the deficits of that approach that are mentioned above. Following the methodology used by Jackie Stacey in her study of the British female audiences of 1940s and 1950s Hollywood stars, Yeşilçam event could be studied by referring to the memories of people who witnessed that period through questionnaires and interviews. A major problem often mentioned in relation to such ethnographic projects is the question of memory, more specifically, the role of the memory formation in structuring audiences’ accounts.

Jensen and Poly explain that “[e]thnography records an actual social encounter between researcher and subject, in however flawed a way, and that encounter

⁹ Here we refer to Kuhn’s definition of textual analysis as an “ideological reading” which deconstructs the text and then reconstruct it to bring to light that which was previously hidden. In other words to reveal how the text naturalizes the operation of ideology which structures it (Women’s Pictures 77)

promised to deepen researchers' understanding of the audience" (164). However ethnography's potential of "deepening" the understanding of any culture has been the subject of a serious debate even in anthropology from where it is imported to audience studies. James Clifford writes

"Cultures" do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship. (10)

In fact this is a common argument facing any attempt to describe "another world".

Zygmunt Bauman writes:

To make that world speak to us, we must, as it were, make its silences audible: to spell out what that world was unaware of ... In the end, instead of reconstructing that 'other world', we shall no more than construe 'the other' of the world of our own. (5-6)

The political and ethical question of the relationship of the researcher to the audiences under consideration has been debated within ethnographic studies, too. Jensen and Pauly argue that ethnographic methods such as accessing the audience through letters and questionnaires, enable researchers to "incorporate the subjects' own voices into the research account, and avoid some of the problems of an omniscient authorial presence" (165). It seems to me that this is not convincing since the researcher, although not physically, is still present in his/her invitation to answer questionnaires and his/her questions.

A distinctive feature of this study is the use of audience letters published in cinema magazines as data for audience research. The preference of these letters does not derive from a belief in their independence from the problems associated with ethnographic research such as availability, representativeness, manipulation, and memory formation. It seems that these problems will persist as long as we deal with audiences. It would be very naive to claim that the audience could be available to

researcher in an unmediated way. In fact, no object of research can. However we should also notice that the emphasis on mediation and distortion as a problem suggests that, as Stacey argues, “there may be pure cinematic experience beyond the limits of representation” (“Textual Obsessions” 266). The problem of mediation and distortion apply to the use of audience letters as data, too. Moreover using audience letters published in magazines has been considered problematic in itself. Some of the problems are said to be the “inextricability of production from consumption”; letters’ being a “partial representation of audiences’ feelings and opinions” since the “selection by producers clearly determines what is printed”; and the possibility that they “may well be concocted by office staff at the magazine” (Stacey, “Textual Obsessions” 266). However similar problems might be mentioned for any type of data used to “represent” audiences. The preference for audience letters published in cinema magazines in this study derives mainly from the idea that these letters enable the researcher to consider multiple aspects of audiencehood instead of a simplistic reliance on reality-representation relation. These letters not only constitute a site for different voices, views and experiences but also of intersection and interchange between production and reception, film industry and society, and among audiences themselves. The reader columns in cinema magazines that are reserved for audience letters can be considered as “billboards”. Lawrence Grossberg describes “billboards” as follow:¹⁰

Billboards are neither authentic nor inauthentic . . . [a]nd they perform, provoke, and enable a variety of different activities: they open up a space for many different discourses and practices, both serious and playful, both institutional and guerrilla . . . Billboards mark “strategic installations” - “a fixed address for temporary lodgment” ... They manifest complex appeals that draw us down certain roads, open and close alternative routes, and enables us to be located in a variety of ways at different sites and

¹⁰ In fact Grossberg use this term to describe “the multiple effectivity of cultural practices” (“Wandering Audiences” 313).

intersections where we can rest, or engage in other activities, or move on in different directions. (“Wandering Audiences” 313)

Using audience letters in cinema magazines makes the researcher avoid starting with a predefined audience and context. The letters construct a dynamic site consisting of a variety of “roads” and “crossroads” traced between different constituents (i.e. film, star, magazine journalism, audiences, fan discourse) that make up Yeşilçam event.¹¹ This study follows the traces of an imaginary audience wandering through these roads and crossroads and tries to figure out the multiple aspects of Yeşilçam event, what made it meaningful to audiences, what audiences cared about and why.

1.3. Methodology

The study uses 239 audience letters published in two popular cinema magazines of the 1960s, Sinema and Perde, as its primary research material.¹² The majority of the letters were written by male audiences and from the province. Letters’ being written mostly by male audiences could be “partially” related to the distribution of general population of Turkey according to sex and literacy in the 1960s. Distributions of the letters according to year, sex, and city are as follows:

Table 1
Distribution of the Letters Used According to Years

Year	Number
1961	117
1962	44
1964	21
1965	39
1967	18
TOTAL	239

¹¹ Moreover these letters become a constituent of the cinema event by their being published and read by other audiences.

¹² 38 letters are excluded from the research either because they do not provide insight to Yeşilçam-audience relations or they are very few in number in terms of their subject matter. These are: (a) 20 letters referring to foreign film stars and 1 letter referring to a foreign film (b) 6 letters addressed to Sinema magazine about topics not directly related to cinema (c) 4 letters referring to celebrities in other media such as music and theatre (d) 5 letters referring to “artist competitions” (e) 3 letters written by actors or directors in response to each other.

Table 2

Distribution of the Letters According to Sex

Year	Male	Female	Unknown
1961	73	39	5
1962	18	20	6
1964	16	4	1
1965	25	13	1
1967	6	11	1
TOTAL	138 (58%)	87 (36%)	14 (6%)

Table 3

Distribution of the Letters According to Cities

Year	İstanbul	Ankara	İzmir	Other	Unknown
1961	38	5	7	55	12
1962	20	4	1	14	5
1964	3	2	2	13	1
1965	3	5	1	15	15
1967	6	0	0	10	2
TOTAL	70 (29%)	16 (7%)	11 (4%)	107 (45%)	35 (15%)

Distributions of the general population of Turkey according to year, region, sex, and literacy are as follows:

Table 4

Distribution of the Population According to Regions

Year	City	Rural Area	Total
1960	26.33 %	73.67 %	27,754,820
1965	29.89 %	70.11 %	31,391,421

Source: Atatürk'ün Doğumunun 100. Yıldönümünde Rakamlarla ve Fotoğraflarla Kalkınan Türkiye. Ankara: DPT, 1981. 168.

Table 5

Distribution of the Population According to Sex

Year	Male	Female
1960	51 %	49 %
1970	50.6 %	49.4 %

Source: Atatürk'ün Doğumunun 100. Yıldönümünde Rakamlarla ve Fotoğraflarla Kalkınan Türkiye. Ankara: DPT, 1981. 168.

Table 6
Distribution of the Population According to Literacy

Year	Male	Female
1960	53.6 %	24.8 %
1965	64.1 %	32.9 %

Source: Atatürk'ün Doğumunun 100. Yıldönümünde Rakamlarla ve Fotoğraflarla Kalkınan Türkiye. Ankara: DPT, 1981. 191.

We do not have any information about the age and occupation of the majority of the audiences. However we met 20 letters where the correspondents clearly express that s/he is a young person –either a student in middle school, high school or university or a young girl or boy of age between 14-22.

Despite the above statistics the study does not give credence to the treatment of the letters as a sample of “real audiences” that “represents” a much larger population. Rather it conceives the letters as constructing a particular discursive space. In other words what we have access to here is not a pre-given “flesh and blood” audience speaking for themselves but rather a discourse through which we can only “reconstitute” the audience. In this respect the analysis of the audience letters tries to combine “listening” and “theory”. We try to listen to the voice of a particular discourse and figure out / read the ideas, feelings, images, assumptions, and attitudes that constitute it. In other words we read the letters “symptomatically”. Based on what we read we try to see the image(s) of Yeşilçam event it constructs. This analysis still depends upon “theory” -if not “Theory”- in that it articulates a particular point of view rather than an objective truth.¹³ We are not content simply with listening and

¹³ In fact the word “theory” originates from the Greek root “thea”, which means sight.

description, but interpret what we hear. In fact this study involves an interpretation based on a historical research. As Certeau remarks “historical interpretation” is never a “transparent presentation of an object” or a “simple exposition of results”. It is always an “operation” marked with subjectivity, which redistributes the historical material on the basis of concerns formulated in the present. Certeau writes:

in history, everything begins with the move which *sets apart*, which groups together and which transforms into ‘documents’ certain objects which had been classified another way The material is created through concerted actions which cut it out from its place in the world of contemporary usage, which seek it also beyond the frontiers of this usage, and which subject it to a coherent form of re-employment Establishing signs offered up for specific kinds of treatment, this rupture is therefore neither solely nor first of all the effect of a ‘gaze’. It requires a technical operation. (qtd. in Ahearne 15)

We also refer to other theories and explanations formulated within the framework of studies on fandom and stardom in our interpretations when necessary. We concentrate mainly on three broad questions when analyzing and interpreting the letters: Why did audiences write the letters? What did they write? How did they approach to the topics that they dealt with?

In fact the study is based on analysis of texts, since the letters are reception texts produced by audiences. However this should not be confused with “textual analysis” characterizing a specific body of works that is informed by structuralism and psychoanalysis. In this study the content of the letters will not be analyzed in terms of a homogeneous fundamental structure lying beneath or with direct reference to a universal human psyche. Instead they will be analyzed on the basis of social meanings and discourses within them and their negotiation with other history-specific discourses relating to cinema industry and society. Janet Staiger describes the difference between the two types of analysis as follow:

reception studies is not textual interpretation. Instead, it seeks to understand textual interpretations as they are produced historically ... Another way of putting it is that reception studies tries to explain an event ([i.e.] the interpretation of a film), while textual studies is working toward elucidating an object ([i.e.] the film). (Interpreting Films 9)

1.4. Limitations of the Study

The study has been restricted by certain conditions that were beyond our control. Since there are no special archives that preserve letters written by cinema audiences in the 1960s, cinema magazines that are available at the National Library in Ankara have been the only research source for the study. Although the majority of these magazines were searched thoroughly only two magazines found having published audience letters: Sinema and Perde. Moreover although Sinema had published letters regularly its publication life ended in 1962. Perde was published throughout the 1960s but it published letters with several interruptions until the end of 1967. In this respect, the sample of letters used in this study could be named as an “incidental sample”, in that the sampling is based on availability. The study has also been restricted with regard to the fact that only those letters that were selected for publication by the two magazines were available for examination. Since some of the letters in Sinema magazine were edited we had to be contented with the published sections of the letters in that magazine.

1.5. Study Overview

As it has been previously stated, the purpose of the study was to explore Yeşilçam event from the perspective of its reception as it is revealed in the audience letters published in the cinema magazines Sinema and Perde during the 1960s. The second chapter deals with a review of the literature on media/audience relations from 1930s

mass communication research to the recent ethnographic studies of audiences, including cinema audiences. The main problems with recent audience research and an alternative perspective are presented in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 offers an historical overview of cinema in Turkey until the end of the 1960s paying special attention to changing discourses on cinema in Turkey and Turkish cinema. Such an overview, which is based on written material collected from magazines and journals from various periods, could illuminate, in the words of Barbara Klinger, “the critical standards and tastes within the aesthetic ideologies and social preoccupations of a given historical moment” (118). Moreover it also offers an idea about changing discourses on cinema in Turkey and enables the researcher and the reader to better situate audiences’ discourses on Yeşilçam event within a larger framework of historical and social context. The analysis and interpretation of the audience letters published in cinema magazines Sinema and Perde are presented in Chapter 5. The final chapter of the study is concerned with the results and implications of the research and suggestion for further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the main general theories of media/audience relationships, which can be conceived as different approaches to and proposals for how audiences could be researched. The chapter organizes the review in the form of an examination of the studies of media/audience relationships by categorizing them on the basis of the propositions and theories that they relied on in their elaboration on that relationship.

2.1. Early Mass Communication Research

Denis McQuail argued that consumption of media products constitutes “at least a mark, and possibly even a requirement of membership of modern society” (qtd. in O’Sullivan et al. 19). Since every member of modern society is also a member of the audience of the media, the audience interested researchers of mass communication since the very beginning. Therefore it is possible to draw the beginning of the literature on media/audience relationship back to the early mass communication research despite the fact that these studies were more directly concerned with the question of the media than the question of the audience.

2.1.1. Effects Model: “What Do Media Do To People?”

When the media became the object of serious study for the first time it was considered heavily in terms of its effects on the audience and this way of conceptualizing the media had remained dominant until late 1960s and 70s (Mutman 26-37). In other

words research into media and audiences meant research into influence or effect. Although the claims of the negative effects of the media on the audience date back to the 19th century the investigation of media influences within a “scientific” perspective did not occur until late 1920s (Lowery and De Fleur 17). The early studies were based on an “effect” model of mass communication, in that they all came up with a certain theory of the effects of mass communication. The first studies conceptualized the media as having strong power to influence individuals’ activities, behaviors, beliefs and ideas more or less uniformly. More specifically the media was conceptualized like a “hypodermic needle” or “magic bullet”, which was able to inject its messages directly into the thoughts of the audience and have immediate and powerful effects on them (Morley, Television 45; Severin and Tankard 192; Lowery and De Fleur 22). The “hypodermic needle” or “magic bullet” model of media effects conceptualized the audience members as individuals isolated from everything that surrounded them except the media and passively accepting media messages. This concepts of powerful media and passive audience were in conformity with the assumptions of the “mass society” thesis of the early 20th century, which was used to describe the social organization of the new society that emerged as a result of industrialization, urbanization and modernization. Mass society was different from “traditional” society especially in terms of the relationships between its members and their relation to the institutions of the society. As a result of the industrialization and urbanization, as it is argued by McDonald, mass society consisted of atomized, isolated and alienated individuals who were no longer tied to each other by “common interests, work, traditions, values and sentiments” (qtd. in Strinati 69), which characterized the traditional society. Once the “mass” was considered as a “crowd” of uniform people lacking traditional bonds it had been argued that “such individuals were entirely at the

mercy of totalitarian ideologies and propaganda and the influence by the mass media” (O’Sullivan et al. 173), which became one of the central institutions of society as a result of industrialization and modernization in the 19th century (Lowery and De Fleur 9-11). When these assumptions are considered together with the use of newspaper and film as a means for heavy propaganda during the First World War and later the use of radio and film for propaganda by German fascists, it is not surprising that the first conception of the effects of the media had resulted in the “hypodermic needle” or “magic bullet” theory. The question “what do media do to people”, which seems to lie on the basis of the early studies of mass communication research, was a question that needed an immediate answer under such historical and social conditions. Barker and Brooks argue that “audience research and theory has been driven by two kinds of desire: a desire for policies and a desire for political positions” (83). It could be argued that the early researches were marked with the former and dominated mostly by non-academic concerns.

The Payne Fund Studies seems to be the first and the most comprehensive one among the various media effects researches, which were concerned with the question “what do media do to people?” in 1920s and 1930s. The study, which consisted of thirteen separate studies carried out between 1929 and 1932 by a group of psychologists, sociologists, and educators, aimed at examining various aspects of the effects of the content of films on children, which was one of the hot topics of the period (Lowery and De Fleur 32-3).¹ The Payne Fund Studies was policy driven like much of the early mass communication research. As Barker and Brooks argue, the question at the

¹ For a description of the details of the Payne Fund Studies see Lowery and De Fleur 31-54.

center of these studies was “not a research one, but a moral one: ‘how much harm is done to vulnerable viewers by improper media materials?’” (85). Although the results of the separate studies, which were mostly based on psychological field experiments, were not so homogeneous the general conclusion derived was that movies had a negative influence on children.² W.W. Charters who wrote a volume summarizing the main findings of the Payne Fund Studies in 1933 concluded that the commercial movies were an “unsavory mess” and that they had bad influences on children (Lowery and De Fleur 52).³ With such a conclusion The Payne Fund Studies seems to be representative of the hypodermic needle approach to media effects in that it suggests that media content has powerful, uniform and direct influences.

However the theory of “uniform influences” or “strong effects”, which emerged from the Payne Fund Studies and its similars does not seem to be supported by subsequent media effects researches carried out in late 1930s, 40s, and 50s. These later researches came up with the conclusion that the media do not effect everybody uniformly and that individual psychological differences, social categories (e.g., age, sex, income, education), and social relationships (e.g., family, friends, acquaintances) play an important role in people’s perception and interpretation of the media content. It could be argued that the theories of “selective influence” or “limited effects”, which emerged from these researches were also a challenge to the assumptions about the

² The research done by Herbert Blumer, which was quite different from other researches in the series in terms of its methodology, brought interesting conclusions. Blumer based his research on autobiographical accounts of movie experience collected from young people and children and offered a detailed description of the uses and gratifications provided by movie content for its young audience and rather than condemning the situation as being harmful (Lowery and De Fleur 44-51). However these findings do not seem to be reflected in the general conclusions derived from the studies in the series.

³ The result of the Payne Fund Studies could be considered as one of the factors effecting the strengthening of the motion picture production code in 1930s in the United States (Lowery and De Fleur 52).

social organisation in the mass society. Let us have a brief look at some of the researches in this category.

When the broadcast of a radio drama in 1938 caused panic among American people, who believed that the drama was real and that America was being invaded by the hostile Martians, Hadley Cantril decided to study “the psychological conditions and the situational circumstances that led people to believe that the broadcast drama was real” (Lowery and De Fleur 63).⁴ One of the objectives of the Cantril Study was to determine why some people were panicked while others were not. The study concluded that the personal characteristics (e.g., critical ability, emotional insecurity, phobic personality, lack of self-confidence) and social characteristics (e.g., religion, education) of individuals, the social setting in which listening occurred, social relationships (e.g., activities and perceptions of family, friends, strangers) were among the major factors that caused people receive and respond to the broadcast differently. This conclusion was one of the first challenges to the hypodermic needle model of the media effects.

In a similar vein when Carl Hovland and his associates in the U.S. War Department’s Information and Education Division examined the effects of the Why We Fight films on American soldiers during the World War II concluded that although the films had been effective in increasing soldiers’ factual knowledge about the war and the enemy, they had almost no effect in increasing their resentment of the enemy and motivation to serve as soldiers, which were the ultimate objective of the films (Lowery and De

⁴ For a description of the details of the Cantril Study see Lowery and De Fleur 55-78.

Fleur 108-17; Severin and Tankard 149).⁵ When the reasons of this result were examined through an investigation of the different patterns of effects on different categories of viewers it was concluded that the effects were strongly influenced by individual differences (e.g., intellectual ability) and social categories (e.g., education) (Lowery and De Fleur 133).⁶

The conclusions of the Cantril Study and Hovland's army studies were important, in that they were questioning the assumptions that media had great power of influencing people uniformly and that, therefore, those who own the media could manipulate people in the way they desired. However it was Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues' study of mass media influences on voting decisions and political behavior of people in Erie County, Ohio that came up with the greatest challenge to the direct power of the media and the hypodermic needle approach to mass communication. The study was aimed for exploring the effect of political propaganda in mass media on voting behavior of people during the presidential election of 1940, which resulted in Franklin Roosevelt's victory over Wendell Wilkie, a comparatively unknown candidate.⁷ The results, which were reported in The People's Choice in 1944, showed that the media had a very limited effect on the voting behavior of people and that social relationships and "face-to-face discussions" had been more effective in shaping people's voting

⁵ For a description of the details of the study see Lowery and De Fleur 105-135.

⁶ The experience and the result obtained from Hovland's army research gave way to a new search, which Lowery and De Fleur calls "the search for the magic keys of persuasion" (134), which resulted in a body of research on persuasive communication. Between 1946 and 1961 Hovland and his associates conducted several experiments within the framework of Yale Program of Research on Communication and Attitude Change, which aimed at discovering "the magic keys" according to which more effective messages could be designed. The characteristics of the communicator, the content and structure of the message, the audience and audience response patterns were analyzed separately in relation to the discovery of those "magic keys". For further details of the Yale Program studies see Lowery and De Fleur 137-161.

⁷ For a description of the details of the study see Lowery and De Fleur 79-103.

decisions than the political propaganda made through the media. It was discovered that people did not receive messages and information directly from the media, but from other people, who were referred as “opinion leaders” (Lowery and De Fleur 100). Departing from this observation Lazarsfeld and his colleagues formulated the hypothesis that mass communication was in the form of a “two-step flow”. The hypothesis suggests that messages of the media first reach “opinion leaders”, who are more interested in and more exposed to those messages; opinion leaders interpret and then transmit messages to other people who are less interested and not directly exposed to media messages. In other words the hypothesis points to the “movement of information through interpersonal networks, from the media to people and from there to other people, rather than directly from media to mass” (Lowery and De Fleur 166). The role of the interpersonal relationships and the mediated nature of the communication of media messages, which the two-step flow hypothesis emphasized, could be considered as the indication of a necessary shift from the previous perspectives to mass communication. As it is argued by Lowery and De Fleur:

Social relationships between people had definitely *not* been thought to be significant in the process of mass communication. Mass society theory, and its mass communication derivative, the magic bullet conceptualization, had stressed a *lack* of social ties between people. Yet, here were research findings from a large-scale study showing that ties between people were one of the most important parts of the mass communication process. (102)

Departing from the two-step flow hypothesis Lazarsfeld, together with Elihu Katz, started a new study in Decatur whose results were published in 1955 in Personal Influence: The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communication (Lowery and De Fleur 165).⁸ In addition to the findings of the Erie County study the Decatur study showed that personal influence was more effective than the mass media in

⁸ For a detailed description of the Decatur study see Lowery and De Fleur 163-186.

marketing, fashion decisions, and movie attendance too (Severin and Tankard 194). In this respect as it is argued by Lowery and De Fleur the study

represented the first clear and intensive focus on social relationships and their role in the mass communication process. The ties between people were seen as the most important factors, rather than the structure of the message stimulus, the perceived characteristics of the communicator, or the psychological make-up of the receiver, in significantly shaping the mass communication process. (185)

Moreover the Decatur study pointed for the first time to the function of “primary groups” (e.g., family, peer groups) in providing meanings for their members, in other words in the creation of social reality (Lowery and De Fleur 168-9). The conception of the audience as “individuals and members of society connected to families, work organizations, and communities” (Ball-Rokeach and Cantor 12), which emerged from the studies of Katz and Lazarsfeld, was a challenge to the conception of the audience composed of identical and unconnected members, which lied at the basis of the hypodermic needle theory of mass communication.

In addition to the studies above several studies examining the effects of television on people had been carried out in late 1950s and 60s. With television’s becoming a part of everyone’s life in the United States during the 1950s the effects of television content on its audience became an important object of study. Television’s effects on children (Television in the Lives of Our Children,⁹ 1961), the effects of the portrayal of violence in television programs on violent behavior in society (Violence and the Media,¹⁰ 1969), the relationship between viewing violence on television and the

⁹ Wilbur Schramm and his associates’ study focused on the reasons children used TV and the knowledge and satisfactions they obtained from viewing. The study concluded that on the average TV seemed to be neither harmful nor beneficial for children. For details see Lowery and De Fleur 245-270.

¹⁰ The study concluded that television had to be considered as one of the factors that could contribute to explain the existence of violent behavior in the American society of the 1960s. For details see Lowery and De Fleur 271-295.

behavior of children and adolescents (Television and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Violence,¹¹ 1971) were among the major issues examined in those studies. As it is summarized by David Morley, the research on television effects during the sixties, which were mostly concerned with the relationship between televised violence and actual violence in society, suggested that “television was not a principal cause of violence but, rather, a contributing factor” (Television 50).

McLeod, Kosicki and Pan note that “media effects research is quite heterogeneous in both theoretical concerns and methods and has limited common characteristics”; but it is viewed as “much more homogeneous by its critics” (236-7). It could be argued that the heterogeneity of media effects research mainly lies in the variety of its methods of analysis, which ranged from simple psychological stimulus-response experiments (e.g., The Payne Fund Studies) to surveys (e.g., The Erie County Study) and in depth interviews (e.g. The Decatur Study), and the variety among the answers it gave to the question of media effects. R.G. Meadow has argued that “after four decades of exploration, we are left with one answer to the question of media effects - ‘it depends’” (qtd. in Severin and Tankard 247). The findings of the studies that we have described in this section confirm that argument; but this is not something negative. On the contrary the variety among the findings made a very important contribution to media studies, in that they continuously necessitated the revising of earlier assumptions and explanations about the mass communication process. In other words new findings necessitated the formulation of new theories of media effects, which would show that mass communication process could not be reduced to a simple

¹¹ The report prepared to the U.S. Surgeon General concluded that viewing violence on television was likely to increase aggressive behavior among certain categories of children. For details see Lowery and De Fleur 297-326.

syringe-like operation because various outside factors were effective in the audience's reception of the media messages such as individual psychological differences, membership in social categories, and social relationships. However although it is possible to observe a positive movement from direct-powerful effects theories to indirect-selective effects and from passive-uniform audience conception to active-diverse audience, media effects research still displayed homogeneity in terms of their approach to the media-audience relationship, in that this relationship is conceptualized only as a matter of effectiveness or ineffectiveness of media messages on audiences¹². It seems that the question "what do media do to people", which lied on the basis of the earliest studies had been transformed into Harold Laswell's question "who says what in which channel to whom with what effect" (Severin and Tankard 38) in subsequent studies; but the question of "effect" had always remained.

2.1.2. Uses and Gratifications Model: "What Do People Do With the Media?"

The question "what do media do to people" was not the only question that concerned all mass communication researchers. There had also been researches on "what the audience does with the media", which were characterized by "the uses and gratifications approach" to the media. Although there had been references to the uses and gratifications obtained from the media content by the audience even in the media effects researches (e.g., Herbert Blumer's research on the influence of motion pictures on children within the framework of the Payne Fund Studies), the uses and gratifications approach was first described by Elihu Katz in 1959. In his article entitled "Mass communication research and the study of popular culture" Katz pointed to the

¹² On the conception of media only in terms of its effects see Mutman.

need for turning from the question “what do media do to people” to the question “what do people do with the media”, since the media effects research, which was dominated by the aim of investigating media’s power to persuade people, had shown that media had little effect in persuading people (Severin and Tankard 269-270). He argued that “even the most potent of mass media content cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has no ‘use’ for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives” and based on that he described the uses and gratifications approach to media as an approach which assumed that “people’s values, their interests ... associations ... social roles, are pre-potent, and that people selectively fashion what they see and hear” (qtd. in Morley, Television 49).

The uses and gratifications approach suggested that different people can use the same media output for different purposes and in different ways because their “consumption of the media output is motivated and directed towards the gratification of certain individually experienced needs” (O’Sullivan et al. 325). E. Katz, J. Blumler, and M. Gurevitch summarized the concerns of uses and gratifications studies in 1974 in a paper entitled “Utilization of mass communication by the individual”¹³ as follows:

(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones. (qtd. in Severin and Tankard 272)

In an attempt to describe the ways in which the media provides gratifications for needs, uses and gratifications studies came up with various categorization of needs among which the one offered by D. McQuail, J. Blumler, and J. Brown is the most

¹³ The paper is situated in Blumer, Katz, eds. The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research. Beverly Hills, Cal.: Sage, 1974. 19-32.

famous one (O'Sullivan et al. 325-6; Severin and Tankard 272). According to that categorization media content functions to provide gratifications for the needs for "diversion" (escaping from the pressures of every day routines); "personal relationships" (the media provide companionship through its personalities and characters and sociability through becoming the object of conversation between the viewer and others with its programs); "personal identity" (the media contents enable the viewer to compare his/her life and situation with the lives of characters and situations in the media and hence to explore, question or confirm his/her own personal identity); and "surveillance" (the media become the supplier of information about the issues and events of the social world that might influence the individual's life) (O'Sullivan et al. 326).

One of the most important implications of the uses and gratifications approach is that the audience is not a passive crowd but rather it consists of individuals who actively seek gratifications from the media content for some of their needs, which arise from social experience. This seems to be the major reason why this approach has been considered as an alternative to the effects approach to mass communication. However McLeod, Kosicki and Pan argue that although the uses and gratifications approach has been seen as "replacing message-driven effects ('what media do to people') with an audience-driven perspective ('what people do with the media')" it is still possible to conceive it as complementing media effects research (250).

J. G. Blumler and D. McQuail's study of the 1964 general election in Britain with uses and gratifications approach seemed to support that argument. The aim of the study was to find out "why people watch or avoid party broadcasts; what uses they

wish to make of them; and what their preferences are between alternative ways of presenting politicians on television” (qtd. in Severin and Tankard 270). This was an attempt to understand why voters follow election campaigns in the mass media if they have very little effect on them as the former media effects studies have shown (e.g. Erie County study). The study concluded that people used party broadcasts “as a source of information about political affairs”; “to find out about campaign promises and pledges”; and “for reinforcement of existing attitudes” (Severin and Tankard 271). Blumler and McQuail also classified the viewers according to the strength of viewers’ motivation for following an election campaign on television and found that those with medium and weak motivation were more likely to shift in favor of the party whose broadcasts they had been exposed to than those with strong motivation (Severin and Tankard 271-2). Severin and Tankard argue that

this finding indicates that a uses and gratifications approach can actually increase our knowledge about effects of mass communication. Effects may be dependent upon or related to audience members’ needs and motives. (272)

The uses and gratifications approach has been criticized for several reasons, particularly for its being overindividualistic and psychologistic in defining needs and gratifications. Uses and gratifications research seems to assume that individual “needs” always precede “uses” and “gratifications”. Severin and Tankard state that in uses and gratifications research “[o]ften needs people seek to fulfill through media use are inferred from questions about why they use the media, leading to the suspicion that the need was created by the media, or is a rationalization for media use” (275). P. Elliott, in his 1974 article entitled “Uses and gratifications: a critique and a sociological alternative”, pointed to the difficulty of establishing which come first

among “uses”, “needs”, and “gratifications” (O’Sullivan et al. 327). G. Murdock, in his 1973 article entitled “Mass media and the construction of meaning”, argued that

In order to provide anything like a satisfactory account of the relationship between people’s mass media involvements and their own social situation and meaning system, it is necessary to start from the social setting rather than from the individual; to replace the idea of personal ‘needs’ with the notion of structural contradiction; and to introduce the concept of sub-culture. (qtd. in Morley, Television 81)

Parallel to Murdock’s argument David Morley argues that the uses and gratifications approach’s tendency to see differences in interpretation of media messages simply as the outcome of individual differences among the audience (e.g. different personalities, hobbies, interests) is quite problematic:

it can be argued that the question of different interpretations of messages is not quite such a purely individual question as this ... it is not simply a question of the different psychologies of individuals, but it is also a question of differences between individuals involved in different sub-cultures, with different socio-economic backgrounds. That is to say, while of course there will always be individual differences in how people interpret a particular message, those individual differences might well turn out to be framed by cultural differences. (Television 80).

As the paragraph above suggests Morley criticizes the uses and gratifications approach for being “insufficiently sociological” (Television 53). Therefore he states that

[w]e need to break fundamentally with the ‘uses and gratifications’ approach, and its exclusive emphasis on individual psychological differences of interpretation. What is needed is an approach which links differential interpretations back to the socio-economic structure of society ... In short, we need to see how the different subcultural structures and formations within the audience, and the sharing of different cultural codes and competences amongst different groups and classes, structure the decoding of the message for different sections of the audience. (Television 88)

The uses and gratifications approach has also been criticized for its overestimation of the openness of the message; in that it has pointed to the possibility that the same media message could be open to different readings but neglected the fact that the media message still may ‘prefer’ certain reading as opposed to others (Morley

Television 52; O'Sullivan et al. 327).¹⁴ These criticisms seem to be related to the idea that the uses and gratifications approach carried in itself the potential of taking for granted the content of media messages or totally neutralizing them and their effects.

The literature so far -the effects and uses and gratifications approaches- is marked with two different conceptions of the audience. One is a "passive" homogeneous "crowd" manipulated by the media and the other is "active" "individuals" consciously and freely choosing and using the media for some type of compensation. In other words research into audiences means either research into "effects" or into "compensation". It must be noted that one is based on an "apocalyptic" view of the media deriving from the idea of "mass society" whereas the other is motivated by a "pluralistic" view of the media deriving from the idea of "free democratic society". Therefore what appears to be the audience in both approaches is in fact a construction made with respect to a certain conception of social and political priorities.

2.2. The Semiotic Intervention: From "Message" to "Text", "Receivers" to "Readers", "Communication" to "Signification"

It must be noted that although the mass communication research until the end of 1960s produced many "findings" concerning the effects and uses of the media, it always took the media message for granted and left the formal structure of the media output and the production of meaning unquestioned. James Halloran who was one of the contributors to the postwar mass communication researches argued in 1970 that these researches had not produced anything of significance about the actual

¹⁴ These issues will be referred again in section 2.2.2.

relationship between dominant forms of mass media and their audiences. The reason, for Halloran, was that perhaps they “weren’t asking the right questions in the first place” (qtd. in Brunt 69). It seems that the early mass communication research was mainly concerned with the question “what?” (i.e. “what do media do to people?”, “what do people do with the media?”) rather than the question “how?”. More specifically the media was considered only in terms of its effects and the audience in terms of their behavioral responses to the media and their uses of it while the formal structure of media output and how meaning is produced in the interaction of the media and the audience were left unquestioned.¹⁵ The popularization of structuralism and semiotics starting from the 1960s contributed to the emergence of a new paradigm in media studies in the 1970s. The concepts of “message” or “content” was replaced with the concept of “text”, the concept of “communication” with the concept of “signification” and the production of meaning became the subject of theoretical inquiry. The change could be described as movement from the “transmission model” of “communication” to a “semiological” account of “meaning formation”.

Semiotics or semiology “aims to give an account of the structure of meaning of social practices and objects” (Coward and Ellis 29). Structuralism as a method of analysis in semiotics was derived from Saussurian linguistics, which sought to explain how language function to produce meaning. Saussure defined language as a system of

¹⁵ However it must be noted that mass communication research on media effects and uses had important contribution to the subsequent study of audiences. This body of work exhibits a movement from the idea of audience as a homogeneous group of individuals isolated from everything except the media messages to the audience as consisting of differentiated individuals already situated within a network of social and interpersonal relationships, which also suggested a movement from the model of uniform media influences to selective influences and from media effects to uses. These movements are important in that they seem to serve as points of departures in subsequent studies on audiences, which seem to further broaden the implications of early studies.

signs, which resulted from the association of the “signifiers” with the “signifieds”. He argued that the meaning of signs were determined by their differential relation to each other rather than some material characteristics inherent in them or by some external reality, which they referred to. Saussure also argued that the link between the signifiers and the signifieds was “arbitrary”; in other words the link was not natural but conventional. Saussure’s emphasis on language as a structure and system suggested that language did not reflect reality but rather “structures” it.

Saussure’s conception of language in terms of “signification” and its deployment by structuralism in the 1960s was a challenge to the earlier conceptions of language as a medium of “communication” and to the communication theories based on that conception. Within the framework of Saussurian linguistic, as Coward and Ellis write:

language is not just a means of communication. It is not a courier of meaning that exists outside it in some way ... Language is not the servant of thought [and as such] it is equally not just a container which transfer a thought from one brain to another, as the theory of language-as-communication implies. (79)

Language-as-communication assumes a person with a meaning in mind situated outside the language. However Saussure’s conception of language implied that meaning is not external to the language but rather constructed by it through signification. This, at the same time, suggests that “[b]ecause all practices that make up a social totality take place in language, it becomes possible to consider language as the place where social individual is constructed” (Coward and Ellis 1). It follows that “meaning and the subject are only produced in the discursive work of the text” (Coward and Ellis 6).

Structuralism applied Saussurian linguistics to the study of texts. In fact the term “text” referred to the internal structure and organization of any cultural product or set of representations (Kuhn, Women’s Pictures 8). Therefore a novel, a painting, a film, an image could all be analysed as texts. Structuralists studied texts as analogous to language. Since according to Saussurian linguistic it was the structure that made meaning possible, structuralists aimed at examining the rules and conventions that governed the production of meaning in a text. Structuralism maintained that the elements within any structure gained their meaning through their relations to other elements. Such an approach suggested that narratives did not express ideas in the mind of an author. In other words the source of the meaning was not the mind of the author, but rather the meaning of the narrative derived from its general structure (Macdonell 10-1). It was Roland Barthes who became the pioneer in the withdrawal of the author from the space of the meaning. In 1968 Barthes proclaimed “the death of the author” as the source of meaning and the emergence of the reader by arguing that

[t]he reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that *someone* who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. (129)

Shaun Moores offers a good summary of the shift in the 1970s caused by the deployment of the implications of structuralism and semiotics in media studies:

Cultural theorists drew on semiotics and began to talk about the message as a ‘text’, as a complex and structured arrangement of signs rather than an empty vehicle for the transmission of information or opinion. In this jargon, receivers became ‘readers’. They were seen to be involved in -and for a number of analysts, constituted by- a construction of meaning. The stress here was on signification not direct behavioral change. (Interpreting Audiences 6)

It could be argued that the semiotic intervention marked a new beginning in media studies. With the movement from the idea of “communication” to “signification” the media output is redefined as not an empty courier of messages but a “text”, a set of signifying system where meaning is constructed through certain rules and conventions forming the structure of the text. The resulting emphasis on “texts” and their organizations of meanings which was missing from the effects and uses and gratifications approaches revealed itself in two different approaches to “text” - “reader” relations: the “textualist approach”, which is sometimes referred as “textual determinism” and “culturalist approach” or “encoding / decoding model”. While both approaches stressed the “meaningfulness of texts” and focused on the question of “meaning formation” the latter differed from the former in its conclusions about the “reading subject”, “reading process” and the relation between “meaning” and “reading”.

In fact recognizing the text as a representational system that created particular subject positions for its readers both approaches focused on the positioning force of the media text. However while the textualist approach constructed a “hypothetical” reader and text-reader relation exclusively on the basis of the subject positions produced within the text, the culturalist approach emphasized the “historical” subject who is already positioned by other social and discursive formations which might affect his/her engagement with the text. It could be argued that while the textualist approach dealt with meanings within media texts and the implied reader, the culturalist approach dealt with how meanings are constructed at the point of encounter between texts and historical readers.

2.2.1. Textualist Approach, “Screen Theory”: From “Real People” to “Spectator” as a Construct of the “Text”

The relationship between films and their audience have been one of the major objects of study within mass communication research. We have already mentioned The Payne Fund Studies and Hovland’s army studies focusing on Why We Fight films in late 1920s and 1940s in the section on “effects” studies. There had been investigations of the effects of cinema on children and youth in the early 1930s in Britain too (Gripsrud 207). Earlier in 1914 Emilie Altenloh had written a doctoral dissertation on films and their audiences from a sociological and historical perspective. Altenloh had provided

a detailed picture not only of the social composition of audiences but also of the differences between various sections of the audience in terms of genre preferences and the overall context of their going to the movies, including their relations to other cultural forms and media. (Gripsrud 207)

There had been other sociological studies focusing on “the role of cinema in the everyday lives of ordinary people in particular social milieux” such as E.W. Bakke’s The Unemployed Man, 1933 and Llewellyn Smith et al.’s The New Survey of London Life and Labor, 1935 (Gripsrud 208).

1970s witnessed films’ becoming the object of theoretical inquiry in a totally different way within the framework of film studies. It is possible to consider the shift from the study of film as an aesthetic form and the study of auteurs to the study of films as texts, which contributed to the circulation of meaning within the public sphere as a revolution in film studies. However it must be noted that it was not only the concepts of “text” and “signification” but also “ideology” and “subject” which informed 1970s cultural theory. It could be argued that the purpose of the concern with meaning was mainly to bring to the surface “those aspects of meaning which can be characterized

as ideological” (Smith 8). In this section we will focus on “screen theory” developed in the pages of the British film journal Screen¹⁶ in the 1970s, which characterizes a particular trajectory within 1970s film theory that still informs current film studies. Screen, which had figures such as Stephen Heath, Colin MacCabe, Laura Mulvey, Peter Woolen as its key contributors, gave the best examples of the textual analysis, which was the preferred mode of analysis of films. However, and more importantly, it also came up with the first significant theory of text (film) - reader (spectator) relation in cinema, especially after the introduction of psychoanalysis into the studies of the journal.

Christian Metz was the first person who applied Saussurean linguistic to cinema. In 1964 he developed “cinesemiotics” which aimed at describing the fiction film as an elaborate web of cinematic codes and systems (Film Language). Following Metz, Stephen Heath argued in 1970:

The ‘truth’ of cinema is to be interrogated in its formation. Today (today meaning over the last ten years or so) semiotics is constituting itself as the point of this interrogation at the same time that a certain *practice of cinema* is itself refusing the unreflexive ‘innocence’ of the films that are produced in overwhelming number alongside it, that is itself deconstructing the naturalism of that cinema, working on cinema as process of production of meanings and comprehending itself in its very practice: a cinema no longer of films, but of *texts*. (“Film/Cinetext/Text” 104).

Heath used the term “cinetext” to refer to “what is commonly understood by ‘film’ (as ‘finished work’), but regarded not as object of consumption (surprise), regarded as, on the contrary, set of signifying systems” (“Film/Cinetext/Text” 105). However screen theory did not aim at mere figuring out the language of cinema and the meanings in

¹⁶ Screen was derived from Screen Education, which was the journal of the Society of Education in Film and television (SEFT), a department of the British Film Institute (BFI). BFI was mainly concerned with the development of film education by providing training equipment for teachers. In 1970 a group of the members of SEFT who disagreed with BFI’s goal gathered under the Screen journal and engaged in developing a critical film theory (Davies 89).

films. Informed also by Althusserian notion of “ideology” and Lacanian theory of “subject formation” screen theory addressed three distinct but overlapping issues: (a) the relation of the film to the world it represents (b) the internal organization of filmic discourses (c) the relation between film and “spectator”, a subject position produced by the film text (Smith 8).

It might be useful to look briefly at Althusser’s notion of ideology and Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory that informed screen theory to better situate its motivations and implications, especially those referring to film/spectator relation. In fact Althusser’s theory of ideology, which was also informed by Lacan’s theories, and Lacan’s theories drawing on Saussurean linguistic, both involved a theory of the subject. According to these theories the subject “neither the individual person nor an immediate sense of one’s own identity or self. It is rather a category of knowing defined by its relation to objects and to other subjects” (Bordwell 6). It follows that subjectivity is not something pre-given to the individual but something acquired or “constructed through representational systems.” In his article entitled “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” Althusser attempts to understand the relations between State and subject by distinguishing between “repressive state apparatuses” (RSAs) and “ideological state apparatuses” (ISAs). RSAs are “repressive and coercive state apparatuses” such as government, police, courts, prisons, which can enforce behavior directly whereas ISA’s are institutions, such as education¹⁷, religion, the family, politics, art, which generate ideologies which individuals internalize and act

¹⁷ Diane Macdonell points that Althusser’s ideas were a breakthrough in Marxist theory of ideology after 1968. One of the reasons was that he was describing education as one of the main institutions among ISAs. In fact the critic of the university had played a major role in the beginning of the events of May ’ 68 (14).

in accordance with. This suggests that “a state functions not only by power but also by ideology” (Ricoeur 52).¹⁸ It follows that ideology functions to reproduce the system, to maintain its survival. Althusser describes three aspects of ideology, which, at the same time, explains how ideology reproduces the system. In For Marx, Althusser argues that “ideology is a system ... of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case)” of the “imaginary relation” between human beings and “their real conditions of existence” (qtd. in Ricoeur 53-4). In Lenin and Philosophy he offers a clearer explanation of this aspect of ideology: ‘it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that “men” “represents to themselves” in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there’ (qtd. in Ricoeur 60). However, Althusser points, this representation involves distortion and the relation it represents is only “imaginary”:

all ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relationship of production (and the other relationships that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live. (qtd. in Ricoeur 61).

The second aspect of ideology is that it has a material existence. Althusser expresses this with the statement: “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices” (qtd. in Ricoeur 62). The third aspect of ideology is that “the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology ... insofar as all ideology has the function ... of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (qtd. in Ricoeur 64). Althusser uses the concept of “interpellation” to demonstrate the relationship between ideology and

¹⁸ It is argued that Althusser’s theory of ideology was influenced by the concept of “hegemony” developed by Gramsci in the 1930s. Althusser’s distinction between RSAs and ISAs has some parallels with Gramsci’s distinction between “coercive control” and “consensual” control where “consensual control” refers to the “voluntary assimilation of the world view or hegemony of the dominant group” (Strinati 165-6).

the subject and argues that ideology turns individuals into subjects through “interpellating” or “hailing” them as its subjects (Ricoeur 64). It follows that interpellation is the very mechanism by which people are subjected to ideology in that it promotes in individuals the illusion that they are consistent, rational and free human agents and invite them -in disguised ways- to take up their appropriate role in society (Cook 366). In other words individuals recognize and identify themselves as the subjects of ideology through interpellation.

Althusser’s theory of ideology had direct implications for film theory. As it is argued by Philip Rosen

[i]f ideology consists in a universe of discursive representation, then insofar as cinema works as representation and/or as a component of discursive systems of representation, filmic signifying systems can and should be investigated as ideology. If discursive effects are inseparable from interpellating individuals as subjects, then even film theory conceptualizing cinema as ideology should inquire about the mechanisms through which an individual film spectator “recognizes” himself or herself as subject in the film viewing process. (159)

In fact this inquiry became one of the major concerns of 1970s film theory. Film theorists analysed how cinema

works to interpellate the film spectator, binding his or her desire with dominant ideological positions, and above all, how it conceals this ideological process by providing the spectator with the comforting assurance that they are a unified, transcendent, meaning-making subject. (Cook 366)

The “apparatus theory”, which was identified with the works of figures such as Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz, tried to theorize the ideological workings of the cinematic apparatus. Baudry in his essay entitled “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus” described cinema as “a work”, “a process of transformation”, which continuously “concealed” the traces of its workings (287). In so doing cinema was able to present its ideological constructions as natural. In this

mechanism, Baudry argued, the spectator' positioning as a phantasmatic subject who identified with the apparatus played an important role:

Everything happens as if, the subject himself being unable -and for a reason- to account for his own situation, it was necessary to substitute secondary organs, grafted on to replace his own defective ones, instruments or ideological formations capable of filling his function as subject. In fact this substitution is only possible on the condition that the instrumentation itself be hidden or repressed. (295)

In The Imaginary Signifier Metz also referred to cinema as a psychic apparatus where the spectator is seen as complementing its working:

The cinematic institution is not just the cinema industry ..., it is also the mental machinery -another industry- which spectators 'accustomed to the cinema' have internalized historically and which has adopted them to the consumption of films. (7)

The outer machine (the cinema as industry) and the inner machine (the spectator's psychology) are not just metaphorically related, the latter a facsimile for the former, 'internalising' it as a reversed mould, a receptive hollow of identical form, but also metonymically related as complementary segments. (8)

In fact the second paragraph in the above quote carries the traces of Lacanian psychoanalysis more than Althusser's arguments. As it is argued by Philip Rosen, although the category of the subject is important for ideological formations within the framework of Althusser's theory of ideology it does not account much for the human subjectivity in itself.¹⁹ Rosen points that the individual's attraction to "subjecthood" needs further theoretical explanation and asks "what profit is there for an individual human being in assuming positionality defined by that category?" (159). Metz seems to make a similar point in the argument below:

Is it, then, a question of 'ideology'? In other words, the audiences have the same ideology as the films that are provided for them, they fill the cinemas, and that is how the machine keeps turning. Of course. But also a question of desire, and hence of symbolic positioning. (Imaginary Signifier 91)

¹⁹ John Ellis explains that the answers Althusser gives to the question "what is a subject?" are not present in his Lenin and Philosophy but given in "a very divergent ... essay 'Freud and Lacan', which he was 'correcting' whilst writing about ideology" (189).

Although Althusser's theory of ideology included the idea that ideology functions in psychic terms it was the psychoanalytical theory, especially the Lacanian psychoanalysis, which film theory of the 1970s applied to in order to explore the desire of the spectator to recognize himself/herself as subject, which was not much elaborated on in Althusser's writings. With its concern for the issue of desire psychoanalysis could provide an explanation for the pleasure in cinema. Lacan provided an account of how subject is produced through language. It is at the same time an account of the individual's desire for a stable identity. Kaja Silverman compares Lacan's theory of the subject to a classic narrative in that "it begins with birth, and then moves in turn through the territorialization of the body, the mirror stage, access to language, and the Oedipus complex" (Subject 150). Lacan talked about three phases of development for human being -the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic- according to which individual becomes a subject by entering into the "symbolic order", which is the structure of language itself (Silverman, Subject 149-93). In this account the subject is only an effect of the language in that, as Elizabeth Grosz explains, for Lacan "language does not represent the subject's preexisting intentions or ideas; the subject no longer constitutes language or functions as its master, but conversely, is constituted as a subject by language" (97). Silverman argues that the term subject "helps us to conceive of human reality as a construction, as the product of signifying activities which are both culturally specific and generally unconscious" (Subject 130). Rosen summarizes Lacanian psychoanalysis as 'an account of how, in and through signification, the individual is "sutured" into "secure" meaning at the service of "stable" identity' (162).

For Lacan the concept of “lack” is crucial to the formation of the subject. Silverman writes, “[i]ndeed, one could say of the Lacanian subject that it is almost entirely defined by lack” (Subject 151). Lack is also the basis of desire, which is the concept marking the Symbolic realm in Lacan’s account. Silverman explains that

desire is directed toward ideal representations which remain forever beyond the subject’s reach. The first of these representations ... is the mirror image in which the subject initially “finds” its identity. The identifications which the subject is encouraged to make immediately upon its entry into the symbolic order, and which exercise a kind of retroactive influence over the mirror stage, are calculated to induce in the subject an even more radical sense of inadequacy and lack. (Subject 176)

The mirror stage, which marks the entry into the Imaginary, cements a self/other (mirror image) dichotomy, which gives the child the idea of Other. This idea of Other creates and sustains a never-ending “lack”, which Lacan calls “desire”. In other words “desire”, which marks the field of the Symbolic, is the desire of the Other (Silverman, Subject 192). The first object of desire is the mother but “with the subject’s entry into the symbolic the father replaces the mother as the central object of desire” (Silverman, Subject 190). The Symbolic is at the same time the domain of the “law of the father”, which prevents the child from fulfilling her mother’s desire. Silverman writes, “the child’s desire for the mother is therefore displaced onto what she desires, and the paternal signifier emerges as the definitive one in the history of the subject” (Subject 190).²⁰ Within such a framework the Other represents the phallus, the law of the father, the center of the system, all at the same time. Therefore the desire is the desire to be the center of the system, the center of language itself to secure stable meaning.

²⁰ It must be noted that the figure of father is only a function of the language. The law of the father refers to the submission to the rules of the language in order to enter into the Symbolic, to become a subject.

Apparatus theorists drew on Lacanian theory of subject formation, especially the mirror phase, in their elaboration on the kind of viewing situation the cinematic apparatus as an ideological machine involves. Baudry drew a parallelism between movie watching and dreaming (“Apparatus”) and mirror phase (“Ideological Effects”). He argued that the cinema makes the spectator return to a state of imaginary wholeness where he/she imagines himself/herself as a transcendent meaning-making subject. This state paralleled the mirror phase, the period when the infant (mis)recognizes himself/herself in the mirror and imagines being a unified body with an ego.

Screen theory was highly informed by Althusser’s theory of ideology, Lacanian theory of subject formation and the arguments of apparatus theorists. Contributors of Screen agreed with apparatus theorists’ conception of cinema as an institutional and ideological apparatus. However they focused on the textual operations of the cinematic institution. As Cook remarks rather than “the spatial, perceptual, and social arrangements of the apparatus” they engaged in “detailed analyses of individual classic Hollywood films which were seen to represent the cinematic institution” (366). Due to that screen theory became to be characterized with “text-based” film theory and textual analysis in film studies. However although the primary object of analysis became the operations of film text it must be noted that this was still in order to examine the operation of ideology within film texts. In other words it could be argued that the aim was not just textual analysis but also “ideological analysis” (Kuhn, Women’s Pictures 77).

Screen theorists considered film as a discourse and focused on the ideological work lying at the basis of the classical cinema. They described the ways in which films organize their consumption by creating certain ways of seeing and knowing through specific narrative mechanisms and codes of representation. In this respect Colin MacCabe argued that

film does not reveal the real in a moment of transparency, but rather ... film is constituted by a set of discourses which (in the positions allowed to subject and object) produce a certain reality. ("Theory" 62)

Stephen Heath pointed to the relation of "narrativization" to ideology of realism in classical cinema:

The narration is to be held on the narrated, the enunciation on the enounced; filmic procedures are to be held as narrative instances (very much as "cues"), exhaustively, without gap or contradiction. What is sometimes vaguely referred to as "transparency" has its meaning in this narrativization: the proposal of a discourse that disavows its operations and positions in the name of a signified that it proposes as its preexistent justification. ("Narrative Space" 397)

Heath formulated film as a "specific signifying system" where

signifying indicates the recognition of film as a system or series of systems of meaning, film as articulation. *Practice* stresses the process of this articulation, which it thus refuses to hold under the assumption of notions such as 'representation' and 'expression'; it takes film as a work of production of meanings and in doing so brings into the analysis the question of the positioning of the subject within that work, its relations of the subject, what kind of 'reader' and 'author' it constructs... [S]pecificity is at once those codes particular to cinema (codes of articulation of sound and image, codes of scale of shot, certain codes of narrative arrangement, etc.) and the heterogeneity in its particular effects, its particular inscriptions of subject and ideology, of the subject in ideology.²¹ ("On screen" 26)

As Heath's formulation suggests Screen theorists stressed the argument that film should be studied as discourse and "to study film as discourse ... was to identify the textual strategies whereby subject positions are generated for the spectator" (Moore, "Texts" 12). Colin MacCabe wrote that "the attempt to link questions of signification to questions of subjectivity" was the most important feature of Screen's work in

²¹ Heat made this argument in 1976. See Willemsen 211.

1970s (“Class” 6). Stephen Heath in his article “Film and System: Terms of Analysis”, which had important influences on 1970s film theory argued that

It is precisely the figure of the subject as turning-point (circulation) between image and industry (poles of the cinematic institution) which demands study in the analysis of films. The hypothesis, in short, is that ideology depends crucially on the establishment of a range of ‘machines’ (of institutions) which move -transference of desire- the subject (‘sender’ and ‘receiver’) in a ceaseless appropriation of the symbolic into the imaginary, production into fiction. In film, it is narrative that has served as the mode of that appropriation, the very mirror of the subject in its reconstitution. (8)

Heath’s argument carries the traces of an important shift in 1970s film theory with the inclusion of the psychoanalytic theory, especially Lacan’s theory of subjectivity, into agenda. As Barbara Creed remarks “this shift could be seen as moving from studies of the film text as autonomous and discrete to studies which concentrated on the text-reader relationship” (15). However it was not the “actual audiences” but rather the “spectator” as a subject position produced by the filmic text that textual analysis focused on in its elaboration on that relationship. In fact as Rosalind Brunt argues, ‘textual analysis ... rendered any reference to actual audiences redundant as the audience-text relationship became unproblematically inferred from a particular “reading” of the ... text’ (70).²²

Parallel to Lacan’s consideration of the subject as an effect of language the subject in cinema was seen as the product of filmic representation. It was argued that classical narrative film inscribed certain viewing positions and asked the viewer occupy these positions. Therefore the “spectator” was a subject positions constructed by the film text. Screen theorists offered detailed analyses of how film texts “interpellate”

²² It could be argued that this is in conformity with Saussure’s conception of language as constructing reality and the social individual. Within a semiotic framework reference to actual audience might seem to be irrelevant since the individual was also assumed to be constructed in the language as a subject.

spectators, which subject positions they create for them.²³ The insertion of the spectator as subject into the filmic text is referred to as “suture”.²⁴ Kaja Silverman explained that “the concept of suture attempts to account for the means by which subjects emerge within discourse” (“Suture” 219). Stephen Heath argued that “[a] theory of ideology must ...begin not from the subject but as an account of suturing effects, the effecting of the join of the subject in structures of meaning” (“On Suture” 106). The concept of suture was introduced into film studies from psychoanalytic theory, too. Other psychoanalytical concepts such as “lack”, “desire”, “identification”, “phallus”, “imaginary”, “symbolic” and so on were heavily referred to in 1970s film theory to elaborate on the spectator-subject of film as it is positioned by the text. Barbara Creed offers a good descriptive summary of Screen’s consideration of the subject in psychoanalytical terms. She writes:

Psychoanalytic interpretations of the classic realist text hold that the classic narrative constructs an impression of plenitude and coherence to cover over the underlying reality of lack, separation and difference. Similarly, the ideal subject of classic narrative is given a unified, coherent but illusory identity. The notion of the lack at the center of being is denied in the signifying practices of classic narrative. (10)

Screen theorists also appealed to psychoanalysis in their analyses of the way classical film used its narrative devices -the use of close-ups, the relationship between sound and image, the use of shot-reverse-shot - to position the spectator in certain specific ways in relation to the dominant patriarchal ideology. Laura Mulvey’s influential article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” is considered as the best example of such works. In this essay Mulvey referred to psychoanalytical concepts and argued

²³ Stephen Heath’s “Film and System: Terms of Analysis” published in 1975, where he analyses the film Touch of Evil and Raymond Bellour’s analyses of Hitchcock’s films, especially North by Northwest, are cited as best exemplifying Screen’s work.

²⁴ The concept of suture, which was initially formulated by Jacques-Alain Miller, a disciple of Lacan, and introduced into film studies by Jean-Pierre Oudart in 1977. Stephen Heath offered a broader account of suture in cinema in the same years.

that the pleasures offered by classical cinema depended on pre-existing psychic patterns at work within the spectator such as identification, scopophilia, voyeurism, and fetishism, which are in conformity with the unconscious of patriarchal society (200-2). She pointed to the fact that the spectator is positioned by the filmic text in a specific way through a specific organization of the looks. She argued that classical cinema reproduced the male gaze in that man is always positioned as the active bearer of the look and woman is made the passive object of that look. Hence, she claimed, spectator in cinema identified with the male look regardless of his/her biological sex (203-4). Moreover classical cinema offered “avenues of escape” from the castration threat caused by the image of woman through the narrative punishment or fetishization of woman (205-8). Based on all these Mulvey concluded that the pleasures offered by classical cinema reinforced the patriarchal order. It could be argued that Mulvey’s analysis is exemplary of the “appeal to psychoanalysis for understanding how the cinema operates as an ideological medium”, which Judith Mayne considers to be the “single common denominator to all 1970s film theory” (20).

Mulvey towards the end of her essay pointed to the possibility for an alternative cinema through the destruction of pleasure, break with illusionism and detachment (209). In fact the search for an alternative cinema, the valorization of avant-garde film practices characterized Screen’s practice in general. Colin MacCabe considering the past years stated that

In Screen the adopting of Lacanian forms of psychoanalytic argument had effectively reintroduced criteria of value which denigrated forms of popular cinema in favor of a certain number of politically avant-garde texts: Godard, Straub, Oshima etc... As avant-garde positions were valorized, Hollywood was produced negatively: classic narrative Hollywood cinema was evaluated in terms of the constant placing of the

spectator in a position of imaginary knowledge. This cinema was held to deprive the spectator of any perspective for social or political action except for privileged moments when vision was fleetingly disturbed by a pressure the text could not contain. ("Class" 11)

Screen's approach, which is in general referred as textual approach or characterized as "textual determinism" (Moore, Interpreting Audiences 6), had been criticized for several reasons. One of those criticisms was that it presumed a homogeneous and submissive spectator; a "subject" constructed by the text who, as Heath has argued, only "makes the meanings the film makes for it" ("On suture" 88) regardless of differences relating to sex, race, culture, and so on. Another criticism was that in this formulation history is given no place. In other words it was argued that "the notion of the viewing subject that emerges is ultimately nothing more than a generalized abstraction" (Creed 15). However as it is stated by Barbara Creed the emphasis on an abstract notion of the subject had its own purposes. Creed writes:

Defenders of the psychoanalytic approach argue that it does make sense to talk of an abstract notion of the subject outside of these empirical realities, in that the text does position the viewing subject in certain ways through the workings of its more formal mechanisms such as suture and voyeuristic gaze. This does not mean that the viewing subject is or should be reduced to a passive object of the text's formal operations; the viewing subject also contributes to the way in which meaning is constructed. If we ignore the formal operations of the text in the construction of meaning, we are left with the argument that the spectator is free to construct any meaning she or he wishes. (15-6)

It could be said that Creed points to the fact that Screen's psychoanalytical approach cannot be thought as separate from their consideration of the film as an ideological apparatus. Referring to the past Stephen Heat argues in 1990s that

Screen did at times put the weight so heavily on describing the representation made that it fell into an over-deterministic account, a theoreticist version of closure... Screen's point, of course, was an appropriation of psychoanalysis politically, in so far as it could be made conjuncturally useful, and notably as regards identifying and describing mechanisms of subject inscription for ideology. ("Cinema" 8)

A more general criticism directed to Screen was that it used psychoanalysis “in an abstracted, almost deterministic way” (Mayne 52). In fact the problem may not be with the psychoanalysis but rather its use in film theory. Judith Mayne refers to that problem when she criticizes the way psychoanalysis is used in 1970s film theory as follows:

How many times does one need to be told that individual film x, or film genre y, articulates the law of the father, assigns the spectator a position of male oedipal desire, marshals castration anxiety in the form of voyeurism and fetishism, before psychoanalysis begins to sound less like the exploration of the unconscious, and more like a master plot? (68-69)

In a similar vein one of the earliest contributors of Screen, Stephen Heath, arguing about the way psychoanalysis used in film studies writes in 1990s that

In film analysis, the recourse to psychoanalysis as interpretative source has mostly worked illustratively, resolving things into the confirmation of a set of given themes, a repeatable psychoanalytic story duly repeated. (“Cinema” 9)

It could be argued that the criticisms directed at Screen's approach were at the same time criticisms of structuralism and psychoanalysis in general. David Morley argues that

psychoanalytically based work has ultimately mobilized what can be seen as another version of the hypodermic theory of effects -in so far as it is, at least in its initial and fundamental formulations, a universalist theory which attempts to account for the way in which the subject is necessarily positioned by the text ... this body of work ... finds it difficult to provide the theoretical space within which one can allow for, and than investigate, differential readings, interpretations or responses on the part of the audience. This is so quite simply because the theory, in effect, tries to explain any specific instance of the text/reader relationship in terms of a universalist theory of the formation of subjects in general. (Television 59).

In a similar vein Jackie Stacey criticized the consideration of the female spectator in film studies predominantly in textual terms. Her argument below could also be considered as summarizing the way Screen considered spectator in general:

Devoid of sociality and historicity, the spectator has often been seen to be a subject position produced by the visual and narrative conventions of a film text and assumed to

respond to it in particular ways due to the universal workings of the female psyche. (35-6).

Paul Willemen who was one of the contributors to Screen had also pointed to Screen's failure to distinguish between the subject implied by the text and 'real' readers. He argued:

There remains an *unbridgeable gap between 'real' readers/authors and 'inscribed' ones, constructed and marked in and by the text*. Real readers are subjects in history, living in social formations, rather than mere subjects of a single text. The two types of subject are not commensurate. But for the purposes of formalism, real readers are supposed to coincide with the constructed readers. (qtd. in Morley, "Texts" 169)

Screen's way of referring to psychoanalysis was subjected to criticism by some members of the journal too. Early in 1975-6 Edward Buscombe, Christine Gledhill, Alan Lovell, Christopher Williams, who were all in the editorial board of the journal, wrote an article entitled "Psychoanalysis and Film" where they pointed to "the general lack of any critical distance from psychoanalysis in *Screen*", the inaccessibility of the various expositions and applications of psychoanalysis, and the inconsistent use of psychoanalytic concepts such as mirror phase, castration complex, voyeurism and fetishism. Colin MacCabe's "Realism and the Cinema", Stephen Heath's "Film System: Terms of Analysis", Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" were among the specific studies which they referred in their criticisms.

2.2.2 Culturalist Approach, Encoding/Decoding Model: Polysemic Text, Different Interpretations

It was the Media Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the University of Birmingham, who came up with the first organized and most extended critique of the screen theory, especially its model of the text-spectator relation. The members of the Centre, among whom Stuart Hall was the leading figure,

argued that Screen's reduction of the spectator to a subject position constructed wholly by the text was insufficient in accounting for the way actual viewers -historical subjects- read texts. Against Screen's suggestion that the text determines its consumption in certain specific ways CCCS forwarded the concept of "reading as a site of struggle" where audiences could actively negotiate meanings and produce different interpretations. In other words CCCS conceived the text not just an instrument of ideological imposition but as a site of struggle.

Stuart Hall, in an essay describing the Centre's relation to Cultural Studies, described the general project of the center as "the elaboration of a non-reductionist theory of cultures and formations" ("Cultural Studies" 39). Hall argued against the understanding of "culture" in the mainstream American sociology as "already inscribed in the texts" ("Cultural Studies" 21) and criticized the "abstraction of texts from the social practices". He stated that

This obscured how a particular ordering of culture came to be produced and sustained ... But the process of ordering (arrangement, regulation) is always the result of concrete sets of practices and relations. In constituting a particular cultural order as 'dominant', it implied (though this was rarely examined) the active subordination of alternatives - their marginalization and incorporation into a dominant structure: hence also, the resistances, antagonisms and struggles which result from regulation. ("Cultural Studies" 27).

In this respect Hall pointed to the need to move to an "anthropological definition of culture -as cultural *practices*" and to a

more historical definition of cultural practices: questioning the anthropological meaning and interrogating its universality by means of the concepts of social formation, cultural power, domination and regulation, resistance and struggle. ("Cultural Studies" 27).

This conceptualization of culture, which calls for a shift of focus from "texts" to "practices", also carries the impact of a shift from Althusserian notion of ideology to Gramscian notion of "hegemony". The concept of "hegemony" suggested that cultural

domination is achieved not through coercion but secured through the “consent” of the subordinated groups and that, therefore, there is always a room for “negotiation” and “resistance”. As Perkins remarks

[Gramsci’s] conceptualisation of hegemony as never finally secure but rather subject to crises and negotiation reintroduced a dynamic concept of ideology, one which was easier to ground in specific historical conjunctures, which could account for protest and dissent. (85)

Media Studies had always been one of the most active fields of study at CCCS. Hall explained that the development of Media Studies at the Centre had been in the form of several breaks with the dominant paradigms and concerns in mass communication research. Beside the radical turn from the “direct influence” model to the question of ideology one of the most important breaks was the “break with the passive and undifferentiated conceptions of the ‘audience’” and its replacement with a “more active conception of the ‘audience’, [and] of ‘reading’” (“Media Studies” 117-8). Hall mentioned that the engagement of the Media Group at the Centre with new theoretical positions was “in the form of a critique of theories being developed in film studies and around journal Screen” (“Media Studies” 121).

In his essay entitled “Recent developments in theories of language and ideology: a critical note” Hall pointed to the insufficiency of the Lacanian theory of the subject, which appeared to be the dominant point of reference in “screen theory”, in accounting for the functioning of discourse or ideology. He argued that “screen theory” reduced the “productivity” of the text to its “capacity to set the viewer ‘in place’ in a position of unproblematic identification/knowledge” taking Lacan’s theory of the formation of the subject as basis. This meant that the “productivity” of the text “no longer depends in any way on the ideological problematics within which discourse

is operating, nor on the social, political or historical practices with which it is articulated". In so doing, Hall claimed, "screen theory" attempted to explain "the functioning of language, the practices of representation and the operations of ideology" only "by reference to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory". Within such a framework it followed that "all ideological struggle must take place, also, at the level of 'the subject'" (159). Hall criticized this approach by referring to the distinction between the "trans-historical and trans-social subject", in other words the "subject-in-general", which derived from Lacan's account, and "historically specific subjects". He argued that even if we accept Lacan's theory of the constitution of the subject,

it does not follow that a theory of how the 'subject-in general' is formed offers, in *itself*, without further determinations, an adequate explanation of how historically specific subjects, already 'positioned' in language-in-general, function in relation to particular discourses or historically specific ideologies in definite social formations ... The practices of language, discourse and ideologies may have other determinations, only some of which can be fixed at the level of 'the subject'. (161)

In this respect Hall criticized "screen theory" for treating "the most abstract/universal level of abstraction as the most pertinent -indeed, the only 'truly theoretical'- level of explanation" (161).

Hall, in his 1973 essay entitled "Encoding/decoding", offered an alternative model of text-reader relation, which contrasted the homogeneity of the meaning and interpretation implied by "screen theory". Departing from the argument that "the media product is a meaningful discourse"(129) and that "there is no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code" (131) Hall distinguished between two "determinate moments" in the process of communication; the moments of "encoding" and "decoding" (129). With such a semiotic framework in mind Hall described the process of communication, particularly in the case of television broadcasting, as

consisting of the encoding of messages in particular ways so that they become meaningful and the issuing of those messages into social practices through their decoding by the audience. However, the crucial argument that Hall made here was that, “[t]he codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical” (131). In other words the meaning resulting from the “decoding” might not always correspond to the meaning that the message was made to mean during “encoding”. Hall explained the reason of the asymmetry here by pointing to the “polysemic” nature of texts by referring to the “connotative” level of signs that Barthes had elaborated on. However Hall also made the warning that it should not be concluded that the messages could be decoded in any way. He wrote:

Polysemy must not, however, be confused with pluralism. Connotative codes are *not* equal among themselves. Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a *dominant cultural order*, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested. This question of the ‘structure of discourses in dominance’ is a crucial point. The different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organized into *dominant or preferred meanings*. (134)

Hall clarified that point by referring to “selective perception” theories, with which his emphasis on polysemy -text’s openness to more than one possible reading- might seem to be in conformity. He explained:

Of course, there will always be private, individual, variant readings. But ‘selective perception’ is almost never as selective, random or privatized as the concept suggests. The patterns exhibit, across individual variants, significant clustering. Any new approach to audience studies will therefore have to begin with a critique of ‘selective perception’ theory. (135)

Based on that Hall emphasized the effect of “encoding” in constructing “some of the limits and parameters within which decoding will operate” (135). In this respect he identified three “hypothetical” “decoding positions” in the text: 1. The “dominant-hegemonic position”, where the “viewer” operates within the “dominant code”; and reads and interprets the preferred meaning offered by the text as “full and straight”

(136). 2. The “negotiated position”, which involves “a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements”, in that the viewer acknowledges the preferred reading but “operates with exceptions to the rule”, in other words s/he adapts it according to his/her own situation (137). 3. The “oppositional position”, where the viewer operates within an “oppositional code” and decodes the message in a “globally contrary way” (138). In fact the categories “dominant, negotiated, and oppositional” were in parallelism with Frank Parkins’ model of class positions (Barker and Brooks 92). Halls model seemed to emphasize a relation between class position of audiences and their readings of the text. It could be argued that the importance of Hall’s encoding/decoding model lies in its implicit call for what John Corner calls “a shift away from ‘formalism’ in the analysis of meaning” to “analyze meaning ... as socially situated” (278).

The encoding/decoding model of reading opened up a space for empirical research at CCCS. Charlotte Brunson and David Morley carried out a research focusing on the BBC program the Nationwide between 1975 and 1979. The Nationwide project, which consisted of two stages, brought together structuralism and sociology as modes of analysis as well as textual analysis and survey (e.g. interviews) as methods. In the first stage of the research, whose results are published in 1978 in Everyday Television: ‘Nationwide’, Brunson and Morley engaged in a textual analysis of the programme to determine its ideological themes and ways of addressing the audience. In the second stage of the research, carried out by Morley and published in 1980 in The ‘Nationwide’ Audience, conducted interviews with viewing groups from different educational, social and occupational backgrounds “to investigate the extent ... to which the ‘hegemonic’ definitions articulated by the programme were taken up and

accepted by its audience” and “the conditions under which counter-hegemonic, or oppositional, meanings were produced” (Morley, Television 90-1). When summarizing the findings of the study Morley referred to the differential interpretations observed; but emphasized the point that it is not possible to attribute the differences among interpretations simply to social class positions. It was observed that audiences occupying the same class position could offer quite different responses (Moore, Interpreting Audiences 21). Moreover it was not so easy to categorize any response in one single category of reading. For example:

bank managers might agree with the politics of the programme, but they just did not like its presentational manner. The shop stewards might dislike the programme’s view of trade unions but they would happily put up with that, because it had the right kind of friendly relaxation for early evening. The black teenagers simply did not respond at all - they refused any engagement with the programme at any level. (Barker and Brooks 93)

Morley concluded that differences among readings “are founded on cultural differences embedded within the structure of society -cultural clusters which guide and limit the individual’s interpretation of messages”. Therefore,

[t]o understand the potential meanings of a given message, we need a ‘cultural map of the audience to whom the message is addressed -a map showing the various cultural repertoires and symbolic resources available to differently placed sub-groups within that audience. (Television 118).

“Cultural clusters” for Morley cannot be reduced to “social class positions” of individuals. They refer to “social positions plus particular discourse positions”. The discourses “in play in any social formation” have, Morley argued, “inflect decoding in a variety of ways” (118). The importance of the “discursive formations” on individual’s responses was discussed in depth by Morley in an article written in the aftermath of the first stage of the Nationwide research project as well. The article entitled “Texts, readers, subjects”, started with a critique of the “abstract text-subject relationship” forwarded by “screen theory”. The abstractness of “screen theory”, for

Morley, lied in its not conceiving the subject as “already constituted in other discursive formations and social relations”; its tendency to treat the subject “in relation to only one text at a time” -“classic realist text” and explain everything in terms of the “universal, primary psychoanalytic processes”. Morley argued that such a proposition of the text-subject relationship

serves to isolate the encounter of the text and reader from all social and historical structures *and* from other texts. To conceptualize the moment of reading/viewing in this way is to ignore the constant intervention of other texts and discourses, which *also* position ‘the subject’. At the moment of textual encounter other discourses are always in play besides those of the particular text in focus -discourses which depend on other discursive formations, brought into play through ‘the subject’s’ placing in other practices - cultural, educational, institutional. And these other discourses will set some of the terms in which any particular text is engaged and evaluated. (163)

The reference behind Morley’s argument was the concept of “interdiscourse” developed by Michel Pêcheux.²⁵ This concept according to Morley transformed “the relation of one text/one subject to that of a multiplicity of texts/subjects relations, in which encounters can be understood not in isolation but only in the moments of their combination” (166).

Hall’s model of “encoding/decoding” and the way it is applied to the Nationwide research project was later found to be limited as well as problematic. One of the problems associated with Hall’s model was related to the determination of the “preferred reading”. It has been argued that preferred reading could be just the analyst’s construct. Shaun Moores points to that problem by asking: “Where is it and how do we know if we’ve found it? Can we be sure we didn’t put it there ourselves while we were looking? And can it be found by examining any sort of text”

²⁵ As it is explicated by Woods, Pêcheux argued that “the discursive subject is ... an interdiscourse, the product of the effects of discursive practices traversing the subject throughout its history” (qtd. in Morley, “Texts” 164)

(Interpreting Audiences 28). Another problem with the model was that since it was concentrated exclusively on determining whether readers “agree, or disagree, or partially agree with the ideological propositions of the text” it undermined “the question of the viewer’s positive or negative response to the text as a particular cultural form -do they enjoy, it feel bored by it, recognize it as relevant to their concerns?” In other words the model confined itself to a “broadly political form of communication” and left very little room to the questions of pleasure and genre (Morley, Television 126-7; Moores, “Texts” 18). In fact Morley’s findings within the framework of the Nationwide project suggested that encoding/decoding model ignored factors such as people’s leisure patterns and their effect on their pleasures and choices, the pleasures of viewing. As regards to the problems associated particularly with the Nationwide project one of the criticisms was that the explanatory variables were limited just to the structures of age, sex, race and class without a clear reason (Morley, Television 125). However the most often mentioned criticism was that the study did not consider the effect of the context of viewing on individual’s responses. The interviews, which had an important function in the study, were conducted outside interviewees’ homes where they normally used to watch television. Since the way television is watched in home is different from watching it outside home, the results of the study might be different if people were interviewed in their home (Morley, Family Television 40-1; Moores, “Texts” 18).

The problems and criticisms mentioned above are only the major ones. The argument that they all refer to seems to be that the Nationwide study, and the encoding/decoding model behind it, constructed its own audience prior to it. When we add to this the fact that it undermined differences among the tastes and

preferences of individuals as well as the effect of the context on reading, it could be argued that the model carried in itself the potential of becoming as “essentialist” as the “screen theory”, which it aimed to challenge.²⁶

However it must be noted that despite its limitations, which became apparent especially in the researches conducted, the contribution of the arguments and works of CCCS to the debates on the relationship between media texts and their audience is very significant. It could be argued that CCCS opened a new space in audience studies with its propositions such as “meaning as production”, “polysemic nature of texts”, “differential readings”, “active audience”, “negotiation”, “opposition/resistance”. These propositions, all pointed to the need to consider the relation between texts and readers from wider perspectives. Although the aim of CCCS, particularly Hall with his encoding/decoding model, did not aim at producing a theory of audiences, the idea that text does not have a determinate meaning or that it does not determine its reading by itself, became a departing point for the audience research in the 1980s which sought to come up with a broader understanding of the relationship between texts and audiences.

2.3. Ethnographic Approach: From “Text” to “Context”

The conceptual basis constructed by the arguments and works of CCCS and its criticisms, could be considered as the major contributor to the shift from the study of “meaning of the text” to the study of the “contexts of viewing” in the 1980s in audience studies. Wievers’ own reception of the “act of viewing” and the influence of

²⁶ Tony Bennett and Jane Woollacott , in Bond and Beyond offer a critique of both approaches’ prioritization of texts in some way as well as their way of conceptualizing the text and the reading. This point will be referred later in this study.

the viewing context on that act became the main themes of what became known as the “ethnographic turn” in audience research (Barker and Brooks 102).

Rosalind Brunt characterises the way encoding/decoding model used in the *Nationwide* study like a loop which still privileges the text. She argues that the model

starts with the analyst’s own textual examination of “preferred readings,” then goes to the audience to test out degrees of textual fit or variation, then checks off these “responses” with the original text. So that the moment of “return to the audience” is one that is actually only completed by a return to the *text*. It is the text, still, rather than the audience, that remains the privileged location. (73)

Ethnographic audience researches turned to study media uses within the ongoing lives of audiences by emphasizing the concept of “context”. Within the framework of the ethnographic audience studies of the 1980s the term “context” referred to “everyday micro-settings”, more specifically, to the “routine physical locations and interpersonal relations of reception” (Moore, Interpreting Audiences 32). The emphasis on context is not a random choice in that, as Moore explains, “[i]f a central aim of reception ethnography is to understand the lived experiences of media consumers ... then it has to engage with the situational contexts in which the media are used and interpreted” (Interpreting Audiences 32).

It must be noted that the terms “ethnography/ethnographic”, which are used to characterize a particular approach in audience studies, do not fully comply with the term “ethnography” in anthropology. The simplest difference is that while ethnographies in anthropology consist of the study of a culture through long term and in-depth field work, ethnographic research in audience studies is generally in the form of studying audiences’ account of their consumption of the media through short-term “participant observation” or interviews, letters, questionnaires and so on. It could be

argued that what enabled some audience studies borrow the term “ethnography” from anthropology to characterize their method was mainly the importance they gave to the “lived experience”. In other words it could be argued that the employment of the term “ethnography” here is a symbolic one. Janice Radway, who conducted one of the most influential ethnographic studies in 1980s by examining women’s accounts of their acts of romance-reading refers to the “semiotic” view of “culture”, which “focuses on the various ways human beings actively *make* sense of their surrounding world”. She borrows Clifford Geertz’s argument that “human culture is not reducible to sheer behavioral occurrence alone”; it is rather a “complex web of significance” and explains the motivation behind an “ethnographic” study of people’s consumption of the media as follows

To know ... why people do what they do, read romances, for instance, it becomes necessary to discover the constructions they place on their behavior, the interpretations they make of their actions. A good cultural analysis of the romance ought to specify not only how the women understand the novels themselves but also how they comprehend the very act of picking up a book in the first place. The analytic focus must shift from the text itself, taken in isolation, to the complex social event of reading where a woman actively attributes sense to lexical signs in a silent process carried on in the context of her ordinary life. (8)

Television studies constituted the major field where ethnographic audience studies flowered first. These studies mainly concentrated on the audiences’ own account of their act of television viewing and programme preferences through observing and interviewing them in their home where they normally consumed television output together with their families. For example James Lull studied in 1980 “The Social Uses of Television” through visiting families at their home on several occasions during a three-year period. Based on observations and interviews gathered by several researchers who participated in everyday routines of household members, Lull offered a typology of the uses of television at home, which were not directly related with the

meaningful content of television programmes (Moore, Interpreting Audiences 33-4). Similarly, the same year, Dorothy Hobson looked at the significance of radio and television in daily routines of housewives by observing and interviewing them in household contexts. In her resulting article entitled "Housewives and the Mass Media" she explained that radio reduced the feeling of isolation and loneliness experienced by women in the home and the programming structure helped women to reorganize their home time, to give it a structure. These observations were in conformity with Lull's observations concerning the uses of television at home. With regard to television consumption in domestic context, Hobson concluded that women distinguished between programmes as some of them referring to the "man's world (e.g. news, current affairs, documentary, adventure films)" and the others to the "woman's world (e.g. quiz shows, fantasy movies, soap operas)" and actively chose to watch the latter (Moore, "Texts" 18-9). It followed that television viewing was a "gender-differentiated" activity or that it was possible to talk about "gendered tastes".

In 1986 David Morley also investigated television viewing within family by concentrating especially on programme preferences and viewing behaviors. Besides his acknowledgment of the limitations of his previous study, The 'Nationwide' Audience, the study was the result of a shift in Morley's interest 'from the analysis of the pattern of differential audience "readings" of particular programme materials, to the analysis of the domestic viewing context itself' (Family Television 14). The idea lying at the basis of this shift seemed to be that

television viewing [is] a social activity, one which is conducted within the context of the family as a set of social relations, rather than as a merely individual activity, or ... the activities of a collection of individuals who merely happen to live in the same household. (Family Television 18)

Morley obtained information from eighteen families²⁷ by interviewing them in their homes about their viewing activities and observed differences between the viewing habits of men and women particularly due to the “social roles these men and women occupy within the home” (Family Television 146). Morley referred to the common definition of home for men as a “site of leisure” while for women as a “sphere of work” as the main factor causing the differences in their “styles of viewing”. While the men, Morley explained, stated that they preferred to watch attentively and quietly, the women described their viewing as coupled with “ongoing conversation” and “at least one another domestic activity (ironing, etc.)” (Family Television 150). Only when the rest of the family were absent could women freely pause their domestic responsibilities and watch attentively like men (Family Television 159-60). Gender differentiation, Morley explained, was reflected in the programme preferences as well. While the men preferred “factual” programmes (e.g. news, current affairs, documentaries) women preferred “fictional” programmes (e.g. serials) (Family Television 162-3). Moreover, as Shaun Moores notes, it was interesting that “husbands typically dismissed ‘feminine’ genres for exactly the same reasons women enjoy them” (“Texts” 23).

Moores points to a “shift in media and cultural studies during the 1980s -an increasing commitment to taking ‘the popular’ more seriously” (Interpreting Audiences 38). The rising interest in the study of soap operas in that period seems to be supporting Moores’ observation. Terry Lovell challenged the common view of soap opera as the

²⁷ Morley explained that the study was limited to white families, all living in one area and that, therefore, its findings “can only be claimed to be representative, at most, of viewing patterns within one type of household, drawn from one particular ethnic and geographic context and from a relatively narrow range of class positions” (Family Television 11).

“opium of masses of women”, in 1981, in her examination of the British serial, Coronation Street, in relation to the issue of “ideology”. Lovell pointed to the elements in such serials, which subverted the values of patriarchal society; she argued:

the conventions of the genre are such that the normal order of things ... is precisely that of broken marriages, temporary liaisons, availability for ‘lasting’ romantic love which in fact never lasts. This order, the reverse of the patriarchal norm, is in a sense interrupted by the marriages and ‘happy family’ interludes, rather than vice-versa. (qtd. in Moores, Interpreting Audiences 40).²⁸

Soap operas became the object of ethnographic audience studies as well. Dorothy Hobson studied in 1982 the use and reception of the British soap opera, Crossroads, by observing and interviewing its female audiences in their household settings. Beside concluding that “watching television was not a separate, solitary activity; rather it was woven into the routine duties and responsibilities of household management” she observed gender-differentiated tastes among the household members (Moores, “Texts” 19-20). Hobson wrote that some women “excuse themselves for liking something which is treated in such a derogatory way by critics and sometimes by their own husbands” (qtd. in Moores, “Texts” 20). In a similar vein Ien Ang studied in 1985 the reception of the American serial Dallas by taking forty-two letters sent to her by its female audiences in Netherlands as basis. Ang pointed to the enjoyment of the serial by its female audiences for its being “realistic” and “relevant to their everyday lives” (Moores, Interpreting Audiences 43).

²⁸ In fact Lovell’s engagement with soap opera, which is supposed to be addressing largely the female audiences, can be considered as a part of the feminist attempt to broaden the understanding of female spectatorship beyond Mulvey’s account of the spectatorship in her classical essay, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”.

Parallel to the television studies mentioned above Janice Radway examined in 1980s the “significance of romance-reading as an act” in the everyday practices of a group of women in Smithton through interviews and questionnaires (9). Radway commented that “[t]he reading habits and preferences of the Smithton women are complexly tied to their daily routines, which are themselves a function of education, social role, and class position” (50). As an answer to the question “why do Smithton women read romances?”, which was among the ultimate concerns of Radway, she concluded from the early interviews that romance-reading was considered by the women as a significant activity among their ordinary experiences mostly because

[n]ot only is it a relaxing release from the tension produced by daily problems and responsibilities, but it creates a time or space within which a woman can be entirely on her own, preoccupied with her personal needs, desires, and pleasure. It is also a means of transportation or escape to the exotic or, again, to that which is different. (61)

The fact that women “focused so resolutely on the significance of the act of romance reading rather than on the meaning of the romance” in their explanation of the reasons for their romance reading was quite interesting for Radway (86). Later in the study Radway also observed that not only did romance-reading provided women to “escape” into a space of their own, liberated from their domestic responsibilities and duties but also “into a fairy tale where a heroine’s similar needs are adequately met” (93). Based on these Radway argued that the act of romance-reading was both “combative and compensatory”. It was combative in the sense that it enabled women to declare temporarily their independence from the social roles prescribed for them within the institution of family. It was at the same time compensatory in that it permitted women to consider their needs, which “created in them but not met by patriarchal institutions and engendering practices” (211).²⁹

²⁹ This is achieved mainly through identifying with a heroine who is “so closely watched by someone who finds her valuable and worthy of love” (67-8).

Radway argued that the methodology of her study highlighted

the complicated and contradictory ways in which the romance recognizes and thereby protests the weakness of patriarchy and the failure of traditional marriage even as it apparently acts to assert the perfection of each. (221)

Radway's conclusions seem to challenge the argument that the popular -romance here- just serves to preserve the status quo, the dominant ideological order. However, as Radway observed, Smithon women used romances as a medium to express their dissatisfaction from the status quo. In other words they loaded the act of romance reading with a function which lies outside the ideological project that is associated with such popular products. The importance of Radway's study lies in its implication that the demand for romances is not simply a commercial one. It is rather a demand for a certain humanly relations disguised inside that commercial demand. Radway concludes from her study that "mass-produced objects" do not "bear all of their significances on their surface" and "reveal them automatically to us". Therefore it is not sufficient to look only at mass-produced objects themselves. They should rather be considered in relation to the ways in which they are used and interpreted by their consumers (221-2). Moreover the appropriation of such an approach to mass-produced objects increases, according to Radway,

our chances of sorting out or articulating the difference between the repressive imposition of ideology and oppositional practices that, though limited in their scope and effect, at least dispute or contest the control of ideological forms. (221-2)

It seems that the most important contribution of the ethnographic studies mentioned so far to the study of media-audience relations is that they have revealed the necessity of considering the issue of "meaning" in media consumption from a broader perspective. They suggest that when media consumption is considered in relation to the context (i.e. home, family, neighborhood) in which it takes place it becomes

apparent that the relation of the actual consumers to the media is not solely determined by the meaning associated with the content of media texts. Radway writes:

If ... we remember that texts are read and that reading itself is an activity carried on by real people in a preconstituted social context, it becomes possible to distinguish *analytically* between the meaning of the act and the meaning of the text as read. This analytic distinction then empowers us to question whether the significance of the act of reading itself might, under some conditions, contradict, undercut, or qualify the significance of producing a particular kind of story. (210)

Moreover these studies point to the need to consider factors such as genre, taste, gender roles in accounting for people's relation to the media and also to revise the idea that popular texts are merely the containers of dominant ideology.

By choosing mostly the consumption of popular media texts as its object of analysis ethnographic studies seemed to open a space for a more optimistic view of popular culture. John G. Cavelti explains that popular genres were treated as "examples of capitalist exploitation or of the decadence and corruption of mass culture" until 1950s and 1960s (70). It could be argued that a different understanding of popular culture lies at the basis of ethnographic audience studies. It seemed to me that this understanding is in conformity with John Fiske's arguments on popular culture. Fiske writes:

Popular culture is made from within and below, not imposed from without or above as mass cultural theorists would have it. There is always an element of popular culture that lies outside social control, that escapes or opposes hegemonic forces. Popular culture is always a culture of conflict, it always involves the struggle to make social meanings that are in the interests of the subordinate and that are not those preferred by the dominant ideology. The victories, however fleeting or limited, in this struggle produce popular pleasure, for popular pleasure is always social and political. (Reading 2)

In fact much of the criticisms directed to ethnographic audience studies -as well as British cultural studies- seem to be focusing on their view of "pleasure" as a category

separate from ideology. In 1990s ethnographic approach was strictly associated with “populism” and criticized for that. McGuigan in his book entitled Cultural Populism criticized the “uncritical populist mode of interpretation” in the study of popular culture and he mentioned the work of the CCCS on popular TV as a case in point, which could be called “cultural populism”. He argued:

I support the wish to understand and value everyday meanings, but, alone, such a wish produces inadequate explanations of the material life situations and power relations that shape the mediated experiences of ordinary people. (qtd. in Strinati 255)

William Seaman, in his article entitled “Active audience theory: pointless populism”, criticized the “active audience trend” in cultural studies by questioning particularly its arguments concerning the “resistant” or “oppositional” readings. He argues:

In my view it is not always clear what makes a cultural practice ‘resistant’ towards a particular ideological construction, say, for example, towards a sexist stereotype; still more difficult is the judgment of whether or not the practice contributes to transforming the oppressive relationship that the particular ideology functions to maintain. (301)

Seaman argues that the possibility of alternative interpretation does not make sense in itself because what is crucial is “whether that alternative interpretation explains, rather than mystifies, the viewing practices and their consequences” (303). Seaman refers to anti-Arab racism in the United States and its reflections in popular media texts to clarify his point. He asks:

Shall we follow the active audience prescription and interview the domestic Arab-American subgroup to see how they ‘inflect’ their readings of such texts in heroic ‘struggle’ to ‘override’ the ‘incorporating devices’ of the dominant ideology? Or will we realize that the threat posed by these racist messages is not the demoralization of the subgroup represented, but rather the likely encouragement of racist feeling ‘against’ that subgroup. (309)

In short Seaman claims that the contribution of active audience approach to research in communication and media theory is questionable, in that it “has tended more to mystify than to clarify, to rationalize a set of practices rather than explain them” (309).

In response to such arguments, John Fiske rejects the idea that the pleasures derived from popular texts merely serve to maintain the dominant structure of power because even there is resistance it occurs within the realm of the individual rather than the social. Fiske argues that this argument “fail to take into account [that] the politics of everyday life ... occur on the micro rather than macro level” (Reading 9). He refers to Michel De Certeau’s concept of “guerilla tactics”, which he describes as “the art of the weak” to explain popular culture’s ability to resist the dominant ideology (Understanding 19). He explains that guerilla tactics “never challenge the powerful in open warfare, for that would be to invite defeat, but maintain their own opposition within and against the social order dominated by the powerful.” Umberto Eco, in his essay entitled “Towards a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare”, refers to an image in comic strips; “the image of the cannibal chief who is wearing an alarm clock as a necklace”; and argues that “[t]he world of communications ... is full of cannibals who transform an instrument for measuring time into an “op” jewel’ (137). Eco uses this analogy to criticise the “apocalyptic” view that “[t]he mass media do not transmit ideologies; they are themselves an ideology”, which is shared by the critics of mass culture (136) and point to the possibility of resistances to the dominant ideology through such “tactics” (142).

Meaghan Morris, in her essay entitled “Banality in cultural studies”, considers ethnographic audience research as a homogeneous body of work and judges its academic value. She writes:

I get the feeling that somewhere in some English publisher’s vault there is a master-disk from which thousands of versions of the same article about pleasure, resistance, and the

politics of consumption are being run off under different names with minor variations. Americans and Australians are recycling this basic pop-theory article, too. (156)

Morris describes this “pop-theory article” as being consisting of

firstly a citing of popular voices (the informants), an act of translation and commentary, and then a play of identification between the knowing subject of cultural studies, and a collective subject, ‘the people’. (157)

In this respect she argues that the investment of the “knowing subject”, the “analyst”, in his object of study needs to be problematized, which is totally absent in this body of work; in this “populist polemic”. Referring to John Fiske’s quotation from a 14-year old fan of Madonna, Lucy, in one of his studies Morris asks: “Lucy tells us her pleasure in Madonna: but what is our pleasure in Lucy’s?” (157).

Walerie Walkerdine, in her article entitled “Video Replay: Families, Films and Fantasy” comes up with a similar argument departing from the question: “Why would anyone want to watch people watching television?” (339). In fact Walkerdine seems to refer particularly to ethnographic television studies, which use participant observation as a method of investigation. However she takes her own practice in such a study where she observed a family watching the film Rocky II on video in order to elaborate on that question. Walkerdine offers a psychoanalytical account of her practice of watching the family as an “ethnographer” and characterizes that it with “the most perverse voyeurism” (340). She suggests that observers, like her, constitute their subjects as objects of knowledge and regulation. She writes:

The ‘space’ of observation, ... like that of watching videos, is a fantasy space in which certain fictions are produced. One effect of these fictions is to constitute a knowledge, a truth that is incorporated into the regulation of families. (352)

Walkerdine refers to the dramatic change that has occurred in her reading of Rocky II during the course of the study. She reacts when she first sees the father of the family,

Mr. Cole, continuously replaying a bloody fight scene since she cannot make any sense of the pleasure in watching such a violent scene again and again. However when she watches the film in her privacy her reading of the scene and the film changes; she explains:

I recognized something that took me far beyond the pseudo-sophistication of condemning its macho-sexism, its stereotyped portrayals. The film brought me up against such memories of pain, struggle and class that it made me cry ... No longer did I stand outside the pleasures of engagement with the film. I too wanted Rocky to win. Indeed I was Rocky -struggling, fighting, crying to get out ... Rocky's struggle to become bourgeois is what reminded me of the pain of my own. (341-2)

Walkerdine points that factors such as Rocky's portrayal within the narrative of the film as a "small man" who has to fight for the survival of his family and the presentation of physical violence as "the only way open to those whose lot is manual and not intellectual labour" (344) construct a fantasy space, which intersects with the fantasy space of Mr. Cole as well as hers. It must be noted that Walkerdine engages in an analysis of people's engagement with the film at the level of fantasy not in terms of mere unconscious processes but rather in terms of everyday meanings these fantasies have for people.

Walkerdine argues that the "voyeurism" of the researcher is motivated by the "intellectualisation of pleasures" inherent in "much analysis of mass film and television" (341). She explains:

The masses must be known because they represent a threat to the moral and political order; the theorist/voyeur expresses shame and disgust at the 'animal passions' which have to be monitored and regulated -and which she cannot enjoy. This logic of intellectualisation is evident in many studies of audiences. (353)

Walkerdine does not favor models of textual spectatorship; but she does not prefer the ethnographic approach either. With regard to the former she writes:

What is disavowed in such approaches is the complex relation of 'intellectuals' to 'the masses': 'our' project of analysing 'them' is itself one of the regulative practices which produce our subjectivity as well as theirs ... Our fantasy investment often seems to consist in believing that we can 'make them see' or that we can see or speak *for* them. (353)

With regard to the ethnographic studies such as Radway's Walkerdine argues that

however radical in intent ... their insistence on the transcendence of ideology through the intellectualisation of pleasure(s) can itself become part of a broader regulatory project of intellectualisation. (354)

The deficiency common to both, she suggests, is the tendency to ignore the investment of the academic analyst/researcher. Walkerdine writes: "The desire to know and to master conceals the terror of a lack of control, a paranoia which is the opposite of omnipotent fantasy, a megalomania" (355).

2.4. Historicizing Spectatorship: Ethnography and Cinema Audiences

Ethnographic approach has been more visible in television studies than film. This might be partially due to the fact that film audiences and their act of film consumption are less available to the researcher compared to television audiences. As Allen and Gomery remark:

the "audience" for movies in any sociological or historical sense is really only an abstraction generated by the researcher, since the unstructured group that we refer to as the movie audience is constantly being constituted, dissolved, and reconstituted with each film-going experience. (156)

In the case of cinema the turn to the audience was equaled with the turn to the history. We observe several attempts to "historicize spectatorship" in the late 1980s and 1990s as the reflection of the challenge to the textual determinism in film studies, to the hypothetical model of spectator as a construct of the film text, as an absorber of the dominant ideology. Mayne distinguishes between four directions that characterize the recent concern with historicising spectatorship: studies of intertextuality, exhibition, the cinematic public sphere, and reception (63-8).

The argument lying at the basis of intertextual approach is that

spectatorship is structured not just by the experience of going to the movies and being seduced by the spectacle on screen, but by the influence of a whole range of texts that seek, in one way or another, to spark interest in films and keep movie theaters full. (Mayne 64)

Magazine journalism, star images produced through films, fan magazines and popular press are among the most common texts, which are examined within the framework of the intertextual approach in the study of spectatorship in a historical context (Mayne 64-5). Mayne argues that “[p]erhaps the most obvious way that film circulates outside of the movie theater is through the personae of stars” (65). There have been several works on stars such as Maria LaPlace’s “Bete Davis and the Ideal of Consumption: A look at *Now, Voyager*” (1987); Andrew Britton’s Katherine Hepburn: The Thirties and After (1984); Richard Dyer’s Stars (1979) and Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society (1986). As Mayne explains these works have examined “the ways in which star images are produced and circulated through various kinds of address, including the films as well as fan magazines and the popular press” (65). In Stars Dyer introduced the notion of “star text”, which he described as an intertextual construct produced through a range of media extending outside films such as fan magazines, fan discourse, interviews, publicity stills, and so on. In this way the star becomes an element contributing to the production and circulation of meaning by linking cinema industry, films and society. Dyer combined textual analysis and sociology in his analysis of star images and argued that rather than being simple expressions of a dominant ideology star image opened space to divergent or oppositional readings by different audiences. Parallel to the interest in stars researchers have also studied fans, their consumption of popular texts and stars.

Studies of exhibition context and its influence on movie going, examination of cinema as a particular public sphere and the analysis of reception in relation to historical moments were among the other attempts to “expand [the] parameters [of textual analysis] beyond the individual film text” (Mayne 68), to “reconstruct fully a film’s relation to social and historical processes” (Klinger108), to historicise spectatorship.

Historical film audiences also became the subjects of ethnographic inquiry in the late 1980s and, especially, the 1990s. One of the first and most comprehensive studies in film audiences, which used ethnography as a method together with discourse analysis, was Jackie Stacey’s work on the relationship between female stars of the Hollywood cinema of the 1940s and 1950s and their British female audiences.³⁰ Departing from the absence of the “historical cinema spectators”, particularly the female spectators, from film history and feminist film criticism Stacey engaged in a “feminist analysis of ‘real cinema spectators’” (*Star Gazing* 49-50). Although questions of pleasure, fantasy, identification and desire still form a crucial part of her analysis of the female spectator / star relations in 1940s and 1950s Britain, Stacey did not employ the textual analysis informed by semiotics and psychoanalysis, which characterized much feminist work, in her elaboration on these questions. Psychoanalysis, according to Stacey, was quite limited and its universalistic claims were questionable in the face of a “historicized” account of spectatorship (13, 74-5). Stacey preferred to follow the methodology of ethnographic studies on television audiences, which by focusing on

³⁰ Helen Taylor’s study on the reception of the film *Gone with the Wind* by its female spectators and Jacqueline Bobo’s work on the significance of the film *The Color Purple* for its female black audiences could be mentioned among other studies in late 1980s.

the context of media consumption suggested that “social identities, already formed prior to the viewing of a programme, have been considered crucial to understanding media consumption” (Star Gazing 73). Departing from the memories of more than 350 women, mostly in their sixties and seventies, which she obtained through questionnaires and letters, Stacey investigated how “historical and national locations”, the “social identities formed outside the cinema” affected the meanings of Hollywood stars for British female spectators in 1940s and 1950s. When analyzing women’s memories Stacey focused particularly on questions of “why women went to cinema, their viewing practices in the cinema, and what they consumed in connection with the cinema” (Star Gazing 17). She observed that “escapism”, “identification” and “consumption” were crucial to women’s relation to 1940s and 1950s Hollywood cinema and its female stars (Star Gazing 80) and the existence of a “significant shift in the cinematic mode of perception”, which began during the 1950s (234). One of the most significant aspects of Stacey’s analysis lies in the fact that she elaborates on the issues of “escapism”, “identification” and “consumption” not with direct reference to some unconscious processes within female spectators but rather in terms of what they meant within the historical and cultural context in 1940s and 1950s Britain. For example she looks at the effect of wartime experiences in 1940s and change in consumer culture in 1950s Britain on women’s readings of Hollywood stars in terms of escapism, identification and consumption. Stacey writes:

What the project aims to offer is an investigation of the ways in which psychic investments are grounded within specific sets of historical and cultural relations which in turn shape the formation of identities on conscious and unconscious levels. How, for example, are spectators’ fantasies and desires formed differently within specific contexts? In short, my investigation analyses the relationship between psychic and social formations, challenging the ways in which the latter have so often been ignored at the expense of the former within feminist film criticism. (Star Gazing 79)

Stacey explains that women remembered Hollywood stars as enabling them forget the problems and hardships of wartime years and transcend the “dreariness of life outside cinema”. She also notes that “Hollywood stars are repeatedly remembered during this period in terms of their differences from female spectators” with their “wealth, luxury and glamour” as well as their “Americanness” (Star Gazing 235). However, Stacey observes that the difference and distance between spectators and stars is transformed into proximity in 1950s and relates this change to the expansion of consumer markets and consumerism in 1950s in Britain. She explains:

as consumerism expands in Britain in the mid to late 1950s, Hollywood stars increasingly signify proximity to their female fans through the possibility of similarity through commodity consumption. This is compounded by the increasing ‘Americanization’ of British culture during the 1950s. (Star Gazing 234)

However, against the possible conclusion that British women just wanted to transform themselves into desirable objects through commodity consumption and Americanization, Stacey reminds us that commodity consumption also offered women an escape from the roles associated with femininity such as “domesticity and motherhood” at that time. She writes:

whilst it could be claimed that this Americanization of femininity through commodity consumption in 1950s Britain contributed to the sexual objectification of women within patriarchal culture, such an analysis ignores the ways in which this process also facilitated the production of particular forms of feminine subjectivity largely unavailable to women in Britain previously. The production of a feminine self in relation to Americanness signified ‘autonomy’, ‘individuality’ and ‘independence’ to many female spectators in Britain at this time.³¹ (238)

Stacey argues that her observation of the change in modes of perception for female spectators from “distance” to “proximity” to Hollywood stars and their world would not be possible within the “psychoanalytic theories which posit a model of the isolated

³¹ At that point it is possible to observe that Stacey’s arguments on female spectators of Hollywood stars are parallel to Radway’s arguments on female readers of romances in that they both point to the feeling of “independence” obtained from products that are usually associated with passivity and considered as serving to preserve patriarchal order.

ahistorical female spectator". In this respect she distinguishes her model of female spectatorship from the model of spectator in the feminist film criticism under the influence of psychoanalysis as a model which "takes into account changing cultural discourses within particular national and historical locations" (240).

In a similar vein Eric Smoodin examined film spectatorship in the early 1940s by focusing on the letters sent to Frank Capra regarding his film, Meet John Doe (1941). Smoodin studied the reception of the film and "its relationship to the period's popular political discourses" (115) and explained the significance of such studies as follows

we need to place any study of Hollywood production alongside an analysis of the reception texts produced by historically specific audiences. In particular, these texts help us understand not just the interpretations that some spectators made of the films they saw, but also the charged, dynamic relationships between spectators and the film industry, the film celebrity and, perhaps most interestingly, other spectators. (128)

Stacey's study can be considered as a contribution to the body of work on stars. Richard Dyer, when concluding his book Stars, had pointed to what further needed to be done in the study of stars in the future and wrote: "First of all, there is the question of the audience. Throughout this book -as throughout most film studies- the audience has been conspicuous by its absence" (160). Stacey's work could be considered as an important contribution to the elimination of this absence and her approach could serve as a model for other studies in film audiences. However there are some problems with the ethnographic method, particularly in the case of studies focusing on film audiences from past, which Stacey herself acknowledges.

Ien Ang, who analyzed people's reasons for watching Dallas on the basis of letters sent to her on that topic, had argued that

[w]hat people say or write about their experiences, preferences, habits, etc., cannot be taken entirely at face value ... we cannot let the letters speak for themselves, but they should be read 'symptomatically': we must search for what is behind the explicitly written, for the presuppositions and accepted attitudes concealed within them. In other words the letters must be read as texts, as discourses. (qtd. in Stacey, Star Gazing 71)

Ang's approach, for Stacey, is exemplary of the "shift from the textually produced spectator of film studies to the spectator as text within cultural studies". Stacey accepts the textual status of what people tell about their experiences of the media output but states that textual analysis needs to be used "in a framework which is demonstrably derived from the material itself" (Star Gazing 72). She also has some reservations concerning the treatment of "audience data" merely as a text in the sense of "texts of film theory". In this respect Stacey comes up with questions, which are very important to ethnographic audience studies:

How, then, might audiences' accounts be considered as texts, and yet maintain a different status from the texts of film theory? How might we move beyond the simplistic ascription of audiences' responses as the 'authentic truth' about media meaning, whilst avoiding treating them as simply another kind of narrative fiction? How might some aspects of the psychoanalytic conception of the subject be retained, if modified, within studies of 'real audiences'? (Star Gazing 74)

Indeed Stacey's analysis, which is described above, seems to be an answer to these questions in that she locates women's responses within the culture and history specific discourses available to them. Within the framework of her study, Stacey explains that

[a]udiences' memories of Hollywood stars ... are obviously texts, but they are specific kinds of texts produced within a specific set of conditions. The readings of Hollywood that they produce need therefore to be situated within the context of their production. (Star Gazing 76)

Stacey seems to object the tendency of mere "psychoanalyzing" audience responses³² and this seems to be what she refers to when she says that audience responses cannot be treated as "texts of film theory".

³² In this respect Stacey seems to share Walkerdine's criticisms of the tendency of "intellectualizing" audience responses by mere use of psychoanalytic theories.

Stacey also discusses the question of “memory formation” in relation to the investigation of film audiences from past years based on their memories about the cinema. In her essay entitled “Hollywood memories”, where she elaborates in detail particularly on the formations of memory in her research on Hollywood stars of the 1940s and 1950s and their spectators, she points to the importance of acknowledging that “the past is produced in the present” and that the research process and the researcher might have a crucial role in that production (320-1). She states that “this type of research involves ‘a dialogic exchange’ in which the fantasies researcher and respondents have about each other have a determining effect on the accounts produced” (320). The term “dialogic exchange” here is derived from Bakhtin’s dialogic theory. Bakhtin writes:

word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant. As word, it is precisely the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee.

An essential (constitutive) marker of the utterance is its quality of being directed to someone, its *addressivity* ... Both the composition and, particularly, the style of the utterance depend on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressee, and the force of their effect on utterance. (qtd. in Stacey, “Hollywood” 320-1)

Bakhtin’s dialogic theory, for Stacey, “highlights ... the role of the imagined reader in meaning production” and departing from that she argues that in any audience research “the relationship between the academic researcher and interviewees or respondents necessarily shapes which accounts are told and which are not, and indeed how they are told”. However, Stacey argues, in researches, such as hers, where audiences’ memories -their representations of the past- are used, “the imagined reader”-the academic researcher “functions as a way for respondents to reconstruct their pasts in the present for another who is outside their worlds, but also ... outside their generation” (“Hollywood” 321). Stacey explains that, in her study, some textual

enunciations in the letters of respondents signaled her presence as a researcher younger than them ready to listen and valorize their emotions and pleasures (“Hollywood” 322-30). She points that respondents’ memories were marked with “feelings of a previous lack of recognition of the importance of film stars in their lives” (“Hollywood” 328) and that as a researcher her academic status “might in turn invest these memories with a weight and importance they are felt to lack” (“Hollywood” 330). In this respect the letters, according to Stacey, involved what Bakhtin calls “hidden dialogue” with an “interlocutor not named in the text, but whose presence may be inferred” (“Hollywood” 325).³³ However she also notes that “the dialogic exchanges” function to produce not only a “dialogue with an imagined reader in the present”, but also “numerous other dialogues with discourses and interlocutors from the remembered past” (“Hollywood” 331).

Stacey explains that this might also be the reason why women wrote her about the years with Hollywood cinema with a sense of nostalgia. She writes:

Dialogic negotiations between past and present discourses and subjects are far from neutral. They are often shot through with wistful longing for remembered times, and with desire to recapture a lost sense of possibility: such memories, in other words, are deeply nostalgic ... The invitation to produce a remembered past promises the pleasure of an imagined retrieval, but simultaneously reminds respondents of the impossibility of relieving that past. (“Hollywood” 334)

Related to that Stacey argues that the memories of the respondents seem to be shaped by their personal investments. Even “what gets remembered and what gets forgotten” may depend upon the identities, the “personal histories” of the respondents

³³ Bakhtin talks about “double-voiced discourse”, which can take the form of a “hidden dialogue” or “hidden polemic”. “In the case of hidden polemic, the inferred subject or discourse is seen as potentially antagonistic or hostile, which is not the case in hidden dialogue” (Stacey, “Hollywood” 325).

(Star Gazing 70). However Stacey does not suggest that those memories are just fictions on the contrary, she argues, the fact that “certain memories figure repeatedly in some people’s accounts of the past” could mean that “these memories represent particular ‘transformative moments’ in the spectator’s life history” (“Hollywood” 331-2). She writes:

Such moments are especially pertinent to the film star-spectator relationship because Hollywood stars embody cultural ideals of femininity and represent to spectators the possibility of transforming the self. Indeed, many memories pinpoint the role of Hollywood stars in the changes in spectators’ own identities. (“Hollywood” 332)

Annette Kuhn points that memories should not be reduced to just unreliable fictions, too. She argues:

memory work presents new possibilities for enhancing our understanding not only of how films work as texts, but also of how we use films and other representations to make our selves, of how we construct our own histories through memory, even of how we position ourselves within wider, more public, histories. (“Mandy” 243)

3. BETWEEN “TEXTUAL DETERMINISM” AND “AUDIENCE DETERMINISM”

The majority of the literature on media-audience relations share the purpose of overcoming the limitations of textual determinism that had marked 1970s cultural theory including film theory. Textual determinism, which we associated with screen theory in this study, was concerned with the production of meaning in film texts and its investment in construction of subject positions for the spectator. As Annette Kuhn argues:

[t]his model of spectator/subject is useful in correcting more deterministic communication models which might, say, pose the spectator not as actively constructing meaning but simply as receiver and decoder of preconstituted ‘messages’. In emphasizing spectatorship as a set of psychic relations and focusing on the relationship between spectator and text, however, such a model does disregard the broader social implications of filmgoing or televiewing. (“Women’s Genres” 305)

We should keep in mind that Screen’s work was partially an attempt to produce a film theory, to open up a space for theoretical discussion on films and it was motivated by a specific political position. Robert B. Ray describes Screen’s emphasis on theory as an attempt to “break the spell”, with which cinema was characterized since its early days. He explains:

After 1968 magic became the problem, the source of the movies’ ideological menace. Thus breaking the spell became film studies’ object, a goal explicitly announced by Laura Mulvey in her brilliant “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, the 1975 *Screen* essay that became the breviary for two decades of theory. “It is said that analysing pleasure, or beauty destroys it,” Mulvey wrote. “That is the intention of this article”.

Having said this, Ray goes on to argue that “Screen theory often ignored the reasons why people went to the movies in the first place.” So it could be said that the question “why?” was missing in Screen. Gary R. Edgerton et al. argue that

[t]heories are framing devices that are always subject to change and further refinement. Methodologies, the techniques for applying theories and conducting criticisms, are ... processes to be used, adopted, revised, or combined as is warranted by each new research question. (2)

Different approaches to media/audience relations can be seen as producing different frames through which we are invited to look at these relations. The question “why?” invites us to consider what is left outside the frame when we merely focus on the film text, when we limit the experience of the audience simply to look at the film on the screen in movie theatre. Indeed screen theory gives some answers to the question “why?” in its reference to psychoanalytic theory of subject formation and psychic desires. However this remains as an abstraction without any reference to people’s socially situated experiences. This seems to be what is meant when it is argued that Screen ignored the question “why people went to the movies?”.

The question why people consume a particular media product, lies at the core of the ethnographic audience studies and as Ang argues:

one of the important contributions made by ethnographic studies of reception is exactly the ‘signing’, ‘reading’ and ‘symbolizing’ –the documenting, the putting into tangible discourse- of the fragmented, invisible, marginal tactics by which media audiences symbolically appropriate a world not of their own making. (“Culture” 243).

However there is a problem with ethnographic approach. Many ethnographic studies, especially those dealing with television audiences, seem to suppress the fact that they produce a discourse out of other discourses. They seem to treat audiences’ accounts of their act of media consumption not as a discourse in itself, which might have its own dynamics, but rather as a “reality” that has a value as long as it can challenge the

implications of the textualist approach about audiences and media-audience relations. This is why the serious implications of their conclusion that the experience of audiences with media is not only determined by the meanings relating to the content of media texts, is surpassed by arguments constructed on a pre-given dichotomy of “passivity” versus “activity” or “submission” versus “resistance”. By evaluating audiences’ responses in the final analysis with reference to the assumptions of textual determinism ethnographic approach, has started to appear, as it is already remarked by some scholars, as a simple attempt to claim the priority of the “real” over the “abstract”, “conscious” over the “unconscious”, “audience readings” over the “spectator positioning” and defending “heterogeneity” against “homogeneity”, “activity” against “passivity”, and “resistance” against “submission”. Judith Mayne argues that, in the case of cinema for example, the problem with both textualist and ethnographic approaches is that “the activity of making meaning is assumed to reside in one single source -either cinematic apparatus, or the socially contextualized viewer” (94). In other words while audience studies were motivated by the critique of textual determinism they led to what Tessa Perkins calls “audience determinism” (83).

The reception of audience studies as an “academic machine”¹, which does not go beyond reversing certain pre-given oppositions and “celebration of popular culture” is also motivated by the claim that these studies have not presented a broader theoretical framework. In other words while they have produced new information and insights about media-audience relationships they have had a problem in theorizing their results. Ang argues that “what we need is not more ethnographic work on discrete audience

¹ I owe this term to Mahmut Mutman.

groups, but on reception as an integral part of popular cultural practices” (“Culture” 241). This argument again points to the enduring problem of theorization in audience studies. But as Barker and Brooks argue “that raises many questions about what counts as appropriate theory” (12). In fact ethnographic audience studies offer us with “theories” if not with a Grand Theory. As Cook remarks, within the framework of ethnographic film studies “more than simply telling us about why certain people like certain film and stars, these ethnographic studies helps us understand the social dimensions of film viewing” (372). Richard Dyer states that indeed it is very difficult to avoid theory in the study of popular entertainment. He remarks that to investigate entertainment is not entertaining itself because the investigator feels an urge to avoid treating entertainment as entertainment (Only Entertainment 2). This could be the reason why, as Dyer argues, the study of popular films -and other popular forms- is usually dominated by a “but also approach”, which argues that popular films are entertaining and enjoyable but they are also “something else”. Sociological approaches to the study of popular films usually argue that popular films make “profound statements” concerning issues such as history, society, psychology, and gender roles “despite also being entertaining”. Similarly, Psychoanalytic and Marxist approaches refuse taking entertainment as entertainment, but rather treat it as “the sugar on the pill” which disguise ideology. Either one talks about the necessity of entertainment for people or condemns it. Such approaches, Dyer argues, always describe entertainment as a field of “ideological struggle” and assume that what is named as “the sugar” is “unproblematic” (Only Entertainment 3-5). But how will we deal with entertainment as entertainment? Dyer writes: “rather than look ... to other discourses to explain (explain away?) entertainment, we might be well advised to listen, really listen, to the discourse of entertainment itself”(Only Entertainment 7).

However, entertainment or “the specific and concrete”, “the obvious” never “speak for themselves”. As Dyer remarks, “each of us make them speak from what we bring to bear on them, which is theory (if not Theory)” (Only Entertainment 8). In other words we cannot escape from theory. Similarly Jenkins remarks:

Despite its appeal to empirical research, audience study still depends upon theory and interpretation, not only upon observation and description. Whether we are looking at personal diaries and letters, or focus-group interviews, we are reading ‘tea leaves’ left behind by a more immediate process of reception, which we may never directly observe nor fully reconstruct. (“Reception” 167).

It seems to me that the problem with ethnographic audience studies is not a matter of theorizing but of “grounding” of theories. We observe that the audience and media-audience relations “constructed” by ethnographic studies have been caught into a play guided by a pre-given dualism and have become the vehicle of the articulations of social and political priorities. Mayne remarks that ethnography has the potential of constructing

[an] image of the “spectator” or the “real viewer” every bit as monolithic as the “subject” of dominant ideology ... constituting a viewer who is always resisting, always struggling, always seeming just on the verge of becoming the embodiment of the researcher’s own political ideal. (61)

In this respect, as Mayne argues, perhaps we have here a displacement of the notion of the “ideal reader” rather than a problematization of it (85). Mayne notes that in ethnographic studies, namely in Radway’s work on romance reading, the readers are mediated by the researcher’s questions, analyses and narratives. She writes:

It is inevitable that such projections exist in this kind of analysis, and unless those projections are analyzed, then we are left with an ideal reader who seems more real because she is quoted and referred to, but who is every bit as problematic as the ideal reader constructed by abstract theories of an apparatus positioning passive vessels. (84)

As Lawrence Grossberg argues, “the fact that audiences are active does not necessarily imply that that is where we should begin or ground our theories, any more than the fact that texts produce meanings demands an immediate textual analysis”

("Context" 326). In fact the emphasis on "active audiences", Grossberg claims, represents an "escape" rather than a "discovery". This is the escape from the question, "where the audience is, when it is, how it is, for whom it is?"

Not only the concept of "audience" but also "context" seem to be taken for granted in ethnographic studies without any problematization. Much ethnographic studies look at the relationship between singular texts or genres and locatable audiences. In these studies specific groups of people are conceived as audiences which form an "interpretive community" (Schroder 338) whose accounts of their relation to a particular media can be accessed through ethnographic forms of data collection. However we observe that the meaning of "community" shifts from study to study. As Barker and Brooks remark,

sometimes it is defined in terms of socio-cultural characteristics (class, gender, ethnicity, age, etc), sometimes in terms of discursive commonalities (using the same way of speaking, even if the 'members' have no other common characteristics), sometimes in terms of their co-presence (being together in an interview and talking to each other). (103)

This situation implies that what is forwarded as the audience of a particular media is a construction and abstraction of the researcher. It is possible to claim the same thing for the concept of "context". Ethnographic studies define "context", a term that they claim to be important in studying audiences responses, in narrow terms such as family, household or neighborhood.² However the term "context" is a difficult concept in that it is not easy to answer the question where a context starts and ends or what determines its inside and outside. The treatment of the "audience" and "context" in a limited way might be due to the fact that much ethnographic studies have assumed

² Grossberg explains that problem with the fetishization of the context as "the local" ("Context" 321).

that is possible to isolate a particular text -a particular programme, a film, a genre- against which people's responses, which are assumed to be the responses to that text, could be evaluated. However, as Grossberg argues:

Audiences never deal with single cultural texts, or even with single genres of media. Culture 'communicates' only in particular contexts in which a range of texts, practices and languages are brought together. The same text can and often will be allocated in a number of different contexts; in each, it will function as a different text and it will likely have different relations to and effects on its audience. ("Is there a Fan" 54)

Grossberg's point seems to be one of the most important points that are ignored by most audience studies, especially studies on TV audiences. In these studies the context of consumption is reduced to the inside of the home. It is ignored that although a housewife, for example, might use a TV program just to structure home time or lessen her solitude she might still engage with the meaning of the program in another context, for example in a tea party with other housewives.³

Tonny Bennett's has forwarded another term, "reading formations", which we could use to consider the issues "audience" and "context" in broader terms. The term "reading formations" also opens a space for interrogating concepts such as "text", "meaning", and "interpretation". Bennett prefers to define the process of reading as a "productive activation" rather than an act of "interpretation". He argues that the problem with both textual approach, which is concerned with the textual production of a position for reading, and the approaches that aim to confront the empirical reader is that they both conceive the text as an object that is pre-given to the reader. Although the latter emphasize the variability of readings it takes all these readings as

³ In fact, in these studies, audiences' accounts of their act of media consumption were already suggesting that the text is never identifiable as a self-contained object because it is "always, simultaneously, multiply contextualized and intersected by other practices" (Grossberg, "Wandering Audiences" 315). However it seems that researchers preferred to read this as a different way of using the media text that the researcher had in his/her mind.

the readings of the same text. Bennett rejects this conventional view of texts as “‘things’ which have ‘meanings’ which readers may variously interpret” (214-20). He argues that

[m]eaning is a transitive phenomena. It is not a *thing* –which texts can *have*, but it is something that can only be produced, and always differently, within the reading formations that regulate the encounters between texts and readers. (218)

“Reading formation” is the crucial term here. Bennett defines it as “a set of intersecting discourses which productively activate a given body of texts and the relations between them in a specific way” (216). Bennett argues:

The study of reading, as it has so far been developed, has been characterized by a marked one-sidedness. It has placed the reader into the melting pot of variability whilst retaining the text as a fixed pole of reference within the analysis. It is necessary, and high time, to place the text into the melting pot of variability too; to recognize that the history of reading is not one in which different readers encounter ‘the same text’ but one in which the text readers encounter is already ‘over-worked’, ‘over-coded’, productively activated in a particular way as a result of its inscription within the social, material, ideological and institutional relationships which distinguish specific reading relations. It has no meaning which can be traduced. (224)

According to Bennett it is an “empty-headed gesture” to state that “there are texts with ‘fixed properties’ which may, of course, be variantly ‘interpreted’” (225). Because it is not possible to delimit a text as the “text itself”. As Pierre Machery argues,

everything which has been written *about* it, everything which has been collected on it, become attached to it -like shells on a rock by the seashore forming a whole incrustation. At which point the idea of a ‘work’ loses all meaning. (qtd. in Staiger, Interpreting Films 46)

Bennett’s arguments suggest a different approach to “popular reading”. They imply that

the text the critic has on the desk before him may not be the same text that is culturally active in the relations of popular reading. It is, accordingly, with the determinations which organize the social relations of popular reading that analysis must start if we are to understand the nature of the cultural business that is conducted around, through by means of popular texts in the real history of their productive activation. (225)

Bennets approach to popular reading calls for a shift in the focus of analysis from the audience, which is an abstract category, to “reading formations” which regulate readers’ encounters with texts and the way they “activate” them. We cannot take the audience as being fully present in a single identifiable space as the audience of a single text. The audience wander and it always carries the traces of its wanderings in different spaces and practices. As Barker and Brooks remark: “[i]ndividuals use concepts which they do not originate -they borrow ideas from the social sphere, to make sense of their own experience. They position themselves in relation to social practices” (128). Janice Radway has argued that it might be “more fruitful to start with the habits and practices of everyday life” than “segmenting a social formation automatically by constructing it precisely as a set of audiences for specific media and/or genres”. In this respect she suggested starting with “an expedition through the already inhabited, already elaborated built-up cultural terrain” (qtd. in Grossberg, “Wandering Audiences” 316-7).

In this respect the difficulties associated with doing an ethnography of cinema audiences could in fact be something positive. These difficulties force the researcher to approach cinema audiences indirectly. This study deals with audiences writing letters –a habit and practice of their everyday life and a part of Yeşilçam event. It does not have a predetermined audience, but it has a cultural practice in its center through which an audience discourse could be reconstituted. This “discursive reconstitution”⁴ of the audience extends beyond the purpose of constructing a typology of audiences in terms of a pre-given dual structure such as activity versus passivity or submission

⁴ I owe this term to Halil Nalçaoğlu.

versus resistance. What we have access to in the space constructed by audience letters published in cinema magazines are not flesh and blood audiences but certain “reading formations”. What we can do is to imagine the text, Yeşilçam event, that is (re)produced through several forms of “activation” and audiences at the source of these productive activations. If meanings are determined from text/context and if there is not a way to determine exactly what delimits a text/context then perhaps we can try to go to the text/context from the meanings produced within particular reading formations, in other words by reversing the dominant procedure. In other words this study does not deal with Yeşilçam “audience” per se, which is a problematic concept as the literature review demonstrates, but with a “discursive reconstitution” of the audience and Yeşilçam event which it is a part of. This reconstitution is assumed to be important not because it has a claim to reveal a certain reality, but has an invitation to consider the possibility of a third space that is constituent of Yeşilçam event yet neither exhausted by “the audience” nor “the text”.

4. AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF CINEMA IN TURKEY AND ITS RECEPTION¹

4.1. The Ottoman Period: Encounter with Moving Images: “Sin” or “Civilization”

Moving images first entered to the Ottoman Palace during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II. Ayşe Osmanoğlu, Sultan’s daughter, in her book entitled Babam Abdülhamid, mentions a French illusionist called Bertrand who brought cinema to Yıldız Palace and screened one-minute length short films (Şener, Yeşilçam 6-7).² The first public exhibition, which was presented with the title of “live photograph (canlı fotoğraf)”, took place in 1896 or 1897 in the Sponeck pub in Beyoğlu, İstanbul. It was a 30-minute paid screening made in front of a small group of people. Ekrem Talu who was among the audience as a child, provide some information about the reactions of the audience to this first exhibition. First he mentions the darkness which made people afraid and the smell of petrol which was used to run the film projector and enlighten the filmstrip.³ When the light was turned off some of the people whistled and some objected the black curtains

¹ This chapter does not claim to be an exhaustive account of the history of cinema in Turkey. Instead of a detailed review of the literature already available in Turkish cinema history books the chapter aims at introducing some new information collected from magazines to the literature. Moreover, it consciously contend with sketches of production characteristics (i.e. films, directors, genres, and statistical information) and reserves much room for the responses and reactions to cinema and changing discourses about it, which appear to be one of the most ignored areas within the framework of the history of cinema in Turkey.

² However, according to Rakım Çalapala a French painter called Didon introduced cinematograph to Turkey (6).

³ There was not electricity in the country since Sultan Abdülhamid II prohibited its use.

covering the windows. After a man explained the reason of the darkness the screening started. The audience first watched a train leaving the station and then a bullfight that made them afraid and shocked. Some people attempted to leave their seats during the first screening thinking that the train would crash them. Talu states that the exhibition, particularly the cinematograph as a miracle of science, led to an important debate in the school and in the streets of İstanbul. While some people were declaring watching the screening as a sin and some repenting for watching it, others, namely “open minded people”, were expressing the pleasure they got from the introduction of a “new element of civilization” to the country (“İstanbulda” 5-6). It is possible to observe the ambivalent attitude of Turkish society in the face of the project of Westernization in all periods in these two conflicting responses to the cinematograph, a medium imported from the West. In fact besides being an “art” and “entertainment” form cinema in Turkey would always be a social matter which, would serve as an alternative space for the articulation of worries and hopes that characterized different socio-historical contexts.

Rakım Çalapa notes that the majority of the people in İstanbul met cinematograph on the white curtain of a famous Karagöz (shadow play) performer, Katip Salih, in Feyziye Kiraathanesi (coffeehouse) located in Direklerarası, Şehzadebaşı. The screenings always consisted of a group of three or five-minute silent, black and white films. Çalapa argues that although cinematograph did not meet a big demand from the audience at the beginning, soon it became the rival of both Karagöz and theatre (6). The early audiences of cinema were all male. However some rich women had the opportunity to meet cinematograph during several private screenings made in mansions. Cinema, which had

remained as something accompanying other forms such as theatre and variety shows in entertainment places and Karagöz and Meddah in Ramadan entertainments, started to have an existence of its own starting from 1914 and gradually it had a place in the everyday life of Ottoman society (Çalapala 8; Özuyar 33-4). The first Ottoman cinema journal, Sinema, which started publishing in 1914, included articles trying to understand the nature of cinema as a scientific innovation and art form as well as comments on how it could be used for purposes other than entertainment (Özuyar 35-8).

Cinema remained as mobile screenings until the declaration of the Second Constitutional Monarchy mainly due to the prohibitions of Abdülhamid II on the public use of electricity. Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew of Romanian nationality, opened the first movie theatre, Pathe, in 1908 in Tepebaşı, İstanbul. A few others followed Weinberg's attempt, too. Cevat Bey, Murat Bey and Ali Efendi were the first Turkish entrepreneurs who opened two movie theatres, Milli Sinema and Ali Efendi Sineması, in 1914. In the same year women from İstanbul attended cinema for the first time in a movie theatre in Pangaltı owned by Asaduryans in the days and hours reserved solely for screenings to them (Çalapala 8). Several European films were shown in those movie theatres. Hilmi A. Malik explains that before the World War One films from Italy, France and Scandinavia were screened in movie theatres in İstanbul, İzmir and Selanik. However it was German films which were in demand between 1915-1918 mainly due to their being "closer to life" and "able to depict activities and adventures of life". Moreover it was easier to import films from Germany since it was Turkey's ally. After the World War One, French and Italian films started to reappear in movie theatres in Turkey. American films were

introduced to the country starting from 1921 and after 1930 they started to dominate movie theaters (8).

Ayastefanos Abidesinin Yıkılışı (The Demolition of the Monument St Stephen), a short documentary film shot by Fuat Uzkınay in 1914 during the demolition of a monument built by Russians after their victory in the 1876-1877 Ottoman-Russian War, is taken as the beginning of Turkish cinema by most historians.⁴ However, the first feature films were made by Sedat Simavi in 1917 (Pençe, Casus). These were followed by Fuat Uzkınay and Sigmund Weinberg's Himmet Ağa'nın İzdivacı (1918), Ahmet Fehim's Mürebbiye and Binnaz (1919), and Şadi Fikret Karagözoğlu's Bican Efendi Vekilharç (1921) (Özgülç, Kronolojik 5-9). These films revolved around the issues of love and marriage and all the female characters were played by non-Muslim stage performers (Soykan 33-35).

4.2. The Republican Era (1920s, 1930s, 1940s): "Cinemanian": Hope and Paranoia

In the 1920s and 1930s cinema still heavily meant foreign films (Abisel 15).⁵ However these were also the years when Turkish cinema consolidated its presence. In this period Turkish cinema was dependent on Turkish theatre. The years from 1920 to 1939 is named as the period of "theatre men (tiyatrocular)" in Turkish cinema after the fact that the directors and actors were from theatre and the films had a theatrical appearance as if they were plays shot by a movie camera. Muhsin Ertuğrul who was one of the major figures of Turkish theatre dominated this period as "the single man" of Turkish cinema

⁴ For a review of the debates and doubts about whether this shooting event had really taken place see Türk's article.

⁵ For information about exhibition see Abisel 11-9.

with over than twenty films he made first for Kemal Film, the first Turkish film company established in 1921 and later for İpek Film, established in 1928 (“Sinema: Türkiye” 21). Ertuğrul remembers the impact of his first film, İstanbul’da Bir Facia-i Aşk (1922), in Turkish society and film industry as follows:

... when İstanbul’da Bir Facia-i Aşk was started to be screened in movie theatres in Beyoğlu and met extraordinary interest of the audience, not only Kemal and Şakir brothers but the whole film market opened their eyes onto domestic film. The first film obtained a big income and success, which was unexpected. When money started to flow to the box office the value of domestic film increased much more regardless of its quality. The production cost of the film was met as income in its first screening in the biggest movie theatre of Beyoğlu. (299)

The majority of the audience was still male in this period. Fetay Soykan argues that this was natural because films were representing women as adventurous, lively and seducing. In other words the image of woman in the films was in contradiction with the social image of woman and moral values. Moreover going to movies was considered socially inappropriate for women (35). Ertuğrul explains that he had many difficulties during the shooting of his films in İstanbul including the attack of fanatical groups protesting the shooting of veiled (çarşafılı) women in film:

The shooting of veiled woman was regarded as the biggest sin. This was until it was understood that Armenian actress Ms Aznif or Russian actress Andreyevna played the women in veil... Even the veil’s being worn by them was an unacceptable sin. That black cloth was a sacred symbol in itself. Therefore we were attacked and stoned several times. (300)

Ali Özuyar who has examined the cinema journals of the period between 1923-1928 explains that foreign film industries, particularly American film industry, were closely followed and examined in the journals of that period. He also points to the appearance of magazine news, which were absent from the journals of the Ottoman period. News about foreign stars’ daily lives, love affairs, pleasures and preferences were the major topics

among such news (66-71). It could be argued that these were the years when cinema started to mean people something more than science and technique, more than a “cinema of attractions”. Coupled with magazines and news about stars, cinema started to present people with a different world.

An article by Muhsin Ertuğrul published in Temaşa journal in 1918 is considered the beginning of film criticism in Turkey. Ertuğrul criticized Sedat Simavi’s film Pence (1917) for its technical deficiencies and argued that the film was an embarrassment for Turkish audience who had already seen the most artistic films of Italy, France and Germany (qtd. in Atay 53). In fact this criticism also marks the beginning of a discourse in the written responses to Turkish films and cinema. Cinema criticism of twenties and thirties were marked with a nationalist attitude. Western films screened in Turkey were accused of making US propaganda and sound films were considered as forming an attack of English language to the country (Atay 56-7).⁶ In fact these were the years when Republican projects, which can be characterized with the attempts to create a new identity of “Turkish citizen” together with the construction of a nation state, were extended to cultural arena. Although the new Republican State did not directly attempted to put cinema under the service of its national and cultural projects critics were attributing an important mission to Turkish cinema within that project. Nusret Kemal, in an article published in Ülkü in 1933, defined that mission as follow:

To spread the revolution to the country, to become an agent in the construction and progression of the national culture according to the new principles, to provide educational

⁶ The first sound films were introduced in Turkey starting from 1929 and films started to be dubbed in Turkish starting from 1933 on (Gökmen, Eski 61).

entertainment that encourage good pleasures, to introduce Turkey, Turkish public, Turkish culture and Turkish revolution to foreign countries. (351)

Kemal referred to Muhsin Ertuğrul's films İstanbul Sokaklarında (1931), Söz Bir Allah Bir (1933), and Karım Beni Aldatırsa (1933) and argued that he could not call these films "Turkish films" because they do not comply with the mission described above. He would rather prefer to call them "films in Turkish". Kemal claimed that besides lacking any artistic aspect these films "insulted" Turkish public by presenting them "immoral" and "disgusting" spectacles as if they were demanding these. He stressed that cinema was not a matter of personal benefit but, on the contrary, a work for national service (351-2). In fact arguments similar to Kemal's would never be absent from the debates on Turkish cinema. The stress on the opposition between "personal benefit" and "national interest" would always remain. It was not only Turkish films but also several foreign films that were subjected to severe criticism. İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, in an article published in Yeni Adam in 1937, sought the reason of the production of "bad films" in the "capitalist mentality" that dominated cinema industries. He considered the popularity of certain fantastic foreign films, which were made "just for the sake of making money", among Turkish people as a big "threat of cultural imperialism". He argued that the films imported to the country should be subjected to a severe control and the domestic films, which conveyed the ideals of the regime and modern cultural values should be supported (2).

Nizamettin Nazif in an article published in Yedigün in 1933 points to an interesting argument that was popular among certain circles. The argument says:

What is in American films that are made with huge sums of money? American studios need to spend huge money because they exhibit very beautiful female bodies. We should take our film system from Russians. Are there any beautiful woman leg and luxurious bourgeois settings in them? (5)

However it must be noted that both Ülkü and Yeni Adam journals were political journals. Ülkü was aimed at spreading the mission of the Republican Party of the People (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi), the first political party of the Republic (Türkiye’de Dergiler 38) whereas Yeni Adam was among the journals which had socialist inclinations (Türkiye’de Dergiler 49-50). A look at the Yedigün journal could provide an understanding of the more popular image of cinema in Turkish society in the thirties.⁷ The magazine, which was owned by Sedat Simavi, had a low selling price and a large reading public. Establishing a good dialogue with the readers which was reflected in its slogan “the ornament of every home (her yuvanın süsü)” was among the goals of the magazine (Türkiye’de Dergiler 156-7). Yedigün was not a cinema magazine but it included several articles relating to cinema. The majority of the articles dealt with cinema as a social phenomenon in the world but it is possible to meet a few articles on Turkish cinema in particular, too. Articles relating to Turkish cinema were in the form of short reviews of Muhsin Ertuğrul’s films, namely Bir Millet Uyanıyor (1932), Söz Bir Allah Bir (1933), Cici Berber (1933), Karım Beni Aldatırsa (1933), and comments on the situation of the Turkish film industry. In these articles cinema was conceived as an expensive business requiring huge investment in technique and Turkish films were appreciated within the framework of financial and technical limitations in Turkey. It is interesting that the films Söz Bir Allah Bir and Karım Beni Aldatırsa, which were conceived as “insults” to Turkish

⁷ For a similar reivew, which is broader in terms of the variety of the magazines examined see Abisel 30-66.

nation by Nusret Kemal in Ülkü, were described in Yedigün as a source of national pride because “they proved the existence of a film industry in Turkey”.

There were also a few articles aimed at introducing technical aspects of cinema and production staff. In one of such articles, it was stated that opening credits appearing at the beginning of films were boring for the audiences who were used to appreciate films on the basis of the story and actors -and occasionally directors. However, the article wrote, this list of names was important in that there was always a huge production staff behind every film and introduced the members in the staff one by one (A.H). In fact this type of articles constitute a common type of writing in every period. However the early ones had a different characteristic, in that they emphasized the contrast between what the audience saw in films and what lies behind. For example Baha Gelenbevi stated in an article in 1941:

When we are bored or we want to see a new film we go to movie. Especially in our country we certainly go to movie for entertainment. Because we have neither theatres nor other spectacles which can compete with cinema in terms of wideness and abundance. Therefore we certainly go to movie. We watch, the story of the film or the competence of the artist has absorbed and affected us. We do not remember anything about the film neither during the film nor after leaving movie theatre except the story or the artists. However every film has a technical aspect, so to say, a backstage. And be sure that most time backstage is more interesting than the film itself ... Even a film’s recording several movements of a single person without interruption is an event worthy of examination. (14)

Several articles in Yedigün conceived cinema’s wide acceptance in 1930s Turkish society as a phenomenon parallel to the situation in other countries. Although cinema was not directly supported by the state there had been private attempts to encourage people to follow cinema. For example some movie theatre owners distributed cheap movie tickets to schools and public houses (halkevleri) arranged film screenings (Atay 62). An article in

Perde-Sahne journal debated the reasons why people demanded cinema both in Turkey and in the world. It forwarded three main reasons: First going to movie was an inexpensive form of entertainment, especially in Turkey: 20-40 piastre in first-class movies and 10-30 piastre in Anatolian cities. Secondly people found pleasure in seeing their favorite actors in different stories and roles. Finally films provided a fast and easy way of understanding even the most complicated topics and novels.⁸ It must be noted that the music accompanying films could also be a source of enjoyment for cinema. An advertisement of Sümer movie theatre in İstanbul that was published in Sinema ve Tiyatro Heveskarı Mecmuası in 1934 provides clues about some of the elements that attracted the audience to cinema. The advertisement emphasized that the movie theatre was in Beyoğlu, “the location of the most distinguished and cultured families of İstanbul”. Then in addition to citing some of the films and the actors in those films the advertisement reminded the audience that they would also listen to the Sandor orchestra that accompanied the films. Burhan Arpad remarks that during the period of silent films film companies were including a list of music in their film advertisements. Moreover they also offered a detailed plan of music including titles and durations with respect to the scenes.

Arpad writes:

The orchestras playing in movie theatres and their repertoires, until the screening of Brodway Melodi, the first sound film in Turkey, in 1929, had been very useful in the introduction, spread, and appropriation of polyphonic music. From Italian operas to Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Schubert, and Çaykovski, the masters of classical music or classical operetta and the most beautiful pieces of light music were appropriated by middle class people of İstanbul in this way. It happened like this for me, too. (35)

⁸ The article also provided a statistic of the number of movie theatres in the world and Turkey. Turkey was in the 18th row among 25 countries with 194 movie theatres in 1941(“Sinemacılık Yürüyor”).

Cinema's becoming the major form of social entertainment was sometimes discussed with a sense of nostalgia for the lost forms of entertainment such as the show of circuses in Taksim, İstanbul, particularly horse dealers, or objections to the power attributed to cinema in the face of theatre ("Sinemanın Öldürdüğü" 6-7). Nurullah Ata offered an interesting argument about "why cinema could not replace theatre in Turkey". He argued that film making was a very expensive business. Therefore a big budget film could not cover its cost only with screenings made in the country; it needed screenings in foreign markets. In these circumstances it was very difficult to establish a national cinema because, Ata wrote:

we need to consider the pleasures of other nations. Especially we need to avoid politics. This is why Russian films are prohibited in many countries ... A cinema based on national goals and politics is very difficult, almost impossible. Since cinema costs much it has to obey not only the pleasures of everyone but also every nation. This is an obligation which prevents the production of good works ... There will be always people who will not enjoy so many concession and they will prefer theatre. (6)

However it was the relationship between cinema and society that was in the focus of 1930s and 1940s debates on cinema. Early in 1932 Hilmi A. Malik had conducted an empirical research on the effects of cinema in Turkey. The results of the research were published in a book entitled Türkiyede Sinema ve Tesirleri (Cinema in Turkey and Its Effects) in 1933. The purpose of the research was "to investigate the positive and negative effects of foreign films screened in Turkey, which did not have any relationship with none of the goals of the country, on students and, consequently, people" (6). The research consisted of two parts. In the first part 60 primary school students from Ankara were made to watch the Soviet film Mustafa and later asked to write what they remembered from the film two times -one day after watching the film and two months

later. The researcher examined what and how much children remembered from the film each time to understand the effect of the film on children's memory. Based on the accounts obtained from the students the researcher concluded that the film had a 70% effect on children. In the second part of the research the researcher collected information from 920 students from primary, middle and high schools in Ankara through questionnaires and investigated students' habits of movie going, interest in film stars and cinema magazines. It was observed that movie going was a common activity among students. Moreover the majority of them were following cinema magazines to learn about stars and collecting star pictures. However the majority of the students had answered the question whether they would like to be an actor/actress negatively. Those who said "yes" to the question offered reasons such as becoming rich and famous, to have fun, to kiss each other whereas those who said "no" associated being an actor/actress with being dishonorable, immoral, useless and unfaithful to the country, having a bad future...⁹ Besides presenting the results of the research on students Malik also made some generalizations about the cinema audience in Turkey. He divided the audience into five categories: (a) Those who went to movie to see every film. Cinema was a "malady (hastalık)" for these people and 98% of them consisted of young people (b) Those who went to movie in the weekend. These people went to movie to see new things and for entertainment (c) Those who went to movie only to see "good" and praised films (d) Those who went to movie to watch other audiences more than watching film (e) Those who went to movie to make love. These people preferred back seats, lodges, and darkest

⁹ Malik noted that in some of the schools going to the movie frequently and without teachers was prohibited for students and that this might be effective on students' responses (31).

places in the movie theatre. Malik described the first and last two types of audiences as “the most dangerous ones” because, he argued, the first group would perceive the world as it is represented in films and the last two groups were morally debased since they went to movie to “satisfy their sexual pleasures” or to “entrap their victims” (43-4).¹⁰

Although the “scientific” aspect of Malik’s research is highly questionable the book seems to be an important historical document in that it records a common type of reception of cinema in Turkey in a particular historical period. Malik’s interest in the effects of cinema in Turkey seems to be motivated by two feelings. One is fear or paranoia and the other is hope both of which make sense in relation to the nationalist atmosphere of the 1930s. Movie theatres’ being a public space attracting “thousands of people a day” was a source of fear for Malik in that the ideals and struggles of the new Republican regime could be wasted, but on the other hand cinema, “a medium which had so much power in attracting people”, could help to spread and strengthen the same ideals if it is used in the “appropriate” way (6). In this respect Malik ended his book with the suggestion that foreign films should be subjected to a severe control and national films, which would “inoculate people with national faith”, should be made (52-3).

Cinema was discussed in terms of its positive and negative effects to society in Yedigün magazine, too. A few articles were interested in the effects of cinema in Turkish society but the majority of the articles in that category dealt with the effects of cinema as a

¹⁰ For a similar view of movie theatre as a public space reserved for “immoral” activities see Uludağ’s Çocuklar, Gençler, Filmler.

worldwide phenomenon. In both cases cinema was considered an “epidemic”. Among the good aspects of cinema it was stated that cinema, as one of the biggest industries of the world, not only became a profitable work source for artists in other arts such as painting, photography, and sculpture but also contributed to the development of these arts. Beside that cinema was mostly appreciated for its “instructive” and “educational” content. It was argued that cinema was endowing people with the knowledge of different peoples, geographies, histories, natures, cultures, and civilizations in a very short time period such as two hours without asking any physical effort. In this respect cinema was compared to the “school”. In addition cinema was considered helpful in arousing good sentiments about humanity, nation, and country (Gövsä, “Sinema Salgını”; “Sinemacılık Yürüyor”).

The arguments on the negative effects of cinema on people were parallel to the “hypodermic needle approach” which characterised most media studies in the world in the 1930s and 1940s. Cinema was attributed an enormous power to leave traces on the thoughts and behaviors of people in real life in Turkey, too. An article wrote:

When you leave the movie theatre after spending two fascinating hours with the attractiveness of a powerful and exciting film your eye absolutely sees the surrounding differently. You feel yourself not only as if you are in front of a movie screen but also inside the events which have excited you. One needs a couple of hours so that this dizziness stops. Your dizziness stops and you come to your natural state. However a sediment of excitement and a seed of thought have remained inside you. Even though years pass it is impossible that you do not remember and feel the excitement of the event that you have seen in the movie in the face of a similar event that you meet in real life. (Gövsä, “Sinema ve Ahlak” 10)

We observe the appearance of a rhetoric based on morality in the 1930s in addition to the politicized rhetoric of the 1920s and early 1930s. The existence of events such as violence, crime, robbery in action scenes of films and the presentation of “immoral”

relations were cited as the leading factors which “threatened” the order and morality of society, especially the development of children and youth. Beside these one of the most repeated arguments about the effects of cinema was that films misrepresented social reality by presenting “success” as something easy to achieve. Gövsa wrote:

Cinema leads to a different mentality in the people who are addicted to it. Those who become slave to that mentality no longer engage in hard work, in pursuits that require heavy thinking and labour. As a result the number of ordinary people increases. The exploitation of cinema would reduce diligence and the ability to search deep truths with curiosity and insistence. (“Sinema Salgını” 25)

The anxiety of losing “idealism”, which could be considered one of the most important values of the Republican regime, seem to lie at the core of Gövsa’s argument. Peyami Safa was one of the leading figures of Yedigün magazine who dealt with the social implications of the popularity of cinema in Turkish society, too. For Safa cinema was one of the three “epidemics” which had “conquered” Turkish youth. The other two epidemics were football and dance. Safa expressed his confusion in the face of the interest of the society in football games, movie stars, and ballrooms that competed with interest in national matters, national heroes, and conference halls:

I see that still an ordinary news of game occupies as much place as the most national matters in the first pages of our newspapers; still the movie girls who do not have any talent except expressing simple moods on a beautiful face, eyeing lively and curling the lips sadly become as famous and honorable as the heroes who save the country; still the conference halls are empty but the ballrooms are full. (“Spor, Sinema” 3)

These three “epidemics”, Safa argued, were imported from the West and, particularly in the case of cinema, he criticized Turkish society’s claiming the pleasure of innovations of the West without having any contribution to their realization. Therefore, Safa claimed, the youth should be endowed with the love of books before the passion of sport, cinema and dance.

In another article Safa referred to another effect of cinema on people. Departing from an incident that he witnessed he argued that cinema changed people's perception of reality and attitude towards social phenomena. One day a young lady had told Safa that she wanted a war that would not affect Turkey break out in Europe and forwarded her boredom as the reason of her demand. Based on that Safa, who became scared in the face of the lady's argument, established a parallelism between people's fondness of cinema and their demand for war. He accused cinema for transforming watching tragedies into a tasteful entertainment. Safa conceived the enormous demand for cinema as a big threat to peace because "it suggested that a bloody play, which was watched free despite the fact that its cost was much higher than the cost of a film, would find an increasing audience demand in the world" ("Bedava Filim" 10).

An article dated 1937 described cinema as something which "poisons with candy" and people's appeal to cinema as an "illness" called "cinomania (sinomani)". The article cited various social behaviors and actions in Turkey as the "symptoms" of "cinomania", which was a "present of Hollywood" to Turkish society: Young ladies' extending their legs and smoking fearlessly in social environment, making up in trains and boats, little boys' leaving their home for an adventure, men leaving their families and friends because of business problems; women leaving their husbands and homes for new adventures without any reason. The article ended with the statement that "cinomania had a role in fifty percent of neuropathies and, perhaps, eighty percent of social crisis" ("Sinomani" 33).

The debates on the negative effects of films on society could be directly related to the image of the European and American films that were screened in 1930s and 1940s in Turkey. An article by Ölvedi Yanoş, printed in Perde-Sahne journal in 1944, provides insights to that image. Yanoş, a Hungarian person who had visited Istanbul, expressed his surprise in the face of the abundance of movie theatres in Istanbul and people's interest in cinema. He described the films screened in İstanbul in 1940s as follow:

Especially British and American films were being screened in İstanbul. It could be said that the artistic value of these films was zero except a few ones. Because the majority of these films were full of exciting scenes organized with respect to American pleasure, such as smashing, destroying, murdering, and childhood... Naturally, revue films involving musicians consisting of beautiful and naked girls and blacks are not neglected here neither. When I stayed in Istanbul revue films costing millions were being screened almost in every movie theatre. (3)

It must be noted that these were not the only foreign films screened in Turkey in 1930s and 1940s. Many Egyptian movies were also screened between 1937-1945 and they were met with a big interest among society ("Sinema: Türkiye" 21-22, 24). Sezai Solelli remarks that many movie theatres in Beyoğlu, which refused to screen Turkish films were very happy with screening Egyptian movies (10).

Cinema had become an important element of Turkey's social life, which was subjected to enormous changes since the 1920s as a result of the modernization movements of the Republican project. The effects of the social change were perhaps more reflected in the new modern image of Turkish woman and her taking part in the public sphere. Star appearances in films and the exhibition of their daily lives in magazines would probably have a role in the changing image of woman. For example cinema's power of shaping fashions of everyday life was present since the 1920s (Özuyar 69). Perhaps this was the reason why it was mostly women who were conceived as the victims of cinema when

considering the negative effects of films. Even Ercüment Ekrem Talu, who referred to an empirical study of the German social researcher Aloyis Funk, which suggested that cinema did not have so much negative effects on youth but rather served as a space for socialization, ended his article with the following statement:

It was once upon a time that children were eager to watch crime films. They are fed up with such fictitious adventures. From now on cinema is an entertainment of adults. Cinema is not harmful to today's conscious youth, but unfortunately, to the nerves and morals of certain women who have lost their bearings and remained with poor knowledge and manners. ("Sinemaya" 5)

Similarly C. Cahit Cem wrote:

Women in films wear the most beautiful dresses and most attractive jewels. When the time comes the innocent and inexperienced girl in the film becomes as expert as harbor prostitutes... Now think the young and innocent female audience. She cannot cope with her desire of imitation. After the film, when she goes home she stands in front of the mirror and imitates the same gestures. Could presenting innocent people with such examples and catering their immature mind with such dreams be totally harmless? (31)

Düriye Gündoğdu, who wrote regularly the section entitled "Woman in Social Life (Cemiyet Hayatında Kadın)" in the woman magazine Ev-İs in the 1940s had reserved one of her writings for the social ritual of movie going. Departing from the fact that "movie going had become one of the most natural needs and ordinary social activities in big cities" Gündoğdu wanted to introduce women the rules of good manners in movie theatre. The article also provides some insights to the meaning of films to female audience in those years. Gündoğdu stated that she enjoyed films with nice music and subject matter and described some of the impolite behaviors in cinema as follow:

Imagine... the film is very beautiful. You have left yourself totally to the story... Perhaps you are witnessing the emotions of a sad mother or a heart who loves and struggles to express her feelings to a young man whom she has been tied with the most naive and pure thoughts and sentiments... Suddenly a noise of the crackling of pumpkin seed [kabak çekirdeği] or roasted chickpea [sakız leblebisi] starts at your behind. Or you are at the most excited moment of the film ... You wait with curiosity ... However a voice from the front, side or back row summarizes the whole issue in a few words. You do not need to see the

end of the film any more. Here is another example: Although it is possible for the hero of the film to seduce a woman whom he loves much, he repents in the face of a childish smile or a good behavior of that woman's husband. Rather than constructing his happiness upon a child who will become motherless and a family that will be collapsed, he risks his happiness and quits her lover in a humanly and just manner. While you understand and feel his suffering a mocking voice says "Stupid". ("Cemiyet" 20)

The author then described how couples should behave when buying their tickets and entering to the movie theatre; what women should wear; and how they should behave while watching the film.

Gündoğdu, in another article, referred to young ladies who adored male stars such as Rudolph Valentino and Robert Tylor. She pointed to their habit of keeping "star albums", strictly following the private lives of stars, and falling in love with stars. She particularly emphasized the women who mourned after the death of Valentino and argued that such attitudes were inappropriate. The author concluded that art could be appreciated and stars could be approved but she would blame young girls and women who left aside all their occupation and filled their mind with the fantasy of stars ("Darılmaca" 21). Similarly Cemal Nadir had reserved one of his cartoons printed in Perde-Sahne journal in 1944 to film stars and people's attachment to them (See Figure 1). All these suggest that stars had already become a social phenomenon in early 1940s.¹¹ However cinema magazines of that period

¹¹ In fact stars and their influence on people had always been present even during the Ottoman period. Sernet Muhtar describes how "Binemciyan efendi" and "Hekimyan hanım", two theatre players, served as "role models" in society once upon a time like the film stars in 1930s.

YILDIZLAR

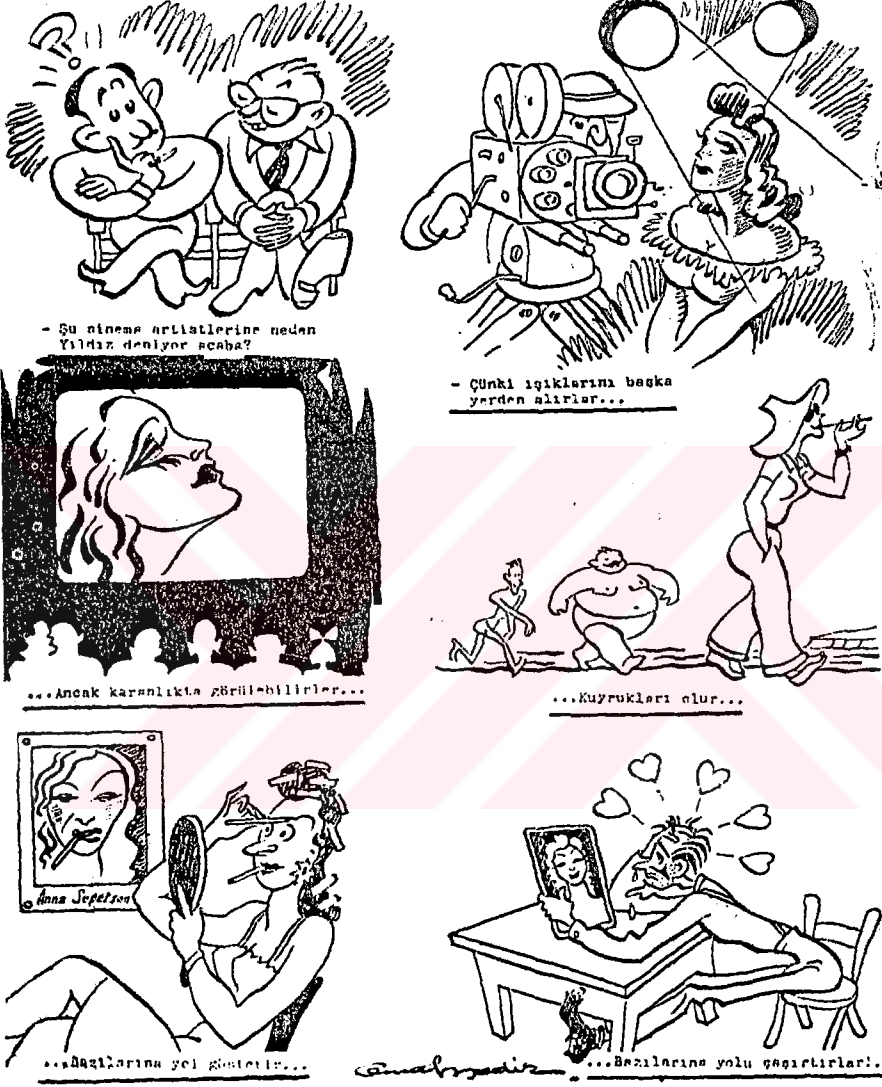


Figure 1. Cartoon on Stars by Cemal Nadir. *Perde-Sahne* 24 (1944):9.

exhibit an ambivalent attitude towards that phenomenon. On one hand, it seems that they had tried to construct a dialogue with their audience on the basis of stars through publishing news relating to stars' lives, providing the audience with mailing addresses of stars, the pronunciation of stars' names in Turkish (See Figure 2), examples of fan letters to stars (See Figure 3), and so on. On the other hand, they seem to be contributing to the formation of a moralistic discourse around stars, especially their influence on society. In a letter printed in Perde-Sahne journal in 1945 a male audience from Elazığ expressed his opinions about the negative effects of cinema in Turkey and the role of film stars in that. The audience argued that cinema had a "good" aspect and a "bad" aspect and it was up to the society to use it in a "good" way or in a "bad" way. He claimed that the good aspect of cinema had been victimized to its bad aspect in Turkey. A part of the letter is quoted below:

[Sinemanın] iyi cephesinden istifade edenler arasında bugün İNGİLTEREYİ misal olarak alabiliriz, orada çocuklar beyaz perdede çiftleşen dudaklar yerine, terbiyevi, gangster filmleri yerine çocuk ruhunu okşayan filmler seyrediyorlar. Yine orada genç kızlar DEANNE DURBİN'in herhangi bir film için giydiği elbiseyi moda olarak kabul etmiyor. Gençleri Robert Taylor'u, Viktor Matür'ü şunu bunu taklit etmiyor, yalnız sağlam bir irade ile yorulan dimağını hırpalanan vücudunu sinema ile dinlendiriyor. Gerçi biz bu fikirlerimizle sinema hep kötü şeyler gösterir demiyoruz ve diyemeyiz de, öyle filmler gördük ki ecdadımızın ve tarihimizin kahramanlarını seyrettik, göğsümüz kabardı, görmediğimiz diyarları hiç olmazsa bir an için görüp, mukayeseler yaptık, bir şeyler öğrendik. Fakat bunlara rağmen bizde sinemanın iyi cephesi kötü cephesi karşısında mağlup oldu. Nasıl mağlup olmasın, gençlerimiz kilometre uzaktan da okyanusu aşarak gelen - Bobstil- modasını kabul ediyor (Burada bizi memnun eden ve yüzümüzü güldüren bir nokta var ki o da bu modayı ekseriyetin kabul etmeyişidir) Genç kızlarımız Hedy Lamar'ı, Bette Garble'ı ve saireyi taklit ediyor. Yarının büyükleri olacak çocuklar ateşli aşk sahnelerini anne ve babalarının yanında seyrediyor, halbuki bu yaşta yavrular sırf çocuklar için hazırlanmış filmler seyrederek istikbale hazırlanmalıdır.¹²

Perde-Sahne journal, owned by Muhsin Ertuğrul, seems to be one of the first institutional attempts to regulate the production and circulation of a particular discourse relating to

¹² Posta Kutusu. Perde-Sahne 29 (1945): 22.

Artist İsimlerinin Okunus Listesi

Brian Aherne (Briyan Ahern)	Irene Dunne (Ayrin Dyün)
Don Ameche (Don Amec)	Alice Faye (Alis Fey)
Eve Arden (Iv Arden)	Geraldine Fitzgerald (Ceraldin Fitzgerald)
Richard Arlen (Riçard Arlen)	Frances Dee (Fransis Di)
Edward Arnold (Evard Arnold)	Olivia De Havilland (Olivya De Haviland)
Jean Arthur (Cin Artur)	Errol Flynn (Erol Flayn)
Fred Astaire (Fred Aster)	Joan Fontaine (Con Fonten)
Mischa Auer (Mişa Ouer)	Clark Gable (Klark Geybil)
Gene Autry (Cin Otri)	Judy Garland (Cudi Garland)
Lew Ayres (Lyu Ayres)	Greer Garson (Griç Garson)
Fay Bainter (Fey Beynter)	Ann Gillis (En Cilis)
Kenny Baker (Keni Beyker)	Paulette Goddard (Polet Goddard)
Lynn Bari (Lin Bari)	Betty Grable (Beti Geybil)
Binnie Barnes (Binni Barnes)	Richard Green (Riçard Grin)
Judith Barrett (Cüdit Baret)	Alan Hale (Alan Heyl)
Lionel Barrymore (Layonel Barimor)	Rita Hayworth (Rita Haywort)
Freddie Bartholomew (Fredi Bartolomyu)	Mary Heely (Mery Hilli)
Alan Baxter (Alan Bekster)	Sonja Henie (Sonya Heni)
Wallace Beery (Valas Biri)	Hugh Herbert (Hiyu Herbet)
Constance Bennett (Konstans Benet)	Joy Hodges (Coy Hoces)
Joan Blondell (Con Blondel)	Gloria Jean (Glorya Cin)
Lee Bowman (Li Bovman)	Hedy Lamarr (Hedi Lamar)
Charles Boyer (Şarl Buvaye)	Dorothy Lamour (Döroti Lamur)
Clive Brook (Klayv Bruk)	Priscilla Lane (Prişilla Leyn)
Pauline Brooks (Filis Bruks)	Rosemary Lane (Rozmeri Leyn)
Joe Brown (Co Bravn)	June Lang (Ciyun Leng)
Virginia Bruce (Vircinya Briyus)	Charis Laughton (Charles Lavton)
Jane Bryan (Ceyn Briyan)	Vivien Leigh (Vivyan Li)
Billie Burke (Billi Börk)	Margaret Lockwood (Margarit Lokvud)
Bob Burns (Bob Börnz)	Peter Lorre (Piter Lor)
Spring Byington (Spring Bayington)	Fred Mac Murray (Fred Mak Möri)
Ralph Byrd (Ralf Börd)	Fredric March (Fredrik Març)
Bruce Cabot (Briyus Kabot)	Groucho Marx (Gruşo Marks)
James Cagney (Ceyms Kegni)	George O'Brien (Corc Obriyan)
Joseph Calleia (Cozef Kaleya)	Maureen O'Sullivan (Mayrin Osallivan)
Mary Carlisle (Meri Karlayzil)	Robert Paige (Robert Peyç)
Madeleine Carroll (Madlen Karol)	Walter Pidgeon (Valter Picin)
Lynae Carver (Lin Karver)	Eleanor Powell (Elinor Povel)
Creighton Chaney (Kreyton Çaney)	Tyrone Power (Tayrin Pover)
Charlie Chaplin (Çarli Çaplin)	Vincent Price (Vinsent Prayz)
Charles Coburn (Charles Kobörn)	Basil Rathbone (Beyzil Retbon)
Claudette Colbert (Klodet Kolbert)	Ginger Rogers (Cinçer Rocers)
Gary Cooper (Geri Küper)	Mickey Rooney (Miki Runi)
Joan Crawford (Con Kravford)	Rosalind Russell (Rozalind Rasil)
Robert Cummings (Robert Kamings)	Norma Shearer (Norma Şirer)
Alan Curtis (Alan Körtis)	James Stewart (Ceyms Styuvart)
Alexander D'Arcy (Aleksander Darsi)	Lana Turner (Lana Törner)
Danielle Darrieux (Danyel Darıyö)	Virginia Weidler (Vircinya Vaydler)
Bette Davis (Bet Deyvis)	Johnny Weissmuller (Coni Vaysmüller)
Laraine Day (Laren Dey)	Arleen Whelan (Arlin Velan)
Marlene Dietrich (Marlen Ditrüh)	Warren William (Varen Vilyam)
Melvyn Douglas (Melvin Duglas)	Jane Withers (Ceyn Yiters)
Frances Drake (Fransis Dreyk)	Robert Young (Robert Yang)
Ellen Drew (Elen Drü)	

Figure 2. Turkish Pronunciation of the Names of Foreign Movie Stars.
Yıldız 69 (1941): 36.

YILDIZLARA MEKTUP

Bu sayfamıza birçok okuyucularımızın isteklerini yerine getirdik. Aşağıda Fransızca, İngilizce, Almanca, İtalyanca olmak üzere dört dilde yazılmış dört mektup göreceksiniz. Bu mektuplar imzalı fotoğrafını istediğiniz artist hangi millete mensupsa, ona bu arzunuzu kendi dilile bildirebilmeniz için dikkat ediniz. Resmini istediğiniz artist bir genç kız veya evli bir kadın, yahut ta erkek olabilir. Aşağıdaki cetvele bakınız :

	Genç kız ise	Evli kadın ise	Erkekse
Fransızca	Mlle	Mme	M.
İngilizce	Miss	Mrs.	Mr.
Almanca	Frl.	Frau	Herr
İtalyanca	Signorina	Signora	Signor

Kelimelerle hitap etmek icap eder.

Bundan başka siz de erkek veya kadın olabilirsiniz. Kadınsanız, belâ birinci mektupta *Je suis un* yerine *Je suis une*; admirateurs yerine *admiratrices*; heureux yerine *heureuse* - üçüncü mektupta *eine* yerine *eine* - dördüncü mektupta *ammiratori* yerine *ammiratrici*; *il Vostro devotissimo* yerine *la Vostra devotissima* yazacaksınız.

Aşağıya yazdığımız bir iki adres nümunesile bu izahatı tamamlıyoruz :

Fransızca nümune :

Mlle Simone Simon
Aux bons soins de Paris Film Production
79 Champs - Elysées

Paris
Fransa

İngilizce nümune :

Mr. Gary Cooper

C/O Paramount Studio
5451 Marathon Street

Hollywood - California - U. S. A.

Mlle (Mme, M.)

Aux bons soins de (Firmanın adı)
(Adres)

Mademoiselle, (Madame, Monsieur)

Je suis un (e) de vos très fidèles et enthousiastes admirateurs (admiratrices) et j'attends avec impatience chacun de vos nouveaux films. C'est pourquoi vous me rendriez infiniment heureux (heureuse) en me faisant parvenir une photo autographiée de vous.

Dans l'espoir que ma demande ne restera pas vaine et en vous priant de bien vouloir excuser le dérangement que je vous procure, veuillez agréer, Mademoiselle (Madame, Monsieur), l'expression de mes sentiments très distingués.

Miss (Mrs., Mr.)

c/o (Firmanın adı)
(Adres)

Dear Miss (Mrs., Mr.)

I am a very faithful and enthusiastic fan of yours and am always impatiently waiting for each of your new pictures. Therefore you would make me unsayingly happy by sending me an autographed still of you.

Hoping my request won't be vain and apologizing for the trouble I dare to give you, I beg you to believe me, dear Miss (Mrs., Mr.) yours very truly.

Frl. (Frau, Herr)

Per Adresse: (Firmanın adı)
(Adres)

Sehr geehrtes Frl. (Frau, Herr)

Ich bin einer (eine) Ihrer sehr treuen und begeisterten Bewunderer und erwarte immer mit grosser Ungeduld jeden Ihrer neue Filme. Deshalb würden Sie mich unsäglich glücklich machen, wenn Sie mir ein autographiertes Bild von Ihnen schickten.

In der Hoffnung, dass meine Bitte nicht erfolglos bleibt und mich für die Störung, die ich Ihnen verursache, entschuldigend, zeichne ich hochachtungsvoll

Signorina (Signora, Signor)

A mezzo (Firmanın adı)
(Adres)

Egregia Signorina (Signora, Signor)

Sono un (lei) vostro fidelissimi e entusiastici ammiratori (ammiratrici) ed aspetto sempre con grande impazienza il vostro nuovo film. Percio Voi mi rendereste infinitamente felice, inviandomi una vostra fotografia autografa.

Nella speranza che la mia richiesta non sara stata vana e pregandovi di scusarmi per il disturbo che Vi do, Vi prego di credermi, egregia Signorina (Signora, Signor) il Vostro (la Vostra) devotissimo. (a)

Figure 3. Examples of Fan Letters. Yıldız 13 (1939): 45.

stars. The term “art” and the dichotomy of “artistic ability/beauty” lie at the core of that discourse. In 1943 the journal asked from its readers to write to the journal letters that responded the question: “whom would you like to resemble if you were a movie or theatre artist, why?”¹³ The journal also stated that it would pay 4 or 2,5 Turkish Liras to each of the published letters. The 14 letters published in the journal in four subsequent issues shared a common characteristic. Almost all of the audiences justified their preference for a certain actor by establishing an opposition between body beauty and artistic ability and supporting the latter. We quote below two letters both of which had won 4 TL.

Hiç özenmedim amma, artist olsaydım “Charles Boyer” e benzemek isterdim. Gerçi onda, ne “Clark Gable” in pek çok kadınların hoşuna giden haşin erkek tavırları, ne “Robert Tayşor” un kusursuz güzelliği, ne de “John Hall” in vücudu vardır. Fakat o, yumuşak ve nemli bakışları munis sesi, ölçülü jestlerle seyircileri kendine bağlar. Sözlerle yüzünün ifadesi o kadar uygundur ki konuştuğu lisanı anlamadığım halde, onu dinlerken filmin yazısını okumayı unuturum. Bazı şöhretler “Hollywood” göklerinde parlayıp, söniyor. Bunlara sebep şüphesiz bu yıldızların san’atlarına değil, dış görünüşlerine dayanarak yükselmeleridir. “Charles Boyer” kıymetini san’atten ve takdirkarlarını san’at severler arasından aldığı için, öyle sanıyorum ki şöhretini hiç kaybetmeyecektir. (R. Kayla - İstanbul)¹⁴

Eğer artist olmak imkanını bulsaydım Paul Muni ayarında bir sanatkar olmak isterdim. Belki onda Amerikanın hergün lanse ettiği genç (Jeune-Premier) lerin vücut ve yüz güzelliklerini bulamazsınız, fakat muhakkak ki bu sanatkar sinema tarihinin üzerinde ehemmiyetle duracağı çok büyük bir simadır. Onun hiçbir rolde aksadığını göremezsiniz. Yaşattığı her kahramanın derisine bir sihirbaz gibi giren bu şayanı hayret adamı beyaz perdede bazen bir Pasteur, bazen, bütün hususiyetleri ve ruhile bir Zola, bazen bir ihtilalci, bazen bütün ıstırapları, aşkı ve kederiyle sarı yüzlü bir Çinli ve nihayet alkaponda müthiş bir cani olarak görmedik mi? Paul Muni bence asrımızın en büyük karakter artistlerinden biridir. Onu böyle büyük bir sanatkar olduğu ve ruhsuz güzel birer kukladan ibaret olan genç ve tecrübesiz (Jeune-Premier) lerle zevkimizi öldüren sinamaya san’at ışığından bir parça getirdiği için severim ve bunun için ona benzemek isterim. (Orhan Tinel - İstanbul)¹⁵

¹³ Perde-Sahne 5 (1943): 2.

¹⁴ Perde-Sahne 6 (1943).

¹⁵ Perde-Sahne 7 (1943).

It is possible to observe the existence of a “scriptural economy” lying behind these letters.¹⁶ The journal seem to have a function in the production and circulation of particular responses like “the teacher’s red pen penalizing wrong readings and awarding correct readings” (Jenkins, Textual Poachers 24).

4.3. The 1950s: Yeşilçam as the Hollywood of Turkey: Entertainment versus Art

Cinema in Turkey meant mostly European and American films until the late 1940s. Only 43 Turkish films were made until the end of World War Two (Özön, Karagöz 48). It is argued that cinema was not a very profitable business for movie owners until 1938 since they paid 32.5% of their profit as tax to the state. Although this tax rate was reduced to 10% with the order of Atatürk in 1938, it was gradually raised to 75% until the end of the 1940s, mainly due to the economic difficulties caused by war conditions, without any increase in movie entrance fees.¹⁷ The year 1948 marked a new beginning for Turkish cinema, in that the tax rate for the screening of Turkish films was reduced to 25% whereas the rate for foreign films was reduced only to 70%. Moreover the liberalization of the raw film import after the end of the World War Two was another development for the national film industry. As a result Turkish film industry gained momentum in the 1950s and the number of Turkish films increased year by year.¹⁸ An article in Akis writes

¹⁶ The term “scriptural economy” is used by De Certeau to refer to the systematic regulation of the production and circulation of meanings by “textual producers and institutionally sanctioned interpreters” (Jenkins, Textual Poachers 24).

¹⁷ See İstanbul Sinemacılarının Dertleri.

¹⁸ In fact the 1950s were marked with the populist and capitalistic social and economic policies of the Democratic Party, which came to power in 1950 and marked the end of the single party regime in Turkey. Democracy and liberalism, cheapening of everyday life, growth of production and employment, lowering of costs, and encouragement of private enterprise were among the goals of the Party (Eroğul 66). Moreover there had been a rapid growth in national income between 1950-1955 (Özgür 192). The

that after the reduction of tax rate in 1948 and the increase in film production “the Hollywood of Turkey” came into existence in Yeşilçam street of Beyoğlu in İstanbul (“Sinema: Filmcilik” 32). Vehbi Belgil remarks that 40 films were made and screened in 1951 and several films such as Allaha İsmarladık, Ne Sihirdir Ne Keramet, Ali ile Veli, and İstanbul Kanağlarken broke a record in box office receipts (“Filmlerimiz” 16). 661 films were made between 1950-1960 (Özön, Karagöz 48) and the number of movie theatres increased to 650 towards the end of the 1950s. Moreover while the number of cinema audiences in whole Turkey was 25 million in 1946 there were 28 million cinema audiences only in İstanbul in 1958 (“Sinema: Türkiye” 24). However we should keep in mind that movie attendance might not be motivated only with the desire of film watching. For example Murat Belge states that in the 1950s, Yeni Melek cinema in İstanbul was also a place of flirt for school boys and girls on Saturdays (864).

The 1950s is also considered by Turkish cinema historians as the period of “cinematographers (sinemacılar)” after the fact that Turkish cinema left theatrical mode of representation and films started to be made in the language of cinema. However, as Kayalı implies, we cannot explain the transition from theatrical mode of representation to cinematic mode of representation merely in terms of the characteristics specific to films. Kayalı remarks that theatrical mode of representation until the 1950s was not simply a result of the effect of theatre on cinema; it also had social, cultural, and economic reasons. The same thing must be valid for the films of the period of cinematographers,

development in the film industry in Turkey should be considered together with these economic and social changes.

too. Kayalı points to the parallelism established between Democratic Party's coming to power and "cinema's descending to the street" with Lütfi Akad's film *Kanun Namına* in 1952. The film was considered as the marker of the beginning of the period of cinematographers (Kayalı, Yönetmenler 14-5). In addition to Akad, Osman Seden and Atıf Yılmaz are considered even today as the directors who built language of cinema in Turkish cinema. Film criticism gained momentum in this period, too. Even the leading news papers of the period such as Ulus, Vatan, Dünya started to publish regular film criticisms by figures such as Burhan Arpad, Semih Tuğrul, Atilla İlhan, Nijat Özön, Tarık Kakıncı (Atay 42). The majority of the films made in the 1950s were melodramas depicting village life, and the most prominent director of such melodramas was Muharrem Gürses. Şener describes these films as follow:

"Belly" and "Azan [Ezan]" were the elements that could not be given up in Gürses' films: The antagonist used to do all the malice and then go to a pub to watch a belly dancer... The girl who used to suffer a lot would be affected with tuberculosis and dye. While her lover or neighbors cried on her grave an azan would be heard in the background. (Sinema 65)

Tarık Kakıncı offers a similar description that exemplifies the general image of melodramas of the 1950s in the eye of critics:

In those films, which are all same in terms of subject matter, the naive and pure love of two young persons from the village will be prevented either by a stepfather or a rich village lord. The struggle between the young boy and the lord throughout the film will be followed by the death of innocent young girl and the film will end with the scenes of cemetery and sounds of azan, which will make the audience burst into tears. (qtd. in Atay 72)

As the two quotations above imply the triad of "belly-cemetery-azan" had become a shortcut expression in describing these films, which represented the "reactionary attitude (gericilik)" that was "dominant" in Turkish cinema according to the critics of the period. In fact, films were criticised not only for their subject matter but also for their "poor" cinematographic quality. Giovanni Scognamillo notes that the success of Hüseyin Peyda's

film Mezarımı Taştan Oyun (1951) in the box office, especially in Anatolia, was not because of the director's narration, but rather of its melodramatic screenplay as well as the resemblance of the film's hero to Rudolf Valentino and the "provocative" dances of Üftade Kimi (169). Cevat Fehmi Başkut, in an article in Cumhuriyet newspaper wrote in 1958: "the value of a film in Turkey is still determined based on the length of belly scenes it involves. This is the measure of film-makers and movie theatre owners" (qtd. in Özön, "Kurutulması gereken" 30).

There was not a star system yet but some of the well known stars of Turkish cinema such as Belgin Doruk, Neriman Köksal, Muhterem Nur, Leyla Sayar, Çolpan İlhan, Ayhan Işık appeared in that period. An article in Perde ve Sahne magazine points that it was not easy for film makers to find "girls" who would play in their films because being a film actress had a "bad" image in society and this was mainly due to high number of belly dancers and "pub women (bar kadını)" appearing in films as actresses (Gül 15). Publishing announcements in cinema magazines was one of the ways to find people to play in films. In one of these announcements being a "family girl (aile kızı)" and not having work experience in music halls and pubs were mentioned among the features asked from the applicants (See Figure 4).

The 1950s were also the years when the major problems of Turkish cinema industry became more explicit and the situation of the film industry in Turkey became a subject of serious debate. While the activity in Turkish film industry at the beginning of the 1950s

**BİR FİLMDE BAŞ ROL OYNAYACAK BAYANLARA
İHTİYAÇ VARDIR**

/ 1,65 Boy, mütenasip vücut, güzel yüz, kâfi dere- /
/ cede kültüre sahip, 22 ilâ 26 yaş arası, hiç bir filmde /
/ ve umumî gazîno, bar, gibi yerlerde çalışmamış, aile /
/ kızı bir bayan, ayrıca 17 ilâ 19 yaşlarında masum tipli; /
/ aynı yukardaki evsafa halz 2 bayana acele ihtiyâç /
/ vardır. /

/ Kendisine büyük bir film şirketinin çevireceği film- /
/ de baş rol oynatılacak ve dolgun ücret verilecektir. /

/ Aşağıdaki adrese, her gün 14 ile 16 arası mür- /
/ caat etmeleri /

/ Adres : Hava Sokak YEYMAN HAN Kat: 4 Beyoğlu /
/ (Eski İpek Sinemasının karşısındaki sokak). /

Figure 4. Announcement Looking For Female Players
Perde ve Sahne 2 (1954): 15.

was met with pleasure we observe complaints about the corruption of the industry starting from the mid 1950s. An article in Perde ve Sahne journal in 1954 wrote:

Recently producership has become a fashion in our country. Everybody, from teachers dismissed from school to smiths and carpenters, who have had a few money in their hand have attempted to make film and ruined Turkish film-making... Of course these people, who are not trained and do not know what means to be a producer would be unable to appreciate the value of the artists, directors, and cameramen under their service. Such people have created a class of producers who exploit. (“İstismarcı Prodüktörler” 15)

Some of the leading cinema critics of the period such as T. Kakinç, Halit Refiğ were complaining about the same situation, too. Halit Refiğ, in his article entitled “Utancı Perdesi (the Screen of Shame)” in Yeni Sabah newspaper in 1958 argued that:

we encounter for the first time cinema’s becoming the field of people who were unable to settle down in any field of activity of the society. It is nowhere in the world that cinema, the most powerful medium of culture, the most strong industry, the most perfect collective art to express nations’ sentiments and thoughts has been left uncontrolled and abandoned to its own fate this much. (qtd. in Özön, “Kurutulması gereken” 30)

The existence of a black market of raw film is among the complaints, too:

Today is one of the most difficult times for Turkish film industry, which has 10 million TL as capital and employs 2000 workers... Many studios are under the threat of going bankrupt and many producers, directors, artists, technicians and workers are about to lose

their living. The only reason for this situation is the black market of raw film. (Gökçen, "Ham Film" 3)

It was argued that a few big film companies, which were able to import raw film, were selling it within the country through black market and this was putting smaller film companies in great difficulty.

Beside these problems one of the major difficulties for Turkish film industry for all times, the rivalry between foreign films, especially American films, and domestic films, had become explicit in the 1950s. American movies became dominant in the Turkish film market especially after World War Two, during the cold war years. The weakening of European film industries by war conditions and the Turkish Board of Censorship's ban on the screening of Russian and Eastern European movies in Turkey were among the major factors which opened the Turkish film market to the dominance of Hollywood (Gevgili 27). As a result the majority of the movies in the screening lists announced by Turkish film importers at the beginning of each cinema season in the 1950s were American movies.¹⁹ Nihat Gökçen complained in 1954 about movie theatre owners who preferred to screen foreign films rather than Turkish films. He quoted the statements of a movie theatre owner explaining that their preference for foreign films was not directly related to the demand of the audience but rather it was a commercial matter:

Some of our films started to be very good. Even people approve Turkish films more than foreign films. However the price of Turkish films is too high because they are made in the country and has to meet their cost of production only in Turkey. We buy foreign films at a cheap price. Low price is essential in commerce. ("Türk Sinemasında" 3)

¹⁹ It is stated that over 90% of yearly film imports to Turkey were American movies. See Akis 229 (1958): 32.

The competition between Turkish films and foreign films in the film market had also produced a competition between people who favored foreign films and those who supported Turkish films. Some of the intellectuals criticized the attitude of looking down Turkish films and conceived such attitudes as the signs of a cultural degeneration (Özdeş 6; Belgil, "Meseleler" 10-1). Bülent Oran, an actor in the 1950s who would later become one of the most famous screenplay writers of Turkey, satirized the situation as follows:

If you carry a western mind over your shoulders and if you want to express what are in this mind, such as wisdom, culture, and open intellect, don't bother yourself; just confirm the fashion of the day and say: "Oh, Turkish film? I hate it." Hating Turkish films is the first sign of being cultured ... We can solve all our problems by cursing Turkish films because many improvements have occurred in this land in every field except the field of cinema; only our film-makers made no progress while, in the words of our politicians, everybody were progressing with giant steps... ("Perdemizin" 15)

Film criticism carried out in the pages of new papers and political journals such as Akis depicted a very negative image of Turkish film industry in the 1950s from the films made to producers, directors and screenplay writers. Nijat Özön, in an article entitled "Kurutulması Gereken Bataklık (The Bog That Should Be Dried)" argued in 1958:

Turkish film-making is in the form of a bog. The time passes, the bog needs to be dried. This bog causes new values to decay before growing up, it spreads like epidemics the backward, bad taste, irresponsibility and mindlessness, which develop in its body, to its surrounding. (31)

An article published in Akis journal in 1957, questioned the effects of Turkish cinema criticism, which "aimed at saving the audience from passivity", on the preferences of the audience. The author of the article referred to the reactions of the Turkish audience to Luchino Visconti's film Senso when it was screened in İstanbul and Ankara in 1956. He stated that the film, which was considered by film critics as one of the best films in cinema history, was not liked by audiences in both cities; the majority of the audience had left the film in the middle of it. The author argued that film critics, such as Semih Tuğrul, Halit

Refiğ, Tuncan Okan, Adnan Ufuk (Nijat Özön) insisted on Senso's being a valuable film and, as a result, when the film was screened once more in a movie theatre in Beyoğlu in 1957, it played to a full house for a week ("Sinema: Yazarlar" 33). Another article published in Akis in 1959 argued that there had been a positive change in the preferences of audiences towards the end of the 1950s as a result of the efforts of film critics. The change was defined as the audience's becoming able to distinguish between "good" and "bad" films and becoming more selective ("Sinema: Türkiye" 24-5).

It could be argued that Turkish cinema started to have a real presence and identity in the 1950s. In that period cinema stopped being an elitist activity in big cities and spread even to Anatolia as a popular entertainment form. We also observe the increasing intellectual engagement with Turkish cinema. However, as Engin Ayça remarks, it has always been very difficult for Turkish intellectuals to form a relationship with domestic films and therefore "they have chosen to meet their need of cinema with foreign films which have sounded culturally closer to them" (82). In fact the 1950s appears to be marked with the formation of a discourse revolving around the issue of "taste". Departing from Pierre Bourdieu's argument that taste is "one of the most important means by which social distinctions are maintained and class identities are forged" Henry Jenkins argues that

[t]aste distinctions determine not only desirable and undesirable forms of culture but also desirable and undesirable ways of relating to cultural objects, desirable and undesirable strategies of interpretation and styles of consumption ... Materials viewed as undesirable within a particular aesthetic are often accused of harmful social effects or negative influences upon their consumers ... those who enjoy such texts are seen as intellectually debased, psychologically suspect, or emotionally immature. (Textual Poachers 16)

The arguments of the critics on Turkish cinema in the 1950s imply that they received Turkish film-making as a cultural machine producing "bad taste" and, therefore, they not

only viewed the films produced as undesirable and unacceptable but also viewed the audience of these films as “passive”, “irresponsible”, or “mindless” people. Moreover one of the most common oppositions that has been employed by art world in general since the time of Moliere seems to operate behind the criticisms. This is the opposition between “art” and “entertainment” as a popular cultural form. After Moliere, as Dyer remarks:

[e]ntertainment became identified with what was not art, not serious, not refined. This distinction remains with us – art is what is edifying, elitist, refined, difficult, whilst entertainment is hedonistic, democratic, vulgar, easy. (Only Entertainment 12)

It is possible to argue that it was in the 1950s that this opposition between art and entertainment became an important concern within cinema criticism in Turkey.

4.4. The 1960s: The Golden Years of Yeşilçam and of Discourses on Turkish Cinema: Melodrama versus Realism

1960s witnessed the rise of the films of directors such as Halit Refiğ, Metin Erksan, Ertem Göreç, Duygu Sağıroğlu who were considered the representatives of the Movement of Social Realism (Toplumsal Gerçekçilik Akımı) in Turkish cinema, which lasted until 1965. This movement, which was generally connected to the social atmosphere created by the 27 May Revolution, was described as “a movement that aimed at reflecting the social structure and the relations among people from different classes within that structure” (Refiğ 24). After the financial failure of the films associated with that movement, Turkey witnessed the rise of commercial popular cinema of Yeşilçam, which lived its golden years until the mid-1970s.

The number of films increased year by year. The chart below displays the magnitude of the increases in film production during the 1960s (See Figure 5).

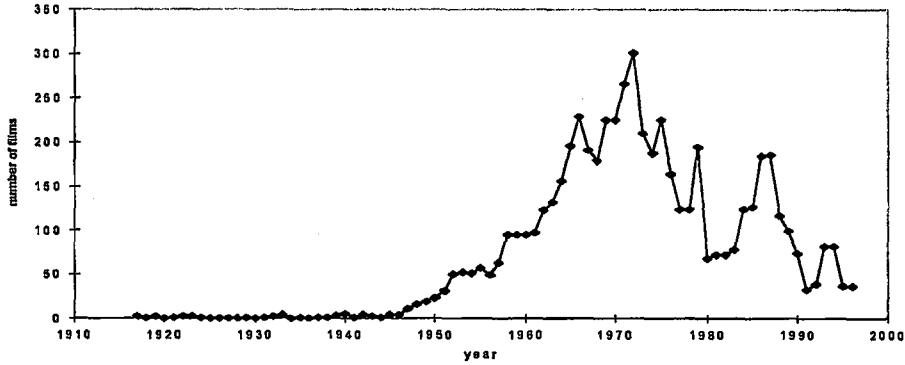


Figure 5. Yearly Changes in Film Production.²⁰

The number of movie theatres and audiences were increasing year by year, too. The table below shows the relevant numbers in İstanbul.

Table 7
Number of Movie Theatres and Audiences

	1955	1960	1964	1965	1966
Movie theatre	135	170	Unknown	245	281
Audience	21,350,000	25,161,000	40,119,869	41,606,506	Unknown

Source: Gürdal, Hasan, Davit Fresko, and Suat Karantay. "Türkiye'de Sinema Seyircisi." *Görüntü* 3 (1967): 17.

Melodrama was the dominant genre throughout this period. As Erdoğan and Göktürk remark melodramas, which focused on "heterosexual couples, underlining socio-cultural conflicts on a number of axes: poor versus rich, rural versus urban, lower class versus bourgeois, Eastern versus Western", were very popular (536). However one of the most

²⁰ Data is taken from Özön, *Karagöz* 48 and Özgüç, *Türk Filmleri* 141.

distinguishing characteristics of these films was their being built around stars. Türkan Şoray, Hülya Koçyiğit, Fatma Girik, Filiz Akın, Göksel Arsoy, Ediz Hun were among the major stars of the 1960s. Stories might be written to feature a given star or alterations to the story might be made to preserve a star's social image. Star system could be considered cinema industry's attempt to create a common point of agreement with the audience whose demands and preferences were unknown.

Producers and film distributors were the most influential figures over the star system. In fact another important aspect of the 1960s was the appearance of different film distribution regions such as İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Adana, and Samsun (Dorsay et al., "Hürrem Erman" 33). The preferences of audiences -guessed from box office receipts- changed from region to region.²¹ Film distributors asked producers to make films involving stars whose films used to make profit in their region. They could also demand changes in plot and casting (Özgül, Nasıl 67; Erdoğan and Göktürk 535). The 1960s could be considered as the golden years of Yeşilçam not only in terms of the number of films and stars but also audiences. Movie going had become a popular social activity even in rural areas. A public survey conducted in 224 villages in Turkey in 1962 and 1968 concluded that the percentage of villagers who went to movie had increased from 43% to 50.8% (26.5% of women, 74.9% of men) from 1962 to 1968 (Türk Köyünde 202-3).

²¹ For example adventure films made more profit in Adana than in İstanbul and melodramas and comedies were more popular in İstanbul and İzmir (Gürdal et al. 16-9).

The 1960s can also be considered as the golden age of the thoughts on Turkish cinema. Most of the concepts such as “social realism (toplumsal gerçekçilik)”, “people’s cinema (halk sineması)”, “national cinema (ulusal sinema)”, “revolutionary cinema (devrimci sinema)”, which reflected different points of view among intellectuals in cinema circles in Turkey, were formulated in this period. However it was the concept of “national cinema”, forwarded by Halit Refiğ in 1966-1967, that was at the core of the major debates of the period. The concept “national cinema” was constructed with reference to the West. Refiğ interpreted Turkish cinema, from Muhsin Ertuğrul to mid-1960s as a cinema that imitated the West. He argued that Ertuğrul made films based on the principles of Western theatre; these principles were replaced with the principles of Western cinema in the period of “cinematographers”; and the films of the movement of social realism were highly influenced by movements in Western cinemas such as Italian neo-realism and American realist cinema (89). The main problem with the movement of social realism, Refiğ argued, was its being a movement of Westernization led by cinema intellectuals –both directors and critics- and not depending on the people (37). Accepting the failure of the films in the movement of social realism Refiğ forwarded the concept of “people’s cinema” in 1965. He argued that Turkish cinema must be conceived as “people’s cinema” because

Turkish cinema is not a cinema of imperialism since it is not founded with foreign capital; it is not a cinema of the bourgeoisie since it is not founded by national capitalism; it is not a cinema of the state since it is not founded by the state... Turkish cinema is a public cinema because it has arisen directly from Turkish public’s need to watch film and it was based on labor rather than capital. (87)

The year Refiğ forwarded the concept of “people’s cinema” was also the year when Turkish Cinematheque Association was founded. The association was generally

characterized by its high interest in European films and its socialist traits. Özgüven remembers his “Cinematheque days” as follow:

The people of Cinematheque were in the mood of saying there is not something called Turkish film ... They hated Turkish cinema, Turkish films ... They hated very sincerely as intellectuals. Turkish film was a matter of good film/bad film for them ... Nobody used to mention the thing that is called popular cinema. Saying a few positive things about Yeşilçam was to run the risk of being shut up, being not taken serious. (70)

Refiğ had argued that Turkish people could not be conceived as being the same with the people of Western societies, which had experienced a transition from feudal order to a bourgeois one. Based on that, he claimed, the problems of Turkish public could not be treated as if they were the same with the problems of Western people (88). In fact, the argument implied that Marx’s definition of society as consisting of social classes did not apply to the structure of Turkish society. This was one of the reasons why the concept “people’s cinema” was negatively received among the Cinematheque circle.

Refiğ described the popular Turkish cinema after 1965 as “people’s cinema” based on the argument that it was neither dependent on private capital nor state capital and it had an anonymous appearance in terms of its artistic character in general (90-1). However he forwarded a new concept in 1966-1967 arguing that this “people’s cinema” had lost its national characteristics especially with the increasing number of adaptations from foreign movies. The new concept was “national cinema”, which Refiğ defined as a cinema that would first take responsibility in preserving national independence and undertake the mission of making Turkish people face the “current material conditions” of Turkey.

Moreover universalism, for Refiğ, was in conflict with the concept of “national cinema” (93-5).²²

The concepts of “people’s cinema” and later “national cinema” had found support within a group of directors such as Mertin Erksan, Duygu Sağıroğlu, Atif Yılmaz and Lütfü Akad. However they met the reaction of people circled around Turkish Cinematheque Association and its journal Yeni Sinema (New Cinema) that started its publication in 1966. Yeni Sinema undertook the mission of introducing Western cinema to Turkish society and sought a “revolutionary” cinema in Turkey. At the third month of its publication, the journal published a special issue on Turkish cinema and expressed its principles in the first pages. Since the expressions resembled a manifesto it is quoted in length below in Turkish:

Kötü filmlerin ... kurnaz yaratıcıları ... tehlikeli bir oyunun peşindeler: Halk sineması. Bu kavramı savunanlar şunları söylüyorlar: “Sinema yığınlar için yapılan bir sanattır. Bir avuç aydının bilgiçlikleri ve batılı beğenileri bizi ilgilendirmiyor. Bizi halkın beğenileri ilgilendiriyor. Düşüncelerimizi onların anlayacağı bir dille anlatmak zorundayız... Filmlerimiz Türk toplumunun yapısına uygun olacaktır.” Yıllar boyu en kötü filmlerle şartlandırılan geniş seyirci topluluklarını sonra kalkıp bir “çıkar kavramı”na ortak yapmak çift yanlı bir kurnazlıktır. Böylece hem çıkarları korumak, hem de halk sözcüğünün kutsallığına sığınarak devrimci çevrelerin desteğini kazanmak istiyorlar... Bu kurnazlık kuramının ikinci kozu “Batılılaşma” kavramıdır. Bu kavram çevresinde, ekonomi ve toplumbilim alanlarında yapılan araştırmalar, henüz kesin sonuçlara ulaşmamış incelemeler (Asya Biçimi Üretim vs.) sağcı bir “İnfiradçılık”a yaraşır basit sloganlarla temel yapılmak istenmektedir. Bu araştırmaları yapan bilim adamlarının, görüşlerinin bir sömürme düzenini savunmak için kullanılmasına göz yummayacaklarından eminiz. Bugün ülkemizde kimse, batılı filmlerin kopyalarının yapılmasını ... istememektedir. Kurulması gereken elbette Ulusal bir sinemadır, halkımızın derin özelliklerini yansıtan bir sinemadır. Ama hiçbir zaman “Alaturka” bir sinema değil... Batılı filmlere kapıları kapatmaya gelince... Yeryüzü sinemasının bütününe bilimsel bir tarafsızlıkla kapılarını açan ve bütün davranışlarıyla devrimci bir kuruluş olduğunu ortaya koyan Sinematek gibi kuruluşlara, yabancı film

²² It must be noted that Refiğ was not the only figure who contributed to the formulation of the concept “national cinema”. Metin Erksan, Sami Şekeroğlu, the head of Turkish Film Archive were also arguing for a national cinema. In addition it must be stressed that the arguments of several thinkers such as Niyazi Berkes, Sencer Dıvıçoğlu, And Kemal Tahir had been influential in the formulation of the concept.

gösteriyor diye sataşanlar, gerçekte ilgi gösterilmediğini iddia ettikleri ... yerli sinema'nın yabancı filmlerin en kötülerinin sırça köşkü üstünde oturduğunu unutmamalıdır... Yarının sineması yepyeni bir sinema olacaktır. Toplum düzeninin temelleri değişince sinema düzeni de kökten değişecektir. Bu değişme uzun bile sürse yeni kuşaklar gerçek bir sinemayı kurmak için kaçınılmaz savaşlarını yapacaklardır... ("Ellinci Yıla" 4-5)

As it can be concluded from the quotation above Yeni Sinema favored a national cinema, which should not be closed to Western cinema and which should be revolutionary at the same time. In fact we observe a very politicised rhetoric among certain circles in the 1960s which seems to be parallel to the social atmosphere of the period. There were another group of young people gathered around Genç Sinema (Young Cinema) journal in that period who were using directly the term "revolutionary cinema (devrimci sinema)" in denoting the national cinema they longed for. One of the writers of Genç Sinema argued that their goal was "to contribute to the demolition of the dominant order of exploitation and its replacement with a Marxist order" through cinema (qtd. in Uçakan 80). Yakup Bayrak, another member of the journal defined his group as "guerillas of cinema" (14) and Jak Şalom wrote:

The young filmmaker should encourage Turkish people to go to movie for becoming a person led not by his/her emotions but consciousness. While doing that the young filmmaker certainly would touch upon the negative aspects of society, clash with the official policies of governors and traditional principles... The young filmmaker would make politics together with cinema. (14)

In fact all the intellectual groups mentioned so far, including Refiğ, were in favor of a "national" Turkish cinema but the term "national" meant different things to each. In an attempt to concretize the debates on "national cinema" Ant journal started an inquiry among several peoples from cinema circles in Turkey -directors, producers, members of

cinema associations, writers of Yeni Sinema and Genç Sinema- in 1968.²³ The inquiry involved questions about what the respondents understood from the concept “national Turkish cinema” and how it could be created.

Although the aim of journal was to concretize the debates on “national cinema” and what is meant by the term the answers revolved around a few abstract concepts such as “realities of Turkish society”, “Turkish culture”, “Turkish view and thought”, “capitalists versus exploited masses”, and so on. In general everybody agreed that “national Turkish cinema” would be “a cinema that reflected the realities of its own society”. However the differences between opinions appeared in the definition and description of those “realities”. Everybody drew his own picture of the “national” on the basis of the “realities” of Turkish society in his mind. Terms such as “Turkish culture”, “people’s culture (halk kültürü)”, “realities of Turkish society”, “realities of the people” were used as if there was a pure homogeneous culture, society, and reality somewhere and as if these terms meant the same thing to everybody. This simply led to the consideration of films in terms of abstract categories such as films that were national versus films that were not national or films that reflected realities versus films that did not reflect realities.²⁴

²³ The inquiry lasted nine issues (No. 80 - No.88) and the people involved were Onat Kutlar (film critic), Halit Refiğ (director), Nijat Özön (film critic), Sami Şekeroğlu (Director of Turkish Film Archive), Metin Erksan (director), Turgut Demirağ (director), Giovanni Scognamillo (film critic), Hüseyin Baş (director of Yeni Sinema), Atıf Yılmaz (director), Hasan Akbelen (president of Robert College Cinema Club), Ertem Eğilmez (director and producer), Murat Köseoğlu (producer), Ümit Utku (director and producer), Lütfü Ö. Akad (director), Atilla Dorsay (film critic), Artun Yeres (short film director), Sezer Tansuğ (short film director and art historian), Üstün Barışta (short film director).

²⁴ For a detailed examination of Ant’s inquiry see Mutlu “Türk Sineması”.

1960s discourses on Turkish cinema shared a common characteristic. They all constructed a fiction outside cinema in response to the question “who we are?” Yeşilçam cinema, according to these discourses, was “exploiting”, “non-realistic”, “imitationist”; it did not represent “us”. However the same year when Ant journal was conducting the inquiry mentioned above, audiences were breaking the gates of a movie theatre in Anatolia to find a place to watch Seyfi Havaeri’s “şarkılı-türkülü” melodrama, Kara Sevda (1968) (Özgülç, Kronolojik 46). This makes one ask: what was then attracting audiences to these “non-realistic” films –and why these films still persist, still continuing to be screened on television today?

Bülent Oran, who had written nearly 1000 screenplay for Yeşilçam was asked in an interview in 1973 what he thought about the “non-realistic” dialogues in Turkish films as a reflection of those films’ being “non-realistic”. The people who interviewed Oran were Atilla Dorsay, Nezih Coş, and Engin Ayça and they represented the intellectual cinema circle in 1960s Turkey. In fact, the question was not really a question, but rather a statement, saying that Oran was ruining Turkish cinema by writing “non-realistic” dialogues for films, by writing “non-realistic” stories.²⁵ However, Oran not only responded negatively, but also problematized the question of realism in cinema:

the true real conversations for the audience are those fake speech, which people against Turkish cinema ridicule... Watch secretly a young man and a suburban girl loving each other in the park... Their talk is mostly as it is in our films. The man talks with the words of E. [Esat] Mahmut, the girl with the words of K. [Kerime] Nadir. They do not resemble our normal talk... When we transfer these to the screen they look like non-real. However, actually, they are more real than real ... We do not take life totally in films. We treat only a part of it such as a love story. At that point, one observes that people use sentences like novel heroes in real life. Because they have memorized them; they prepare, think and tell

²⁵ This is the impression that the interview gives as a whole.

them. Just like they steal sentences from Leyla-Mecnun or its similars to their love letters. These are real... Anyway, these films make money because they are real. It is impossible that a film does not make money when we find reality. However, when reality and the reality constructed in head are different, I mean, because evaluations done from above such as 'the worker is like this', 'the peasant is like that' do not actually conform to reality such films do not make money. (Dorsay et al., "Bülent Oran" 20-1)

Oran implies that the problem is not in the films, but in the organizing system outside, which attempts to determine what is real. Melodrama is a form in which characters repeatedly express and act out their emotional states; their love, happiness, pain, and suffering. In fact, this is one of the rules and conventions marking melodrama as a distinct genre, too. Brooks states that melodrama owes its appeal to the fact that it makes possible 'saying what is in "real life" unsayable' (41).²⁶ It must be noted that the term "unsayable" does not mean "non-real"; it rather points to a coding/classifying mechanism in "real life". In this respect, one thinks that, melodrama is not a question of "reality" versus "non-reality", but rather of "sayable" versus "unsayable", which is coded in "real life". This seems to be the common point which Oran is trying to explain and Brooks remarks.

Oran has always tried to explain that Yeşilçam melodrama was a genre which had its own rules and conventions that could not be judged based on an abstract dichotomy of reality/non-reality or reasonableness/unreasonableness. In the same interview mentioned above Oran gives the following example to clarify this point:

In one of our films (Reyhan) we figured a king of music-hall-men [gazinocular kralı]. It was a terrible type who cheats the devil himself. The guy wreaked his will. It occurred to him to fall in love with the young boy's lover. He made the boy imprisoned through dropping hashish into his pocket. He tried all sorts of tricks and got married to the girl, too.

²⁶ We will refer back to Brooks' arguments on melodrama in section 5 when discussing the rhetoric in audience letters.

Everything is fine so far. However the end of the film is evident for the audience. The boy will get out of the prison, beat the music-hall-man, and reunite with the girl. Yet there is an obstacle. In our films, Turkish man never gets married to a touched [dokunulmuş] girl. If he does the money of the producer runs a risk. Therefore the girl refuses the [music-hall] man in front of the bedroom door on wedding night. She tells him that he bought her, but will never be able to possess her soul. She can say since the tongue has no bones. In this situation it occurred to the monster, the king of music-hall-men, to become proud, he replied “I will not touch to you unless your heart says yes to me”, and went to the next room to sleep. And this room separation lasted exactly ten years, until the end of the boy’s imprisonment. Now, this is an event totally unreal [gerçek dışının dışı]. Actually such a forceful man has the power to possess the girl even without getting married to her. However the audience do not object to this extraordinary unreasonableness because it satisfies them. When this is the case, Yeşilçam has to act according to the conventions, or to be more exact, the desires of people. If it does not then the film fails. In the end, the problem of the REASONABLENESS OF UNREASONABLENESS [MANTIKSIZLIĞIN MANTIĞI], a problem that is perhaps special only to Yeşilçam, appears. (Dorsay et al., “Bülent Oran” 24)

The example above points to two characteristics of melodrama. First, the events and actions mentioned imply that melodramatic narrative constructs an “emotional hyperbole” for the audience. These events and actions are in conformity with Neal’s observation about melodrama as a genre:

melodramatic narration involves continual surprises, sensational developments, constant violations in the established directions of events” and these are achieved through “by chance happenings, coincidences, sudden conversions, last-minute rescues, revelations, *deus ex machina* endings. (6-7)

Neal argues that with the help of such a narrative structure, the audience of melodrama is enabled to progress along an “emotional hyperbole”, together with the characters and the film. In this respect, it might be more appropriate to consider melodrama not simply in terms of realism versus non-realism, but of realism versus “emotional realism”.²⁷

²⁷ See also Ang on the distinction between “realism” and “emotional realism” (Dallas 45) and Mutlu “Yerli Melodramlar” for an examination of the construction of the “emotional hyperbol” in Turkish melodramas through specific examples.

Second, Oran's explanation imply that besides emotion, morality is another axis in itself, which shapes the narrative of Turkish melodramas. In fact, the example given by Oran supports Brooks' argument that

melodrama is indeed, typically, not only a moralistic drama but the drama of morality: it strives to find, to articulate, to demonstrate, to "prove" the existence of a moral universe which, though put into question, masked by villainy and perversions of judgment, does exist and can be made to assert its presence and its categorical force among men. (20)

We cannot know what really attracted people to movie theatres in the 1960s in Turkey. However the statements above imply that approaching the issue in terms of abstract pre-given dichotomies such as reality/non-reality excludes other possible domains of existence/experience (i.e. emotions, morality) from the beginning.²⁸ In this respect, the next chapter that examines audience letters published in Sinema and Perde in the 1960s could be conceived as an invitation for and attempt to consider Yeşilçam cinema and its social experience from a wider perspective. The letters cannot offer (an) exact answer(s) to the question "why?" yet they can, at least, justify the productivity of insisting on asking that question by pointing to the limitations of existing assumptions about and possible new directions to conceive Yeşilçam cinema.

²⁸ Kayalı has also pointed to the limitedness of approaching to these films with rigid generalizations and emphasized the necessity of considering the function of these films in the continuation and reflection of moral values as an example (Yönetmenler 30).

5. YEŞİLÇAM IN AUDIENCE LETTERS

Early in the 1920s cinema had become an important element in the everyday life of Turkey. Parallel to that, cinema magazines of the period started to have a magazinal aspect. Especially news and stories about stars' lives became one of the main constituents of the content of these magazines. The appearance of "reader columns (okuyucu sütunu)" in cinema magazines dates back to the early days of the Turkish Republic, too. These reader columns did not print audience letters but published the answers to the questions of readers. However the person replying the questions addressed the owners of questions personally. One of the first reader columns presented itself as follow: "We announce to our precious readers that we have set up this column to satisfy the demands of those who want to get information, especially information about movie artists" (qtd. in Özuyar 69). The presentation statement of the first reader column that was named as "Dertortağı (fellow sufferer)" in Yıldız magazine, one of the most popular magazines of late 1930s and 1940s, did not have anything to do with cinema: "Dert Ortağı is a true comrade and a good friend who knows to keep secret. You can ask it all your difficulties and get useful answers."¹ However when we look at the reader columns in Yıldız we observe that the majority of the questions were about movie stars or stardom, as well as love relationships and

¹ Yıldız 2 (1938): 40.

problems with beauty, such as how to cope with hairs on face, acne and so on.² Audiences were especially interested in stars' mail addresses, background and professional lives, how to write letters to foreign stars, and how to become an actor or actress. One of the purposes of magazines in constructing such reader columns could be to keep their readers' interest and desire in them continuous. However it could also be argued that these columns served to set up a continuous dialogue between the audience and the movie industry and, more than that, they might serve to the construction of an image of the audience, at least in terms of their interests and demands.

Such reader columns publishing only answers to questions appear in many cinema magazines of the 1950s and 1960s, too. However, we met two magazines that published audience letters. One is Sinema published between 1960-1962, and the other is Perde published between 1961-1969. Sinema started "Sizin Köşeniz (Your Corner)" in 1961, which was changed to "Bizim Köşemiz (Our Corner)" in June 1962 and continued until the end of 1962. Perde started "Serbest Kürsü (Free Chair)" in 1964, which continued until the end of 1967 with several interruptions.³ The presentation statement of Sinema was:

We reserve you two pages in this issue. Thus a matter that you, our respectful readers, have been complaining about for a long time is solved. From now on "SİNEMA 1961", will publish your matters, your requests and letters which relate to problems of Turkish cinema with pleasure. These pages are open to any of your opinions and requests. You can write your opinions in the way you want and send them to us. Of course you should

² It must be noted that Yıldız not only involved articles relating directly to cinema world but also on issues such as beauty.

³ After "Bizim Köşemiz" and "Sizin Köşeniz" Sinema started another reader column entitled "Sizlerle Başbaşa (With You in Private)" in 1962, which involved short questions asked to particular stars by audiences and their answers by the stars. Similarly Perde started reader columns of the same nature, too. These were "Alo! Okuyucu Soruyor (Alo! The Reader Asks)" in 1966 and "Sorun Söylüelim (You Ask We Answer)" in 1970.

include your mail addresses, name and surname and write legibly if it is possible. We expect your letters.⁴

Similarly Perde wrote:

While PERDE thanks for the compliments of its readers it appreciates their criticisms, too. Besides, we are presenting a column entitled “SERBEST KÜRSÜ” where everybody as producer, director, actor, and reader will write their opinions freely and make his/her voice heard. Your writings will be published exactly. We expect your criticisms and writings.⁵

These presentation statements differed from the statements of earlier reader columns that we have mentioned above. We observe that while reader columns of thirties and forties presented themselves as an authority that would endow the readers with the information they lacked, in the 1960s, Sinema and Perde attributed their readers a more powerful status by “inviting” them to contribute to a discursive production with their opinions. It is possible to see here a shift in the conception of the audience. In the presentation statements of Sinema and Perde the audience seems to be conceived not simply in terms of their “requests”, but more than that, in terms of their “opinions”. It is possible to say that there is a “social framing” here; the framing of a “voice” as being the voice of “the audience”, a category which continuously escapes certainty. In other words, Sinema and Perde invited people not simply to provide with their opinions, but before that, to recognize themselves as audiences.

Agah Özgüç, who was one of the pioneering journalists of the 1960s and who also contributed to Sinema with several interviews he made with actors/actresses, states that letter writing is one of the characteristics of the cinema audience of the 1960s which distinguishes it from current cinema audiences. He remembers that cinema

⁴ Sinema 19 (1961): 3.

⁵ Perde 15 (1964): 16.

magazines were receiving “sackfuls of letters” from audiences in that period.⁶ Özgüç adds that the letters published in those magazines were genuine, but they were edited based on the availability of publishing space and in terms of spelling. Similarly, Kadri Yurdatap, one of the leading magazine journalists of the period as well as an editor in Sinema magazine, states that thousands of letters were received each week and the letters published in the magazine were genuine. He also explains that there were eight or nine people working in the magazine and they were dealing with the letters in rotation. Each week a different person was examining the letters and selecting a few to be published in the magazine. Yurdatap adds that the selection was determined only by the personal considerations of the person doing the selection that week and that the magazine did not aim at manipulating audiences by creating fictions or making a biased selection.⁷

Audience letters collected in the pages of Sinema and Perde throughout the 1960s formed a discursive space where a variety of texts such as films, stars, content of cinema magazines, rumours, audiences’ responses and opinions circulated. In this respect it is possible to conceive these letters as gates opening into a socially produced system of representation in which a set of meanings about Yeşilçam are made and circulated. These letters do not simply provide information about what made up Yeşilçam event in the eye of audiences but also implications about the relationship of audiences to the constituents of that event (i.e films, stars, cinema magazines, audiences) as it is “imagined” and expressed by audiences. Moreover letter

⁶ Özgüç, Agah. Telephone interview. 11 April 2002.

⁷ Yurdatap, Kadri. Telephone interview. 18 April 2002.

writing and publishing appears to be a “micro event” in which relationships between audiences and cinema industry were negotiated.

Departing from the question “why did audiences write letters?” it is observed that letters were written for three main purposes –both explicitly and implicitly: (a) audiences were curious and sought some specific information (b) they had a request (c) they wanted to express a message.⁸ In all three cases stars were the major focus of interest. Some of the letters were addressed to the magazine and others directly to a specific star. The audiences were mainly curious about stars. Physical appearance, general information such as background, pleasures and preferences of stars, and their private lives were among the major curiosities of audiences. There are also letters asking questions by referring to specific films, especially wondering about whether audiences would be able to see a star or a star couple again in another film or films. The requests mentioned in the letters could be grouped into three categories: (a) get industry connection (b) request financial favour from specific stars (c) request photograph, interview, and news about stars (d) request personal contact with stars. The requests were mostly addressed to the magazine but there are also letters addressing directly specific stars. The majority of the letters are “expressive letters”, in that more than asking any information or making any request they are motivated by expressing an opinion, suggestion, satisfaction, complaint, criticism related to the content and publishing policy of cinema magazines or to the cinema institution / cinema “world”. The letters in that category imply that cinema magazines in the 1960s not only “catered” audiences, but also allowed them to enter actively into the

⁸ It must be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive.

discourses on cinema and stardom by publishing their letters. While some of the letters refer to Yeşilçam cinema from the aspect of production (e.g. films, acting), in other words to the filmic, others refer to the extrafilmic, especially to private lives of stars. Some of the expressive letters suggest that audiences not only knew or wanted to know about Yeşilçam stars, but also felt strongly about them. They liked some stars and disliked others, and towards some they felt powerful emotional connection. There is a group of letters in that category that are distinguished from others in an important way. These are letters that respond to one another and construct a forum, an interactive debate on certain specific aspects of Yeşilçam event among audiences themselves. Although the focus is on Yeşilçam such debates revolve around more general issues such as morality, humanly values, social norms and values, honour, fidelity in love, and so on.

Based on this very general description of the letters it could be argued that letter writing had several functions within the social life of audiences. Some of the audiences sought gratification of their personal –but socially formed- needs (i.e. letters motivated by curiosity and request). However, and more interestingly, letter writing seems to be an opportunity to interact with other people, an opportunity for public complaint and confession, an opportunity to hear one's own voice in public, to become a part of an imaginary community (i.e. expressive letters). Needless to say audiences we are talking about have a particular characteristic that distinguishes them from other audiences: they write letters, better to say, they share the desire of writing to cinema magazines that publish letters and this desire might be more dominant than what audiences seem to desire in their letters. In this respect it could be more appropriate to consider the statements making up the letters not simply as

“expressions” of “internal realities”, but rather as “performances” or as “stagings” made up of “acts”. Henri Lefebvre writes:

Every word, every gesture constitutes an act, and acts must be understood according to their purpose, their results, and not merely in terms of the person speaking and acting, as though he could somehow express or ‘externalize’ his reality and sincerity. More exactly, words and gestures express an action, and not simply some ready-made ‘internal reality’. When men speak they move forward along their line of action in a force field of possibilities. (135)

Letter writing is a separate act in itself which consists of several actions. However as Lefebvre also remarks, the emphasis on “acting” is not to say that acts are “pure roles” excluding all “reality” and “sincerity”. It is rather to stress that there is in acting “something extra -something real: the knowledge of a situation, an action, a result to be obtained” (136). In this respect the letters enables us to figure out the encounters, intersections, interchanges, and interactions that constituted Yeşilçam as event.

The letters point to the existence of three images in which audiences encountered and involved in Yeşilçam. These are Yeşilçam as Turkish cinema, Yeşilçam as the movie industry, and Yeşilçam as stars. Parallel to these images it is possible to mention three channels of expressions marked with three distinct mode of involvement on the part of audiences: (a) Intellectualism / Critical distance to Turkish cinema (b) Imaginary connection and contribution to movie industry (c) Emotional attachment to stars. These different modes of involvement and expression construct an image of the audience in the eye of the researcher, which is characterized by ambivalence. The audience’s relation to Yeşilçam is marked with an ambivalent attachment which continuously alternates between hate and love.

It is possible to divide the letters into two very broad categories in terms of their subject matter. The first group, consisting of nineteen per cent of the letters, focuses on “Turkish cinema” in general -films, production, and acting. Sixty-seven per cent of these letters (thirteen per cent of entire letters) are critical letters in which audiences express their negative opinions about the situation of Turkish cinema in the 1960s. The image of cinema constructed by these letters is a “bad” one, which carries on it all the traces of intellectual and artistic “poverty” associated with any “popular”, “commercial” media product in general. The second group of letters are those in which audiences appear to be closely and emotionally involved in 1960s “cinema world” in Turkey and they constitute eighty-one per cent of the entire body of letters. Stars appear to be in the core of this involvement. This situation makes one ask how did Yeşilçam enabled both forms of engagement on the part of audiences, which appear to be conflicting -one being marked with critical distance and the other with emotional attachment? The two forms of engagement with Yeşilçam exhibit contradictions not only in relation to each other but also within themselves.

However the letters expose one thing very explicitly. This is the fact that audiences cared too much for Yeşilçam, which implies that Yeşilçam event had an important place in their lives. Audiences mention their likes or dislikes relating to Yeşilçam, but in any case one thing is certain; none of them is indifferent to it. In fact, writing letters in relation to that event already is an exposition of caring. It indicates that audiences gave importance to that event, or that they wanted to take part in that event, which they perceived to be socially dominant. This leads to the question, “why Yeşilçam had been so popular?” This question could be answered simply by stating that “because audiences found pleasure in it.” However this leads to another question: “Why

Yeşilçam was so pleasurable for audiences?” We cannot explain pleasure simply as an automatic result of the satisfaction of certain pre-existent needs.⁹ The pleasure that audiences found in Yeşilçam seems to be the outcome of a certain “productivity” on the part of both Yeşilçam and the audience. Below we offer a closer reading of the letters by focusing on the three channels of encounter/involvement/expression that we have mentioned above. In each case we will try to apprehend different images, intersections, interactions and relations which constitute Yeşilçam event. This reading is presented in the form of a “layered text” that is a combination of our interpretations and quotations from the letters. Each section consists of an interpretation followed by more descriptive subsections. In some cases the subsections are dominated by quotations from the letters that are tried to be kept at minimum.¹⁰ It must be noted that this layered text, even the descriptive parts of it, are not simply a transcription but rather a “staging”, an “operation”, which “redistributes” the historical material based on a new organizing system shaped by the present.¹¹ Yet, we leave the quotations from the letters in Turkish in order to preserve personal language and mood of arguing.¹² This is supposed to be necessary because the rhetoric of the letters, especially those relating to stars, not only provides insight to audiences’ intimate involvement in Yeşilçam event, but also exhibits an affinity with the rhetoric of Yeşilçam melodramas and the gossip language of cinema magazines. This could be

⁹ See the section on Uses and Gratifications Approach, especially its critique.

¹⁰ We preferred such an organization because considering the lack of and the difficulty of reaching historical material relating to Turkish cinema, we considered “documentation” a duty as serious as theoretical interpretation.

¹¹ “Layered text” is a term used by De Certeau to describe the form of writing used in any historical research (Ahearne 20).

¹² We also keep spelling and grammar mistakes as they are in the original.

considered as a justification of Yeşilçam as event, in that it points to a continuous interchange and interaction among a multiplicity of elements.¹³

5.1. “Turkish Cinema” Between Embarrassment and Pride: Location of Cinema at the Heart of Social Imaginary

We met 45 letters that focused exclusively on the general state of “Turkish cinema” in the 1960s. In the majority of these letters audiences were critical of that situation. There appears to be several continuities between the forms of reception and discourses of cinema that are presented in Chapter 4 and the forms of arguing about Turkish cinema in the letters in that category. The nationalist discourse on Turkish cinema, moralistic discourse around films and stars, intellectual discourse on artistry and dichotomies such as art/money, art/beauty, national propaganda/moral corruption, westernization/cultural imperialism, marking particular forms of reception in the history of cinema in Turkey, show up in these letters, too. In this respect more than providing opinions of the audience about Turkish cinema in the 1960s the letters in that category point to cinema’s becoming an important space for the reflection and articulation of social and cultural imaginary.

The majority of audiences complained mainly about monotony (same stories, same actors/actresses), imitation, and slang words “dominating” Turkish films and the disorder in movie industry whereas a small group of audiences characterized films that were supposed to overcome these problems with pretension. All of the figures taking

¹³ The similarity between the two rhetorics does not mean that the audience copies or repeats something pre-given. It seems to me that this similarity rather points to a process of “becoming”.

part in the production of a film such as producers, directors, scriptwriters, and actors/actresses were acknowledged one by one by audiences as having a role in the “bad” state of Turkish cinema. However be it producers or actors/actresses or any other production member all criticisms converged at one point; the point that Turkish cinema lacked “art” and was unable to reach the state of American and/or European cinemas. Dichotomies such as “money / art” or “beauty / art” continuously recurred and American and European cinemas were posited as the “great” “Others” of Turkish cinema in the letters. Turkish cinema appears to be a source of “embarrassment” within such a figuration. However a group of audiences who conceived this attitude as “snobbery” approached Turkish cinema with nationalist feelings and offered a more optimistic view of it. In this respect the letters point to an ambivalence which alternates between hate and love, embarrassment and pride. This situation could be conceived as a reflection of the ambivalent attitude of Turkish identity in the face of Westernization.¹⁴

It must be noted that a great majority of audiences expressing their negative opinions about Turkish cinema, actually, seem to be among the strict followers of Turkish films. Moreover they exhibit not only accumulation of knowledge about films, genres, and trends but also about the operations of the film industry. One explanation for that might be that, as two of the audiences expressed, actually audiences had a problem with the “process” of Turkish filmmaking rather than films and actors per se:

Ben şahsan Türk filmlerini severim. Bir seyirci veya vatandaş olarak, filmlerimizi değil de filmciliğimizin gidişatını sevmiyorum ... (Şevket Darcaboğaz - Adana)¹⁵

¹⁴ Erdoğan has referred to the same ambivalent situation on the basis of the representations in Yeşilçam melodramas and examined the “logic” of that situation in relation to colonial discourse (Ulusal kimlik).

¹⁵ Sinema No. 36 (1961).

Sinema dünyasının bir numaralı oyuncularını sizler gibi senaryoyu okumadan, provasız ve diğer imkanlarla bir gün dahi çalışmazlar. Sizler yabancılar gibi beş veya daha fazla çekim provalarıyla ve büyük imkanlarla oynasanız, elbetteki onlardan daha başarılı olursunuz. Bizim filmciler gibi 15-20 günde değil, en az 6 ay, 1 yıl veya 2 yılda bir filmi tamamlarlar. İşte bu yüzdendir ki bizde oyunculuk değil, filmcilik yoktur. (Sırrı Öztürk - Gaziantep)¹⁶

Perhaps audiences' being unhappy with the "monotonous" structure and artistic "poverty" of Turkish cinema did not keep them away from going to see Turkish films.

However it seems to me that a different explanation could be found if we consider these letters together with the discourses on Turkish cinema in the 1960s. The problems that were mentioned in the letters were almost the same with the problems that were described by Turkish film critics and intellectuals in that period. This is especially revealed through the fact that dichotomies of "money / art" and "Turkish / foreign", which were never absent from the debates on Turkish cinema in the 1960s, recurred in the letters as common principles in the organization of arguments. In other words, the way audiences talk was a common way of arguing about Turkish cinema. These letters could be considered as an attempt to have a part in a specific type of discourse, which is somehow associated with intellectualism. Another confusing aspect of these letters is that they are written to popular cinema magazines, which could be subjected to the same criticisms that are directed to Turkish cinema industry. However these audiences seem to be among the loyal readers of these magazines. Perhaps we can argue that the complaints mentioned in the letters are not really complaints, but rather they make up the appropriate language of a particular discourse. If one wants to take part in that discourse than he/she needs to use the appropriate language. These letters point to a particular type of engagement with Yeşilçam cinema, which is marked with a particular vocabulary of involvement in that

¹⁶ Perde 19 (1967).

event. Moreover it seems to me that this is not only a mode of involvement but also of finding pleasure in it.

Grossberg argues:

We can call the particular relationship that hold any context together, that binds cultural forms and audiences, a 'sensibility.' A sensibility is a particular form of engagement or mode of operation. It identifies the specific sorts of effects that the elements within a context can produce; it defines the possible relationships between texts and audiences located within its spaces. The sensibility of a particular cultural context (an 'apparatus') defines how specific texts and practices can be taken up and experienced, how they are able to effect the audience's place in the world, and what sorts of texts can be incorporated into the apparatus. Different apparatuses produce and foreground different sensibilities. (Is there a Fan 54-5)

It could be argued that the letters dealing with Turkish cinema in general operated in a particular space of sensibility. As we will see later in this study the critical distance that is observed in these letters is replaced with emotional involvement when audiences talk about other elements of cinema, especially stars. The reason might be that the audience travels between different spaces of sensibility. In fact it is possible to observe different spaces of sensibilities already within the letters on Turkish cinema in general. Audiences seem to work out certain matters that cannot be limited to cinema despite the fact that they seem to talk exclusively on Turkish cinema.¹⁷ Grossberg also argues that the audience's relation to cultural texts "operates in the domain of affect or mood". Affect, according to Grossberg, is a "feeling" which is not a subjective experience but a "socially constructed domain of cultural effects". According to this formulation, Grossberg argues:

The same experience will change drastically as our mood or feeling changes. The same object, with the same meaning, giving the same pleasure, is very different as our affective relationship to it changes. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that different affective relations inflect meanings and pleasures in very different ways. Affect is what gives 'color,' 'tone' or 'texture' to our experiences ... It is in their affective lives that fans constantly struggle to care about something, and to find the passion necessary to imagine and enact their own projects and possibilities (Is there a Fan 56-9)

¹⁷ See sections 5.1.7 and 5.1.8.

Based on that we can say that different spaces of sensibility might be marked with different moods or feelings and the audience might need to wear the appropriate mood in order to express himself/herself within a particular space of sensibility, which has already been associated with a particular mood. In a similar vein Jenkins argue that “all reading is essentially rereading as we draw upon cultural codes and social assumptions acquired through our previous encounters with other texts” (Textual Poachers 67). Criticisms directed to Turkish cinema in newspapers, cinema journals, even in more popular cinema magazines by critics and people from the industry as well as audience letters might be effective in the formation of a particular mood, and way of reading about Turkish cinema, in other words, in audiences’ learning “the right way” to read and speak in order to involve in a particular imaginary community formed at the discursive level. In fact, remembering Bennett’s approach to the process of “reading” that has been mentioned in Chapter 3, it is possible to argue that the form of reading here is an “activation” -more than “interpretation”- of “Turkish cinema” by audiences within the framework of a particular “reading formation”. Moreover, considering the fact that the readings are presented to cinema magazines in the form of letters and that writing to cinema magazines is a constituent of the Yeşilçam event, it could be argued that what we have here is not only a “reading formation”, but also a “writing formation”. In addition it must be noted that letters published in magazines constitute a part of the discourses circulating in society. These letters might be functioning not only as a “reading repertoire,” but also as a “writing repertoire” for other audiences.

Below we will offer a more descriptive reading of the letters on “Turkish cinema” by categorizing them on the basis of their “explicit” subject matters. These letters point

to certain attributes of Yeşilçam cinema as event.¹⁸ First of all they imply that besides an “aesthetic existence” in terms of films Yeşilçam cinema had a “material existence” in society and that this material existence was an important constituent of the cinema experience. For example the production team and activities, film festivals and rewards, foreign movie industries that are referred to in the letters are not a part of the film texts, but they constitute an important component of cinema’s -Yeşilçam’s- social materiality and its experience. Second, cinema experience is characterized by “multiplicity” and “heterogeneity”, in that it involves a broad range of processes and activities both in terms of production and reception. Third, cinema serves as a field of “intersection” for a variety of activities comprising inside and outside the movie theatre. Fourth, cinema experience is marked with “multi-discursivity”, in that cinema serves as a social field for the intersection of a variety of discourses. Fifth, cinema event is marked with a continuous “interchange”, which blurs the distinction between inside and outside of cinema, between production, film text, reception and culture.

5.1.1. Films, Actors: “Always the Same...”

One of the major criticisms mentioned in the letters was that Turkish films all resembled to each other both in terms of subject matter and plot structure. Audiences not only stressed that point but also described the image of Turkish films in their eyes. It was melodramas that characterized the 1960s, especially the years starting from 1965. Family melodramas and melodramas focusing on love relationships between heterosexual couples were the two main types of melodrama as the dominant genre in the 1960s. Audiences referred to both types and conceived these melodramas as the

¹⁸ These attributes are figured out based on Altman’s description of the attributes of cinema as a macro-event (4-14).

recyclings of a single film; as the presentations of the same plot in different clothes. That film was received by audiences as a love story or, more than that, as a “simple”, “imaginary” love story revolving around the “struggles” and “sufferings” of a couple. The conflicts making up the story are either based on a moral opposition such as “the good” versus “the bad” or socio-cultural differences such as “the poor” versus “the rich”. Below are two exemplary quotations from such letters:

Sinema seyircileri artık konuları hep birbirine benzeyen filmleri ... seyretmekten bıktı. Eski filmlerin sonunda mutlaka verem olup ölürlendi. Şimdi ise film mutlaka bir düğün salonunda bitiyor. Yakışıklı jönlle, güzel bir genç kız tanışıyor, sevişiyorlar... Fakat aralarına giren kötü bir adam veya kötü bir kadın onları birbirinden ayırır. Ama herşey düzelir ve nihayet evlenirler. İşte size her Türk filminin kısaca mevzuu! (Fidan Sun)¹⁹

Malesef konularımız çocuk masallarını bile gölgede bırakacak kadar hayal mahsulü oluyor. “Olay çok zaman köşklere geçer, aile çok zengindir, biricik kızları çok şımarık büyümüştür, kendisini zengin diye tanıtan bir fakiri sever. Birleşmelerine bir sürü engel çıkar, erkek bunu yumrukları ile kız ise çocukça bir aklın yarattığı kurnazlıklarla hallederler. Sonunda birleşirler.” Bütün konular temcit pilavı gibi ... (Yılmaz Özak - İstanbul)²⁰

Audiences not only criticized the lack of different films but also films’ being founded on a few actors. They also complained about actors’ always appearing in the same roles, playing the same characters:

Nasıl olmuşsa beş altı tane kadın ve erkek oyuncu yetişmiş. Bütün prodüktörler onların peşinden koşuyorlar. Birbirleriyle yarış ediyorlar. Bir sezonda aynı oyuncu altı yedi tane film yapıyor. İnsana bıkkınlık geliyor açıkcası. O filme gidersin aynı isim, aynı çehre. Bu filme gidersin aynı adam, aynı çehre. O memuayı okursun onlar, bu mecmuayı okursun bunlar. Sanki Türkiye’de başka sanatkar yokmuş gibi... (Fehmi Eruçar - İstanbul)²¹

Mesela Belgin Doruk, yıllardır çevirmiş olduğu filmlerde, “hanımefendi” kompleksinden kendini hala kurtaramamıştır. Seyirci onu aynı mevzulu filmlerde, aynı şahsiyet altında görmekten bıkmıştır. Belgin Doruk filmlerinde, daima zengin ve şöhretli bir ailenin biricik sevgili kızı olur. Fakat çıkıp ta bir tamircinin karısı rolüne veya fakir bir ailenin kızı hüviyetine maalesef bürünmek istemez. (İlkgül Bayraktar - Ankara)²²

¹⁹ Perde 12 (1965).

²⁰ Perde 27 (1964).

²¹ Sinema 34 (1961).

²² Perde 8 (1965).

5.1.2. Beauty / Artistic Ability

Forwarding as a reason for the domination of the same actors, audiences complained about the cinema industry's preference of "beauty" over "artistic ability" in their selection of actors:

... [Türkan] Şoray hanım gözleri güzel diye bütün filmlerde rol alması, bunu altın yumurtlayan bir tavuk haline getirmiştir ... Diğer bayan artistleri de düşünmek lazım. Bir kadın oyuncunun gözlerinin güzel olması, dudağının dolgun, sağ yanağında beni olması şart mı?... Bizim bildiğimiz güzellik değil, oyun gücünün kuvvetli olmasıdır. (Metin Tanboğa - Kilis)²³

One of the audiences described how seeing Türkan Şoray -an actress with a "thick body"- playing Feride -a novel character described as a "slim, very active" girl- in the film adaptation of Reşat Nuri Güntekin's novel Çalı Kuşu upset her:

... Çalkuşu romanında yazar Reşat Nuri Güntekin Feride'yi çıtı pıtı ağaçlara tırmanan ince, zarif yapılı, kumral bir kız olarak tasvir ediyor. Türk sinemasının yarattığı Feride is Türkan Şoray... Türkan hanımın vücudu öyle ince ve narin değil ve kumral da değil, aksine esmer. O kaba vücutla ağaca tırmanmak ve yaramazlık yapmak şahsen ona hiç yakışmaz. (Sevgi Polatgöz - Kilis)²⁴

The dichotomy of beauty versus artistic ability appears in letters written to criticize Turkish film industry by focusing on "poor acting" in Turkish cinema. Audiences criticized the preference of "beauty" over "artistic ability" in Turkish cinema and argued that "art" requires the latter. They referred to the invariability of gesture and mimics as a sign of poor acting and being "fleshy and plump" as complementing beauty:

... filmlerimizde baş rolde oynayacak erkek ve kadın artistin mutlaka güzel olması lazımdır. Sanat kabiliyetine bakılmaz ... Sorarım sizlere; bir Göksel Arsoy'u, bir Ediz Hun'u, sanatkar olarak görüyor musunuz? Yakışıklı bir jön olabilirler, fakat sanatkar asla! Bu aktörlerimiz hangi rolü oynarlarsa oynasınlar, hareketleri, mimikleri değişmez. Her filmde robot gibi ezberledikleri hareketleri tekrar ederler. (Fidan Sun)²⁵

Türk sinemasında oyuncular var. Ekserisi iri, gösterişli ve yakışıklı oyuncu bunlar. Zaten sinemaya girenlerde ilk şart güzellik, sonra da oyunculuk aranmıyor mu? Bu da

²³ Perde 12 (1967).

²⁴ Perde 17 (1967).

²⁵ Perde 12 (1965).

zannedersem çok şey kaybettiriyor bizlere. Mesela Aliye Rona için çirkin diyorlar, olmaz diyorlar. Bilmiyorlar ki Rona yüce oyuncudur. “Yılanların Öcü” nde bunu kanıtlamıştır. Fakat hayır! Güzel olacak, iri olacak, dolgun olacak... (H. Cengiz Han)²⁶

Sameness, monotony and stability appear to be three major factors characterizing Turkish films in the eye of the audience. A female audience used an interesting term, “tiresome”, to characterize the films that she liked and expected but could not find in Turkish cinema. She referred to films having a “circus” or a “ballerina” as their subject matter to exemplify “tiresome films”, which seems to be the solution she forwards to eliminate monotony in Turkish cinema:

... hemen hemen filmlerin hepsi birbirine benzeyen cinsten oluyor. (Gerek mevzu gerekse dekor.) Bu da büyük bir hata sayılır. Şimdiye kadar hiçbir Türk filminin şöyle fazla kabiliyetli, yorucu ve güzel olduğunu görmedim. Mesela sirki canlandıran yorucu bir film veyahutta balerinin hayatını canlandıran mevzu verici ve güzel olan daha birçok filmler katienen yok. Bunlar neden olmasın? (Tülin Akgündüz - İstanbul)²⁷

5.1.3. Imitation

It must be noted that the 1960s were also the years when a great amount of American films were screened in movie theatres in Turkey. As the above letter implies audiences' reception of Turkish films must be influenced by foreign films they saw. In 1960s foreign films were not only a source of enjoyment for some audiences but also a source of inspiration for Turkish filmmakers. Turkish film industry's tendency of making adaptations from foreign films, which was received as “imitation”, was another subject of criticism amongst audiences:

Sanki yurdumuzda konu darlığı, edebiyat kısırlığı varmış gibi; senaristlerimizin birçoğu, yabancı filmlerin senaryolarını ve yabancı edebiyatın bazı hikaye ve romanlarını da (kaynak göstermeksizin) kendilerine malederek sinemaya adapte etmekten sakıncama duymuyorlar! ... Geçenlerde bizim şehrin sinemalarında iki tane Türk filmi gördüm. Birisi Hulki Saner'in “Maceralar Kralı” diğeri de Ülkü Erakalın'ın “Bütün Suçumuz Sevmek” idi. İlki Mervyn Le Roy'un 1942 yılında çevirdiği (Johnny

²⁶ Perde 3 (1965).

²⁷ Perde 19 (1967).

Eager) Gangsterin Hilesi filminin sadece isimler değişik, tıpatıp aynı. Diğeri de İnsanlık Suçu'nun, yavan bir kopyesinden başka bir şey değildi. (A. Saygun Günay - Konya)²⁸

In fact “imitation” was a distinguishing characteristic of Turkish filmmaking. Making similars of domestic films that had been financially successful or producing serials out of such films were common practices. This tendency was described by audiences as another form of “imitation”, too:

... bizde bir adet vardır. İşte ondan kurtulamadık: Taklitçilik!... Bir film tutuldumu; hemen arkasından bir benzeri daha: derken bir daha... Örneğin; Yabangülü, Gümüş Gerdanlık'ta arkasından... Küçük hanımefendi, hanımın şoförü, kısmeti yok efendim kedi, köpeği.²⁹ Aman! Şimdi okurlarsa yine başlarlar devam... Bir başka firma rekabet için Küçükbeyefendi; beyin kısmeti, v.s.³⁰ Çok şükür bu hanımlı beyli seriler bitti: İyi mi oldu? Ne gezer efendim ne gezer. Yeni bir moda çıktı. Jönler filmde çift hüviyet taşımağa başladılar. Örneğin; Siyah Melek, Dağlar Bulutlu Efem, Zoraki Milyoner, v.s. Daha sonra jönler çiftlendi. Ne Şeker Şey bunlardan ilki zannedersem. Fena da değildi. Ama bir de baktık Badem Şekeri...³¹ Eh bu seferde filmlerimiz şekerlenmeye başladı dedik. İki şöhreti bir araya getirmekle iş bitti zannettiler.³²

5.1.4. “Argo”: Films and the Youth

The existence of slang / “argo” words in Turkish films is another criticized aspect Turkish cinema. Audiences stressed the possible negative effects of this situation on society, especially the youth:

Filmlerimizde bir argo modası aldı yürüdü. Tabii bu moda filmlerin isimlerine de sirayet etti. Artık; Helal Olsun Ali Abi, Temem Bilakis, Aslan Marka Nihat, Bitirimsin Hanım Abla... gibi isimlere rağbet ediliyor. Sadece keselerini düşünen filmciler, çok para kazanma hırsı ile saçma sapan filmler çeviriyor... Bir Turist Ömer, bir Abidik Gubidik, bir Horoz Nuri modası aldı yürüdü. Herkes ne yapacağını şaşırıldı... Artistler dansöz, şarkıcı, şarkıcılar film artisti oldu... Ve artık bu kepezeliğe bir son verme zamanı çoktan geldi. (Fidan Sun)³³

... bizim yerli filmlerimizde ..., öğrenilen çirkin, haysiyet kırıcı argo, güzel sözler yerine hakim olmuştur ve olmaktadır. Otobüste, vapurda, trende, gençlerimizin konuştukları hep bu filmlerdeki konuşmalardır. Gençler, abi, abla; orta yaşlılar amca, yenge; daha yaşlılar ise moruk. Bu konuşma düzenini, izleyecek bir kurum yok mu?

²⁸ Perde 28 (1964).

²⁹ A series made by Nejat Saydam such as Küçük Hanımefendi (1961), Küçük Hanım Avrupada (1962), Küçük Hanımın Kısmeti (1962), Küçük Hanımın Şoförü (1962).

³⁰ These films might be Küçük Beyefendi (Türker İnanoğlu, 1962), Damat Beyefendi (Sırrı Gültekin, 1962).

³¹ Ne Şeker Şey (1962) and Badem Şekeri (1963) were both directed by Osman Seden.

³² Perde 17 (1964).

³³ Perde 12 (1965).

Ailenin huzurunu bozan bu gibi filmleri, terbiye yöneticileri görmüyor mu? Bunlara, sansür nasıl mücadele ediyor? Güzel Türkçemize ve gençliğe, bu tarzda bir süikast hazırlayanlara “dur” diyecek bir merci yok mu? Dikkatlerini çekerim. (V.Kemal)³⁴

5.1.5. Pretension

As it has been mentioned in Chapter 4, the years between 1960-1965 marked a distinguished period in 1960s Turkish cinema. It was mainly the question of the “real matters of Turkish society” which motivated the directors who made films within the framework of the movement of Social Realism in that period. The films associated with that movement had not been successful at the box office, but they were appreciated by the film critics of their time. It could be argued that these films were not simply different from melodramas of the 1960s but, more than that, they constituted the “good” cinema that audiences might expect. However we observe that realism in these films, which was supposed to be their most distinguishing aspect, was questioned by some of the audiences and they were characterized by “pretension”. Some of the audiences accused the directors of these films of imitating European films. In this respect in the below letter, written in 1965, the audience describes these films as being pseudo Italian and French:

Türk sinemasında düne kadar yoktu ama, bugün bir de özentisi var. İtalyan özentisi, De Sica özentisi, sonra Fransız özentisi. Bir takım alttan, üstten alınan, uzaklaştırılan, yavaşlatılan planlarla çoğalan özentisi devri. “Susuz Yaz”dan başlıyor. “Duvarların Ötesi”ne değin olageliyor. Sonra da iş, birbirimizi taklit şekline dökülüyor. (H. Cengiz Han)³⁵

We met two letters in which audiences questioned the claims of Metin Erksan, one of the leading figures of the movement of Social Realism, with respect to his two films. Both of the letters referred to the issue of “pretension”. The first letter, which was written in 1961, referred to a statement by Erksan in which he made a comparison

³⁴ Perde 20 (1965).

³⁵ Perde 3 (1965).

between the film Kırık Çanaklar (Memduh Ün, 1960) and his film Gecelerin Ötesi (1960). Erksan's stated that "Kırık Çanaklar's winning the prize this year is the victory of melodrama in Turkey and therefore Turkish cinema has receded ten years back. However Gecelerin Ötesi is a realist film." The writer of the letter questioned the "realistic" nature of Erksan's film and tried to show that the film on the contrary was a melodrama in terms of actions and dialogues in it. Moreover she criticized Erksan for his "arrogance" and "pretentious intellectualism":

Metin Erksan'ın Gecelerin Ötesi, bence daha tehlikeli bir melodramdır. Çünkü, özenti bir entellektüellikle, gerçekçi gibi görünmek ister. Fakat filmin ikinci yarısından itibaren, durmadan tabancaların işleme, realism için yeter çare değildir. Kadir Savun, ise biz seyircilere zorla kabul ettirilmek istenen bir tip. Onun gibi dürüst, namuslu, sade ve faziletli bir insan nasıl olur da, birkaç serseri arkadaşının metres tutması, Amerika'da macera araması, tiyatro kumpanyası kurması, -ve hele, müstakbel bir saadet yuvası kurması için elde tabanca, Tanrı'nın gecesini haydutluk yapmağa kalkar? Hele Suna Selen'in -keten helvası ile çekilen niyetler gibi- söylediği dokunaklı sözlerin gerçekle ve gerçekçilikle ne alakası var? Yarabbin, onlar ne sahte sözler öyle!... Kadir Savun'un ölümü, bir melodram şaheseri değil midir? Tiyatrocu gencin, tam yakalanacağı sırada -hem de Anadolu'da- Dostoyevski'nin "Suç ve Ceza" - Crime and Punishment- isimli eserini oynaması, bir melodramcıdan başka kimin aklına gelebilir? Onun için Kırık Çanaklar'ın da melodramı, bu bakımdan zemzemle yıkanmış gibidir. Çünkü, daha fazla birşey olmak iddiasında değildir ... (Süheyla Dur)³⁶

The second letter, written in 1965, criticized Erksan's Suçlular Aramızda (1964) in similar lines. Moreover the writer of the letter considered the film as an example of "exploitation":

Suçlular Aramızda gerek tekniksizlik, gerek kötü senaryo ve gerek taklitçilik örneğinin canlı bir nümunesidir. Erksan'ın şahsiyeti olgunlaşmak ister. Kararsızlık içinde bocaladığı filmin her noktasında belli. Yabancı rejisörlere karşı duyduğu hayranlığa hürmet etmekle beraber, onları aynen taklit etmesinde bir fayda görmüyoruz ... Vadim'in rejisindeki Bardo ve Robert Hossain'i hemen hemen aynı mekan ve mizansen içinde Belgin ve Tamer olarak göstermesi. Yine Belgin'i gecelikte koru dekorunda (Klavsen) kilise müziği ile gezdirmesi bize yine ister istemez Vadim'in Kan ve Gül filmini hatırlattı. Erksan'ın en affedilmez tarafı, yazdığı senaryosu. Zengin fakir arasındaki sosyal farkları maksatlı bir şekilde düzenleyip fakir tabakanın zihnini bulandırmaya, kin güdebilecek sebepler uyandırmaya çalışması, sözüm ona bir takım hayal tiplerle, tanımadığı bir muhitin insanlarını, hiç bir zaman onların yaşantısına sahip olamamanın verdiği bir aşağılık duygusu ile yerden yere vurması. Bu kadar sahte, iğreti, yaşantısız tiplerle bir senaryo meydana getirmek, sömürücülük örneğinin ta kendisidir. Dünyanın neresinde, hangi muhitinden olursa olsun, bir babanın sebepsiz

³⁶ Sinema 38 (1961).

adam öldüren oğluna kılı bile kıpırdamadan aferin diyebilmesi insan aklının alamıyacağı bir canavarlık örneği, sadistlik timsalidir. Kaldı ki Erksan'ın çizmiş olduğu bu tipler, her çeşit halkın arasından milyonda bir çıkabilecek olan hasta ruhlu doğuştan canavar tipli insanlardır. Böyle bir tipi getirip İstanbul'da yaşayan kalburüstü bir sınıfın içine yerleştirmesi ve finaldeki deyimini ile suçu tüm para, şöhret ve mevki sahibi insanlara yüklemesi ve dolayısıyla o sınıfın dışındaki insanlara yaranmaya, hoş görünmeye ve taraftar toplamaya çalışması sadece bir sömürücülük örneği de değildir. (Bir grup azbuçuk anlıyan kişilerden Lamia Tezöven)³⁷

The image of audience implied by these letters contradicts the generally accepted image of Yeşilçam audience as intellectually poor people ready to watch whatever is presented to them. One might think that the two audiences behind these two letters represented only a minority. However Bülent Oran's below statement suggests that this was not the case:

Imagine a movie theatre where the audience consists of people who are even illiterate. Though, they would find out all mistakes once they are shown a film that does not conform to the rules and traditions of domestic films, even a film that has technical mistakes in terms of its story. Therefore, it is wrong and dangerous to look down the audience on the basis of its cultural level. (Dorsay et al., "Bülent Oran" 23)

5.1.6. Money / Art

Producers, directors, scriptwriters, actors were all considered responsible of the "bad" image of Turkish cinema in the eye of the audience. However it was the producers who were blamed most. Some of the audiences criticized directors for confirming the "cheap" goals of producers and some criticized actors for accepting to act in "low quality" films. The producer was pictured as a "merchant (tüccar)" for whom directors, scriptwriters and actors worked. He was criticized for intending only making profit and posited as the major obstacle before the progress of Turkish cinema. Many audiences invited first producers then other industry participants to intend "art" rather than money since this was the major weakness of the Turkish film industry according to them:

³⁷ Perde 2 (1965).

Sadece işi ticarete döken filmciler: Zannetmeyin ki bu iş böyle yürür gider... Gün gelecek, sinemasever ve düşünürler, sizi bu yoldan döndürecek ve birçoğunuz iflas edeceksiniz. Bırakın artık bu saçma sapan, gelişi güzel ve hep aynı nakarat mevzuları, sanat yüzüne dönün. (Sırrı Öztürk - Gaziantep)³⁸

Biz bu on yıl içinde ne yapmıştık? 7500 den fazla film yapmış bunun 15 inde sanat kavramını biraz olsun verebilmiştik. Bu acı bir gerçektir; nedenleri de bilinen şeylerdi. Sinema severlerin tümüne ait film yapılmıyor, sadece bir zümre için film yapılıyor. Anadolu sinemacılarının arzusuna uyarak Star sisteminde ısrar ediliyordu. Bütün filmlerde özden kaçılıyordu ve Türk sineması kaçış sineması olmuştu. Ama bu işde yapımcı memnundu, cebine giren parada başarısının (!) armağanıydı. (A. Saygun Günay - Konya)³⁹

... bazı senarist beylere sesleniyorum: ... Bir eserin gerçeğe ve mantığa uygun olması lazım ve şarttır. Ama sizler, sanki dünyada hiç mevzu kalmamış gibi, ne gerçeği ve ne de mantığı düşündüğünüz var. Tutturmuşsunuz bir türkü, varsa o, yoksa o türkü. Bu yüzdendir ki sanat yüzüne çıkamıyorsunuz, bu gidişle çıkamazsınız da... (Sırrı Öztürk - Gaziantep)⁴⁰

Sayın prodüktörler, rejisörler ve senaristler!... Lütfen biraz anlayışlı olun ... Filmlerde eli ayağı düzgün gençleri oynatmakla vazifenizi yapmış olmuyorsunuz. Sinema güzellik teşhir edilen bir meydan değil. Bir sanat alanıdır. Yakınız cüzdancınızı değil, biraz da seyirciyi düşünün. (Tülin Hiçyılmaz - Mersin)⁴¹

In fact what is meant by “art” is not explicit enough in audiences’ statements quoted above. Rather, the term “art” seems to be used by audiences as a “keyword” which would stand for the opposite of all the characteristics that they complained about.

5.1.7. Turkish / American and European

The disorder in Turkish film industry, the overabundance of film companies, their very low budgets and poor quality were among other criticisms directed to Turkish cinema. It must be noted that regardless of the point of interest (i.e. films, actors, directors, film companies), many of the audiences made comparisons between Turkish film industry and European and American film industries to support their negative arguments about Turkish cinema and suggest solutions to its problems. In all of these

³⁸ Perde 12 (1967).

³⁹ Perde 25 (1964).

⁴⁰ Perde 16 (1967).

⁴¹ Perde 17 (1964).

comparisons European and American film industries were posited as conveying the type of cinema environment that audiences expected:

... neden biz de Avrupalılar gibi yeni yeni kabiliyetler keşfedip oyuncu kadromuzu zenginleştiremiyoruz? (Fehmi Eruçar - İstanbul)⁴²

Ecnebi yıldızları görüyoruz. İcabında Sophia Loren bile, bir filmde zengin kadınsa, diğer bir filmde, fakir, icabında sokaklara düşmüş bir kadının hayatını bile, rahatlıkla bünyesinde hiç bir aşağılık duygusu duymadan, gayet güzel canlandırabiliyor. Neden?... Elbette sanat için... Hem böylelikle seyirci, aynı şahsı aynı şahsiyet içinde değil de, değişik mevzularda görme imkanını elde eder. Acaba siz de böyle hareket edemez misiniz? (İlkgül Bayraktar - Ankara)⁴³

Bu güne kadar OSCAR alan yabancı filmleri hatırladıkça içimde acı bir burkulma hissediyorum. Ve müteakiben şöyle düşünüyorum. Neden biz de onla kadar kaliteli filmler yapamıyoruz?... Ama az sonra bunun cevabını yine kendim üzümlere veriyorum: Çünkü biz; türk filmciliğini değil de kendi gelirimizi, daha doğrusu şahsi menfaatimizi düşünüyoruz ... (Yılmaz Özataş - Manisa)⁴⁴

Siz filmcilere sesleniyorum: Eserlerinizi sinemalarda hiç mi seyretmiyorsunuz? Bu eserlerin senaryolarını hazırlayanlar hiç yabancı film görmemişler mi? Lütfen zahmet edip bir kere gitsinler. O zaman kendi kusurlarını daha iyi görmek imkanını bulurlar. Sinemaya giden fert sanatla işlenmiş bir konuyu görmeye gider ... Rol yapmak ta ayrı bir sanattır. Takma kirpikler altında hep aynı manayı taşıyan bakışlarla, göz şaşılatacak bir yeşşe çekmekle sanat olmaz, zaten sanat için kültür ve görgü lazım. Bizim birkaç artistimiz hariç gerisinin kültürü ve görgüsü meydanda, söylemeye hiç lüzum yok. Benim sözüm onlara değil kültürlü oyunculara. Ayhan Işık ve Göksel Arsoy ve onlar gibi kültür yapmış kişilere. Onlar kültürlerinden neden faydalanmıyorlar? Türk filmlerini seyretmiyorlar mı? Bu halkın alayına maruz kalmış zengin hayatı mevzularını tenkit etmiyorlar mı? Batı filmlerindeki ciddiyeti ve realiteyi hiç mi görmemişler? ... Para ve reklam için değil, sanat için yapalım. (Yılmaz Özok - İstanbul)⁴⁵

It could be argued that these statements do not constitute simply another body of criticism directed to Turkish cinema. They rather seem to be the reflection of a common social attitude in Turkey in all periods within the context of Yeşilçam event. The question “why can’t we be like them -the West?” has always been an important element of Turkey’s social imaginary.

⁴² Sinema 34 (1961).

⁴³ Perde 8 (1965).

⁴⁴ Perde 23 (1964).

⁴⁵ Perde 27 (1964).

It must be noted that audiences did not respond to Turkish cinema simply as “cinema audiences” but also as “Turkish citizens”. In some of the letters Turkish cinema appears to be conceived as one of the most important national matters, partially because it was one of the main cultural channels to present Turkey in international arena. In this respect it is observed that Turkish cinema had become another channel for the expression of the feeling of social inferiority and embarrassment in the face of the West. This is implied explicitly by the emphasis on the importance the word “Turkish” in the term “Turkish cinema” in some of the letters. While an audience made a distinction between the terms “Turkish film” and “domestic film” the other expressed his worries about the representation of the Turkish nation abroad by Turkish films:

Yerli filme neden Türk filmi denilebilir bunu anlayamıyorum. Gerçeği düşünürsek bugüne değin tam anlamıyla bir Türk filmi ortaya çıkarılmadı. Olmadı böyle bir şey. Bu gidişle de her halde olmayacak ... Yerli filmlerimizin -sanat mı?, -para mı?- tezlerinden ele aldıkları -para- sorununa karşı -sanat- ı da rahatlıkla düşünmelerini istiyoruz. Türk sinemasının artık doğması artık gerekli. İstenilen bir durum var ortada. Toplum oraya, o aydınlığa kaymak istiyor... Ama karşısına çıkan engeller, o yerli filmcilik bu aydınlığa gidişe engel oluyor. (Bülent Habora - İstanbul)⁴⁶

Basmakalıp konularla, sanki arkasından sahneye itilmiş yapacağını bilmeyen ilkokul çocukları gibi oynayan artistlerimizle yalnız avama hitap edebilen konuşmalarla Türk filmcileri ne bekliyorlar? Bir dünyanın bu filmleri seyredebileceğini düşünmüyorlar mı? Unutmasınlar ki, yaptıkları filmler dışarıda kendi namlarıyla değil, Türk filmi diye oynuyor. Bir milleti de beraber düşürmiye hiçbir hakları yoktur. (Yılmaz Özok - İstanbul)⁴⁷

Location of cinema at the heart of national pride reveals itself in another way, too. In some of the letters audiences expressed the pleasure and honour they would feel from the successes of Turkish actors and films in international arena. One of the audiences

⁴⁶ Sinema 85 (1962).

⁴⁷ Perde 27 (1964).

expressed the pleasure and honour he felt from learning that a Turkish actor was the main character in an American film:

... Amerikan Sinema dünyasından verdiğiniz bir haber, emin olun ki yalnız beni değil, bütün Türk Sinema okuyucusunun göğsünü kabarttı. Nasıl kabartmasın? Türk aktörü Mümtaz Alpaslan, bir Amerikan kovboy filminin başrolünde. Değerli aktörümüzün bu şeridi Türkiye'ye gelir veya gelmez, bilmiyorum ama, o filmi iftiharla ve zevkten sekiz köşe olmuş bir halde seyretmek, her Türk gibi benim de arzum. Hele o yayınladığınız, yandan çekilmiş pozunu tıpkı, ama tıpkı Gilbert Roland. (Yılmaz Titzcan - İzmir)⁴⁸

Another audience mentioned how he was pleased by seeing a domestic child star in Turkish cinema similar to the child actors/actresses in foreign movies:

Bir zamanlar ecnebi filmlerini seyrederken bu filmlerde rol alan küçük artistleri görünce "Neden bizde çocuk artist yok?" diye kendi kendime sorardım. Ama Ayşecik [Zeynep Değirmencioglu]'in filmini seyredince "İşte bizim küçük yıldızığımız" deyip sevindim. (Erhan Tıgılı - İstanbul)⁴⁹

Some of the audiences considered Turkish films' appearing in international film markets and film festivals to be very important:

Bana kalırsa bu filmin bütün süksesi, heyecanı sadece Türkiye hudutları içinde kalmamalı ve vakit geçirilmeden, festivallerin ardına yapılmasından istifade ederek "Üç Arkadaş" ı dışarıya, beynelmül pazarlara göndermeliyiz... "Denize İnen Sokak", "Kırık Çanaklar" ve "Gecelerin Ötesi" nden sonra, bir "Üç arkadaş" ın da festivallere iştiraki sayesinde sanıyorum Türk Sineması Batı dünyasında uzun zamandır nasip olamıyan, ilk sağlam adımını atmış olacaktır... (Güney Koray - İstanbul)⁵⁰

Çok başarılı bulduğum bu filminden [Kırık Çanaklar]sonra, bir kere daha inandım ki Türk sineması son yıllarda büyük hamleler yapmağa başladı. Eğer bu hamleyi biz seyirciler de desteklersek, yakın bir gelecekte sinemamızın eserlerinin dış piyasalarda da alaka toplayacağı ve festivallerde derece alabileceği söylenilebilir. (Halil Duruk - Burdur)⁵¹

In these letters Turkish cinema is considered not on the basis of particular characteristics of films but rather as a national matter before everything else. This is why American and European cinema, international film festivals and film markets

⁴⁸ Sinema 26 (1961).

⁴⁹ Sinema 49 (1961).

⁵⁰ Sinema 31 (1961).

⁵¹ Sinema 21 (1961).

appear to function as the major standards in the appreciation of the success of Turkish cinema by audiences.

5.1.8. “Snobbery” / Nationalism

There are also letters, which praise or defend Turkish cinema. It must be noted that the majority of these letters are motivated by nationalistic feelings. Some audiences who took praise of American films against Turkish films as a sign of “snobbery” defended Turkish films against American films. Audiences pointed to technical deficiencies or the lack of state support for Turkish cinema and emphasized the differences between American film industry and Turkish film industry in this respect:

Bazı züppe kafaların artık kendilerine gelmelerini istiyorum. Türk filmlerini küçük görmeleri, Türk artistleri hakkında ileri geri konuşmaları ve mütemadiyen Amerikan filmlerinden bahsetmeleri dünyanın en hayasızca işi. Bu adamlar neden böyle yaparlar? Bir kere bunlar hayatlarında ya bir kere, ya da iki kere Türk filmine ya gitmişler ya gitmemişlerdir ... Vazgeçin beyler vazgeçin. Türk sineması ile Amerikan sineması arasında dağlar kadar fark var ama, bu sadece teknik imkanlar yönünden. Gelsinler bakalım, Amerikan sinema adamları, bizim imkanlarımızla yapsınlar yüzelli film. Görelim onların ptkalarını... (Ahmet Özkaya - Zonguldak)⁵²

Yerli filmciliğimiz gün geçtikçe ilerlemektedir. Fakat hayatı toz pembe gören gençlerimiz filmlerimizi yerden yere vurarak tenkit etmektedirler. Filmciliğimiz için tenkit iyi bir şey, fakat bunların yaptığı yıkıcı tenkit. Halbuki bizim istediğimiz, tenkit yapıcı olmalı. Nasıl bir Amerikan yaşayış tarzı ve imkanları bize benzemiyorsa, bizim filmlerin de Amerikan filmlerine benzemesini beklemek yersizdir ... Ben şuna inanıyorum ki, Türk filmciliği dev adımlarla ilerliyor ve yakın bir gelecekte en iyi şekilde girecektir. (Orhan Candoğan - Uşak)⁵³

Geçen sayıdaki Bülent Oran'ın Türk filmciliği ve seyircisi hakkındaki yazısını çok beğendim. Bu yazıyı bazı züppeler okusalar çok iyi olurdu. Ama okusalar ne fayda değil mi? Yabancı artistlerin tanınmadıklarına dahi sayfalarca yer ayıran bazı mecmua ve gazetelerimiz, bu vatanın yetiştirdiği en kabiliyetli artistlerimizden bile bahsetmeğe tenezzül etmezler. “Türk filmlerine de gidilir mi?” diyen Türk seyircisinin karşısında artistlerimiz, film şirketlerimiz ne yapsın? Evet, filmcilerimiz de suçlu. Dört başı mamur filmler yapmak için gayret sarfetmiyorlar. Fakat bunların yanında, seyircinin suçu çok büyük kalır. Biraz da Türk seyircisi gururunu bu sahada gösterebilir. Eğer bizde, atalarımızdan kalan şu kadarlık bir gurur varsa, kovboy filmlerinin yerine kendi öz filmlerimize gitmek isteriz. (Oya Aygün - Bursa)⁵⁴

⁵² Sinema 84 (1962).

⁵³ Sinema 22 (1961).

⁵⁴ Sinema 22 (1961).

Dünya sineması incelenirse senede yüz elli film imal edip de Devletçe himaye edilmeyen tek sinemanın, Türk sineması olduğu hayret ve teessürle görülür ... Devlet için sinemadan daha randımanlı bir propaganda vasıtası tasavvur edilebilir mi? Bu iddialarımızı ispat eden acı bir hakikat: İstiklal marşımızı söyleyemiyen çocuklarımızın, hemen her yerde ve kusursuz, noksansız olarak Amerikan halk şarkılarını, deniz piyadesinin marşını ıslıkla çalıp söyledikleridir ... iyi tatbik edilmeyen rüsum kanunu hariç tek, amma tek, bir kanun yoktur ki filmciliğimizin lehinde neşredilmiş olsun. Hal böyle iken Türk sinemasından bir şey beklemek ayıptır! (Temel Karamahmut - İstanbul)⁵⁵

These letters not only provide insight to the ways of engagement with Turkish cinema in the 1960s but also to the important function of cinema in the formation of social imaginary and the function of social imaginary in the reception of cinema.

5.2. The Movie Industry: Conceptors, Actors, Critics

In this section we focus on another group of letters that construct another image of Yeşilçam and imply a relationship between audiences and Yeşilçam that operates in another space of sensibility. Yeşilçam seems to be conceived in these letters as a vivid movie industry and, related to that, as a fame world or gate of becoming famous. The writers of such letters, who are all male, seem to be interested in Yeşilçam on the basis of this social image and they all exhibit a desire towards it through taking part on the side of production (i.e. becoming a scriptwriter, an actor, magazine journalist, critic) either explicitly or implicitly. In this respect the letters examined in this section point in the most explicit way to cinema's having a social "materiality" in spaces other than the space of the screen, too. Moreover they point to the fact that audiences acknowledged Yeşilçam as a field of "intersection" for a variety of activities extending beyond the movie theatre which were characterized by "multiplicity" and "heterogeneity" and that this acknowledgement was effective in their experience of

⁵⁵ Sinema 83 (1962).

cinema. In other words these letters emphasize Yeşilçam's being an event more than a closed body of filmic images.

In fact Yeşilçam had become one of the most vivid industries in Turkey in the 1960s with an increasing number of people working in that industry day by day. Paşa Gündoğdu remarks that the number of people working in Yeşilçam was 1185 in 1962 (92). However the image of the industry received by the audience was probably much bigger as an effect of the large number of films and, especially, the content of cinema magazines. Yeşilçam was located in Beyoğlu, one of the most vivid districts of Istanbul and the audience was able to witness the dynamic life that is associated with Yeşilçam everywhere in the country not only with the help films but also of magazines. It seems that Yeşilçam had a privileged status among other media industries in the eye of audiences. This is implied especially by a group of letters in which audiences expressed their desire for the involvement of their favourite artists in other media to cinema. In other words these audiences wanted to transfer their favourite celebrities to Yeşilçam. Below are two examples from such letters:

Kim ne derse desin, Ben Orhan Boran'ı geleceğin büyük sinema yıldızlarından biri olarak görüyorum. Acaba kendisi bu büyük kabiliyetini henüz keşfetmedi mi? Mükemmel bir fiziki yapı, fevkalade bir diksiyon ve hepsinden önemlisi, beyaz perdede oynamaya başladığında herhangi bir rakip bulamayacağı. Tabii ben komedyen Orhan Boran'dan bahsediyorum. Herhalde de jön olamaz. "İçimizden Biri"nde gördüğüm Orhan Boran üzerinde biraz daha işlense, muhakkak Türk Sineması'nın Danny Kaye'i olur. Ah bir aktörlüğü benimsese... (Şermin Karaova – İzmir)⁵⁶

Tatlı sesli şarkıcımız Özkan Kaymak'ın hayranlarındanım. Uzun müddetten beri sesiyle bizleri büyüleyen Kaymak'ın memleketimizde çok sevildiğine inanıyorum. Bu kadar çok hayranı olan ve ayrıca göz doldurucu bir fiziği olan bu şöhretli solistin film şirketlerinden niçin teklif almadığına şaşıyorum. Kim bilir, belki de alıyor da, kendi istemiyor. Halbuki ne kadar iyi olurdu, sinemada oynasaydı... (Nevin Tuna – İstanbul)⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Sinema 27 (1961).

In fact stars were the most visible workers of cinema industry and they represented the most attractive aspects of the life associated with that industry. Leo Lowenthal, who has studied celebrity biographies in popular magazines in the first half of the 20th century, points to a shift in emphasis from “idols of production” to “idols of consumption” (Dyer, Stars 39). In other words “heroes of production” who made the world were replaced in time with “heroes of consumption” who enjoyed the fruits of the world (Dyer, Stars 16). It could be argued that the images of stars in cinema magazines of the 1960s in Turkey presented stars as “heroes of consumption”.⁵⁸ The letter below written by a male audience from Diyarbakır exemplifies a possible reception and impact of the image of actors/actresses as “heroes of consumption” that is fostered through a variety of channels (e.g. films, magazines, personal impressions) on someone outside the attractive world of Yeşilçam. İstanbul, fame, joy, money, film, and love seems to be the keywords summarizing that world in the eye of the audience:

Millet İstanbul'da plajlarda kahverengi gecelerde her geçen günlerini kıymetlendirirlerken, bizler de buralarda ancak ve ancak nara atmakla yetinelim. Olmaz yavrular olmaz, biz de insanız, bizi de Allah kulum diye yaratmış, biz de neşelenmek isteriz... Yahu bu ne feci şeymiş. Aynadaki endamına güvenenlerin hepsi koşuyor film şirketlerine. Ve altı ayda oluyorlar sana birer şöhret. Hem demet demet para, hem de keyfin en daniskası. Eğlence onlarda, filmde oynamak onlarda, rüyalara girmek onlarda, aşıklığın birkaç çeşidi onlarda... (Yaşar İlci – Diyarbakır)⁵⁹

Below we offer a description of letters that involve forms of engagement with Yeşilçam as a movie industry by categorizing them on the basis production fields where letter writers explicitly or implicitly situate themselves. In all cases there seems to be either an explicit desire for a connection to the industry or an attempt to pretend as someone from the industry. While some of the audiences requested to get an

⁵⁷ Sinema 32 (1961).

⁵⁸ By consumption we do not refer only to consumption of material goods but also aspects of life such as fame and affinity.

⁵⁹ Sinema 41 (1961).

industry connection others commented on or made suggestions to the members of the industry from an implicit position of authority.

5.2.1. Job Applications

Dependent on the above attractive image of cinema world and acting, the majority of the letters involving a desire for becoming a part of the industry referred to becoming an actor. Some of the audiences presented their “biographies” to the magazine, some asked advice from particular stars. In both cases the person tried to convince the addressee that he possessed the necessary physical qualities to become an actor:

... Artistlerimizi artık hiç çekemez bir hale geldim. Yahu diyorum, onlar da dokuz aylık ben de... nasıl olur da ben artist olamam... Bu Diyarbakır'da Hint filmlerinin sahnelerine benzeyen siyah taştan yapılmış, esrarengiz simalı bir otelde ikamet ediyorum. Lisenin birinci sınıfından ayrıldım. Mesleğimin ne olduğunu sorarsanız, fotoğrafım bunu size ispat eder. Boş zamanlarımı hep bu arzuladığım mesleğe harcıyorum. Kendi kendime tavırlar takınıyor, adeta film çeviriyormuş gibi ciddileşiyor, bir şeyler yapmak istiyorum... 1.75 boyunda, 70 kilo ağırlığında, kahverengi gözlü, kader bakışlı, Eşref Kolçak'ın benzeriyim. Erzurum'da doğdum. İlkokulu Erzurum'da okudum. 12 yaşında eniştemin yanına, İstanbul'a gittim. 6 sene Nişantaşı'nda sohbetkeş bir hayat yaşadım. Yeşilçam Sokağında, hayli zaman dolaştım. Ama cesaret edip de Celal Gökçaya'yı rahatsız edemedim. Yalnız bir defa yazıhanesinin önüne kadar çıktım, yine cesaretim fayda vermedi. İçeride bir sürü artistler vardı. Yazıhaneyi terkederken aşağı katta Göksel Arsoy'la karşılaştım. O zamanlar henüz tanınmamış bir aktördü. Affedersiniz, yaşımı unuttum: 20 yaşındayım... Bir artistte aranacak bütün vasıflara haiz olduğumu sinema seyrettiğim zaman anlıyorum... (Yaşar İlci - Diyarbakır)⁶⁰

Pek muhterem Göksel Arsoy'a,

... Hayattaki yegane hayalim sizin gibi meşhur olmak. Sizin yarınız kadar olmakta yeter. Ama bunun için bana iyi yollar göstermek lazım. Bu iyi yolu da en iyi siz gösterebilirsiniz. Bir gün o kıymetli zamanınızdan bir kaç saati bana ayırın da filmcilerle beni tanıştırsın. Beni beyeneceklerini biliyorum. Tam sizin zıttınızda bir tipteyim. Koyu esmer bir gencim. Aynı zamanda vücudum da atletiktir. (Ömer Kayhan)⁶¹

It was not only actors, but also magazine journalists and scriptwriters who served as stimulators in audiences becoming eager to take part within cinema world:

⁶⁰ Sinema 25 (1961).

⁶¹ Sinema 54 (1961).

... İşte kısaca hayat hikayem bu. Kültür vasıtalarının en başında gelen sinemaya, bilhassa gün geçtikçe gelişen Türk sinemasına yardım ve hizmet en büyük arzumdur. Gerek yeni artistler lanse ederek, gerek değerli yazılarla ikaz ve tenkit vazifesini yapan mecmuanız sayfalarında bu arzum gerçekleşebilirse ne mutlu bana. (Bir Ayasbeyoğlu - İstanbul)⁶²

Türk sinemacılığındaki duraklama, ileri hamlelerin olmayışı şüphesiz ki, iyi bir senaryo üzerine bina edilemeyişinden gelmektedir. İyi bir senaryo olmayışı ise senaryo tekniğinin bilinmemesinden ileri gelmektedir. Ben kalemi az çok kuvvetli olan bir kimseyim. Bu işe karşı içimde büyük bir heves var. Türkiye’de benim kadar hevesli, benim kadar kabiliyetli, daha yüzlerce vatandaş tanıyorum. Bunların hepsi de aynı durumda. Bu hususta bizlere yardımcı olmanızı rica ediyoruz. (Mustafa Büncü - Manisa)⁶³

5.2.2. Suggestions to the Industry

A group of audiences who did not express an explicit desire for becoming a part of the movie industry actively participated in the matters of that world at the discursive level. Several audiences made suggestions to the members of the industry as if they were assuming the role of managers, directors or producers. Such audiences attempted to guide the industry:

Zeki Müren’in bu sene film çevirip çevirmeyeceği kat’i olarak belli değil. Temennimiz onu tekrar Kemal Film’in kordelalarında görmek ve alkışlamaktır. Bu şirkette bulunduğu geniş imkanları diğer şirketlerde bulması çok zordur. Bir filmin muvaffak olması için icap eden bütün şartlara hemen hemen sahip gibidir. İyi bir rejisör, iyi operatör, kuvvetli artist kadrosu. Bir de iyi bir senaryoya sahip oldu mu, filmin muvaffak olmamasına hiç bir sebep yok... (Bilgi Münür – Kıbrıs)⁶⁴

Bazan düşünüyorum da, bu bizim prodüktörlere çok kızmak geliyor içimden... Arada bir prodüksiyon listelerinin güçlüğünden, oyuncu yokluğundan, konu sıkıntısından bahsederler... Yahu alın Yılmaz Duru-Nilüfer Aydan çiftini... Hiçbirşey aklınıza getirmiyor mu? Bu ideal çift için seksen tane film yapılır... Ben senarist olsam, bu çift için yüzlerce senaryo yazabilirim. Rejisör olsam, Amerika’nın en kıral filmlerine taş çıkartacak müzikaller yaparım... Siz ikisini bir araya getiremiyorsunuz ha?... Ayıp yahu!.. (Ahmet Yılmaz – İstanbul)⁶⁵

Sami Hazinses bu sezon seyrettiğim “Altın Kalpler” adlı kordelanın en başarılı oyuncusuydu. Bilhassa iri kıyım Kadir Savun’la ufak tefek Hazinses, sinemamızda bir orijinalite yaratabilecek bir çifti teşkil ediyorlardı. Onları bu filmde seyreden

⁶² Sinema 84 (1962).

⁶³ Sinema 38 (1961).

⁶⁴ Sinema 23 (1961).

⁶⁵ Sinema 29 (1961).

prodüktörler herhalde, Hazinses-Savun çiftini Türk Sineması'nın Lorel-Hardi'si yapmayı düşüneceklerdir. Bu çok iyi olurdu... (Mustafa Dağgil – Gaziantep)⁶⁶

... Henüz 17 sinde olan bu tatlı melek her haliyle başka bir şahane olan kabiliyeti ve kültürlü bir Malatya kızı. Bu muhteşem güzelliğe sahip olan dilberi gönül beyaz perdede de görmek isterdi... Film şirketlerinin, bilhassa kendisine bir benzer kazanacak olan Belgin Doruk'un nazarı dikkatlerini çeker, Malatya İstasyon Garı, Danışma Bürosundaki güzel hanımefendiyle yakından alakadar olmalarını bütün samimiyetlerimle hatırlatırım. (Yaşar İlci - Diyarbakır)⁶⁷

5.2.3. “Tastemakers”: Playing the Critic

Some of the audiences expressed their opinions on various topics, especially actors' performance in films, as if they were critics. These audiences negotiated the judgements and anticipations of cinema magazines and acting performance of actors/actresses. There have always been, as Russell Lynes called, “tastemakers - groups that historically have attempted to promote and deploy their taste in art, architecture and fashion throughout society” (qtd. in Brower 164). The below letters suggest that the audience could function as tastemakers, too.

65. sayınızda, 1965 senesinde aktör ve artistlerin yerlerinin değişeceğinden, yenilerin eskilerini düşüreceğinden, bahsediyorsunuz. Evet, buna ben de kaniyim. Fakat yazdığım sayınızda Ediz Hun'u Ayhan Işık ve Fikret Hakan'la mukayese ediyorsunuz. Ediz Hun'u ben de sever ve takdir ederim. Belki zamanla olabilir. Fakat bu durumda Ediz Hun değil Ayhan Işık'a, Fikret Hakan'a bile ulaşamaz. Bence 1965 senesinde, sinemada büyük ilerleme olacak. Fakat bu şekilde değil. Büyüklerin, bu yıl da yerlerinde herhangi bir sarsılma olmayacak. Tabii yeni aktör artistlerin parlama, yükselme devri olacak. Eskiler ise yerlerini muhafazaya çalışacaklar. Benim kanaatimce kadınlarda da bir değişiklik beklenmemelidir. Bunlardan biri durumu ne olacağı belli olmayan genç ümidimiz Hülya Koçyiğittir. Türkan Şoray yerini rahatlıkla muhafaza edecek durumdadır. Fatma Girik de Türkan gibi, yerini korumakla kalacaktır. (Ali Osman Öztürk - Ereğli)⁶⁸

Fransa'da doğan ve bütün dünyaya yayılan BARDOT modası, Türkiye'de ise, geleceğin BARDOT'su olacağını düşünülen ZEYNEP DEĞİRMENCİOĞLU'nun açtığı ve birçok taklitleri doğan AYŞECİK modası... Meydana gelen sun'i AYŞECİK'ler, ümit edilen alakayı göremediler. Bu da, halkın bir tek AYŞECİK'i tuttuğunu ve sevdiğini ispat etti. Doğruyu söylemek lazım gelirse, gerek kabiliyet ve gerekse diğer hususiyetleri bakımından, Zeynep Değirmencioğlu, diğerlerinden kat kat üstündür. Bu sezon kendisi için yepyeni bir devre olacak. Asıl şahsiyetini, Osman F.

⁶⁶ Sinema 35 (1961).

⁶⁷ Sinema 52 (1961).

⁶⁸ Perde 5 (1965).

Seden idaresinde çevireceği filmde bulacağını sanıyorum. Başarılar. (Bilgi Münür – Kıbrıs)⁶⁹

Son seyrettiğim filmde aktör Eşref Kolçak'ı çok değişmiş buldum. “Ümitler Kırılınca” da mesela bir geçen sezondaki “Namus Uğruna” daki kompozisyonu maalesef yok. Çok silik kalmış Eşref. Acaba bu fark Osman F. Seden ile Orhon M. Arıburnu'nun reji çalışması arasındaki fark mıdır? Böyle olduğunu hiç sanmıyorum. Eşref Kolçak her durumda kendisini kurtarabilecek bir aktördür. Ümit ederim ki, bunun böyle olduğunu yeni filmi “Bardaktaki Adam” da gösterebilsin. (Talat Yılmaz – Adana)⁷⁰

5.3. Stars: Diffusion of Cinema and its Residues

Movie stars constitute another point of encounter between Yeşilçam and audiences. In this section we examine audience letters that deal with topics relating to stars and constitute eighty per cent of all letters. Again, these letters seem to operate in a different space of sensibility marked with appreciation, emotional involvement, and intimacy. It is observed that more than being a source of “visual pleasure” Yeşilçam had an emotional significance to audiences. More importantly, as it is already implied by sections 5.1 and 5.2, these letters imply that cinema does not remain in the movie theatre; it continues to circulate outside in a variety of forms. In addition they give the impression that stars play the major role in this circulation. In this respect, in addition to providing insight to stars' social significance or audiences' relation to stars these letters point to the fact that in the 1960s cinema was an event diffused throughout society through a variety of channels, which contributed to its promotion and continuation in extrafilmic forms.

Star system and star phenomenon were important constituents of Yeşilçam event. In fact cinema's being a diffused event that incorporates a variety of channels and ways

⁶⁹ Sinema 23 (1961).

⁷⁰ Sinema 84 (1962).

of production and reception is something already implied by star phenomenon. Richard Dyer argues that the “star phenomenon consists of everything that is publicly available about stars” and, therefore, “star images are always extensive, multimedia, intertextual” (Heavenly Bodies 2-3). Similarly Christine Gledhill states that “to achieve stardom means breaking out of the medium” (xiii). Within the framework of this study, audience letters focusing on stars through questions, requests, judgements, and expressions continuously underline this aspect of star phenomenon within the context of Yeşilçam, too. It seems that not only films, but also, and perhaps more importantly, printed media, even the everyday social interactions among people play an important role in the reception of stars. As we move along this study it will become more explicit that, as Richard Dyer argues, “the star is also a phenomenon of cinema ... and of general social meanings, and there are instances of stars whose films may actually be less important than other aspects of their career” (Stars 61). An expression used by one of the audiences to describe stars, “[e]ğlence onlarda, filmde oynamak onlarda, rüyalara girmek onlarda, aşıklığın birkaç çeşidi onlarda,” implies that appearing in films perceived by the audience as just one of the fruits rather than the necessary condition of being a star. In fact the majority of the letters examined in this study bring to mind the idea that there was two spaces of diegesis constructed by Yeşilçam. One was diegesis -fictional story world- in films and the other is diegesis outside the movie theatre. Some of the letters suggest that films introduced stars, who would become the main characters of another fiction continuing outside the movie theatre which seems to be more engaging for audiences. Yet, in some cases, it is not so easy to demarcate these two diegesis simply with a line. The reception of the diegesis outside points to certain parallelisms between that diegesis and the diegesis inside the movie theatre. Like the diegesis of Yeşilçam melodramas, the diegesis

outside that was constituted mainly by off-screen lives and actions of stars, involved certain favourite themes such as love, marriage, and motherhood and typical characters such as good man, bad man, good woman, bad woman.

The letters point to three main channels through which audiences encountered star images. These are movie theatre, cinema magazines, and social interactions among audiences. Below we start with an examination of audiences' relation to these channels as it is implied in the letters. Then we try to present a map of the diffusion of cinema, actual and imaginary spaces it occupies, and ways of living it engenders in audiences' lives as it is represented in the letters. In other words we will look at the aspects of Yeşilçam event, which we can describe as "residues".

5.3.1. Movie Theatre As a Meeting Place

We do not have much information about the movie going experiences of audiences but the letters suggest that stars had a determining role in that experience. The statements below quoted from two letters addressed to Göksel Arsoy, one of the leading stars of the 1960s, point to the importance of stars in audiences' attendance to Yeşilçam films. While the first letter implies that first the star then the particular film of the star determine movie attendance, the second letter points that the audience's presence in the movie theatre might be determined by a multiplicity of reasons which do not need to be directly related to the diegesis of the film. For example, the audience might want to see a film just because its scriptwriter was from her town. In addition, both of the letters suggest that the star functions as a means for differentiating between films for the audience.

İzmitte üç tane kapalı sinema vardır: Oğuz Sineması, Halk Sineması, Seka Sineması. Bunların ikisi Türk filmi getirmiyor, Halk Sineması devamlı olarak Türk filmi getiriyor. Burada en çok rağbet gören filmler sizin ve Adnan Şenses'inkiler. Hele sizin "Aşk Rüzgarı" filmi oynarken sinemanın içine iğne atsanız yere düşmez; gerisini siz tasavvur edin. (Hikmet Baykuş - İzmit)⁷¹

Ben İzmir Amerikan Kız Koleji öğrencisiyim. Alsancak'ta oturuyorum. Benim ve muhitimin Türk filmciliği ile hiç alakası yok. Hele Kolejdeki arkadaşlarım en alay edilecek şeyler karşısında "Türk filmi" deyip basıyorlar kahkahayı. Tesadüfen "Satın Alınan Adam" diye bir filminizi gördüm. O da İzmirli oluşu, yazar oluşu yüzünden bildiğim Özdemir Hasan'ın senaryosu olduğu için. Film beğenmiyeyim mi? O hafta İzmir'de oynayan bütün yabancı filmlerin üçünden daha çok tesir etmişti bana. Hele sizin filmdeki karakteriniz, tipiniz. O gün bugündür önce sizin filmlerinize gitmeğe başladım. Sonra bütün sinema dergilerini okudum. Bugün iyi olduğuna inandığım Türk filmlerinin ve sizin bir numaralı avukatınızım. (Nesrin Eren - İzmir)⁷²

The letters do not provide information about the relationship of audiences with films in movie theatres. However they suggest that films were important to audiences especially because they opened a space where audiences met stars. At least we can argue that stars were as important for audiences as the plot of the film in which they appeared. One of the curiosities revealed in "curiosity letters" was about actors' appearance in films. Audiences asked cinema magazines whether they will be able to see again some couples playing together in a film or were curious about the making or screening of a new film by a specific star:

Çetin Karamanbeyin bu kordelasında [Telli Kurşun] gayet hoş bir çift meydana getiren Oktar Durukan ve Fatma Girik acaba tekrar beraber olabilecekler mi? (Kadir Sever - Bursa)⁷³

Türk perdesinin değerli aktörü Orhan Günşiray'ın bu sezon çevirdiği filmlerden birinde, -adı "yabancı Kız"- Danimarkalı bir sarışın bomba ile beraber oynadıklarını gördüm. Birbirlerine bu kadar yakışan bir çift hiç görmemiştim. Acaba tekrar bir filmde daha oynamaları mümkün olmayacak mı? (Mehmet Selman - Çanakkale)⁷⁴

Bu sezon "Aşk Hırsızı" adlı kordelada seyrettiğim Zeki Müren'in yeni filmini sabırsızlıkla bekliyorum. Halbuki o daha bu filmi çevirmeye başlamadı bile. Büyük aktör ve şarkıcı, sinemamızın sempatik çehresi Zeki Müren acaba filmi çevirmeğe ne zaman başlayacak? (Zeki Öner - Devrekani)⁷⁵

⁷¹ Sinema 65 (1962).

⁷² Sinema 53 (1961).

⁷³ Sinema 36 (1961).

⁷⁴ Sinema 25 (1961).

⁷⁵ Sinema 34 (1961).

The following letter implies that the audience's evaluation of stars' performance in films was not based on their ability of acting alone. Although the writer of the letter appreciated a particular star's artistic ability, artistic ability alone was not sufficient to satisfy him. He was disappointed by the change in star's hair length. In addition the letter involves a specific term that appears in other letters, too. This is the term "kompozisyon (composition)", which is used to denote an attribute of the star that makes sense only in films. Although what is meant by the term is not quite clear, the term "kompozisyon" might have a relation to the verb "to pose" and refer to the star's ability to pose in front of the camera. In this respect the term seems to refer to an arrangement of the star's body, attitude, physical appearance, and facial expressions more than to her acting or screen role.⁷⁶

"Kırık Kalpler" de seyrettiğimiz uzun saçlı Evrim Fer'i "Altın Kalpler"de kısa saçlı görünce, doğrusu bu ya, hayal kırıklığına uğradım... Uzun zamandan beri Türk Sineması'nda değişik tipler göremiyorduk, Evrim Fer, gerek fiziği, gerek oyun sanatı ve bilhassa uzun saçlarıyla sinemamızın ilgi çekici oyuncularından biri olmuştu... Acaba güzel yıldızımız saçlarını niçin kesti? Halbuki uzun saç kendisine öylesine yakışıyor ve Evrim Fer'e Türk Sineması'nda yepyeni bir tip, yepyeni bir hava ve karakter veriyordu. "Kırık Kalpler" de ünlü aktörümüz Muzaffer Tema'nın karşısındaki şahane kompozisyonu da Evrim Fer'in başka yönünü, sanatını gösteriyordu. Çok üzüldüm. Herhalde "Altın Kalpler" de Evrim Fer artistik kabiliyetinin kudretini gösteriyorsa da, "Kırık Kalpler" deki uzun saçlı Evrim Fer çok daha iyiydi. Evrim Fer kısa saç modasına kurban olmamalıydı... (Ahmet Güler – Adana)⁷⁷

These quotations point that we cannot ignore the role films play in people's apprehension of stars. In fact, celebrity of movie stars is partially defined by the fact that they appear in films. However the letters suggest that films were not alone in introducing images of stars and that cinema magazines were another exhibition space for them. It could be argued that films owed their importance to the fact that they

⁷⁶ The term also suggests stationariness rather than movement and this is one of the special characteristics of Turkish melodramas of the 1960s.

⁷⁷ Sinema 28 (1961).

provided the audience with the opportunity of meeting stars and feeling their presence in the easiest and cheapest way as the following letter implied:

Leyla [Sayar] Hanım,
Gerçekten güzel bir kadınsınız. Hem de çok güzel. Vücudunuz şahane. Tam ideal vamp diyebilirim. Ama neden arada sırada dans ettiğinize bir türlü akıl erdiremedim.⁷⁸ Sizin yerinizde olsam, dans zevkimi Ölüm Perdesi gibi filmler çevirerek tatmin ederdim. Sizi pek seven bir hayranınız olarak, belki bir gün dansı perdeye tercih etmenizi düşündüğüm içindir ki, biraz acı olduğunu tahmin ettiğim bu mektubu yazdım. Emin olun her filminize ayrı bir zevkle koşuyorum. Dansımı da seyredebilirsiniz demeyin. Yerim çok uzak. Ve Ankara veya İstanbul'un tanınmış lokallerinden birine gelip sizi seyretmek için de mali durumum müsait değil. (Erdal Alpaslan - Trabzon)⁷⁹

Similarly the letter presented below addressing Belgin Doruk points to the importance of films in the preservation of a continuous close contact between the audience and the star and to the importance of that contact to the audience. Moreover the last statement of the letter demonstrates that films' significance to the audience lied especially in allowing them to watch stars, namely their beauty, at length.

Eskiden, sizden haberler alıyorduk, çok film çeviriyordunuz; seyretmeye doyamıyorduk. Ama şimdi ne bir haber, ne de çok film seyredabiliyoruz. Bu, bizi çok üzüyor. Biz istiyoruz ki, sizi her zaman görelim... Özdemir beye kırılıyoruz. Sizi şirketinize bağlamakla hiç de iyi etmiyor. Sizin o güzel rollerinizi başka artistlerin oynamasını hiç tasvip etmiyoruz. Çok üzülüyoruz. Siz, başka şirketlerle anlaşsanız da sizin şirketiniz genç artistleri lanse etse, daha doğru olmaz mı acaba? İnşallah siz de bizi kırmaz, çok film çevirirsiniz... Sizi o kadar çok seviyoruz ki, adeta tapıyoruz. O güzel yüzünüzü doya doya seyretmek için filmlerinizi bazen iki kere seyrettiğimiz oluyor. (Yıldırım Atalay – Ankara)⁸⁰

5.3.2. Cinema Magazines as an Alternative Exhibition Place

Günlerden perşembe... Akşam üzeri... Islak parke taşlarını çiğneyerek, acele acele gazeteciye gidiyordum. Orada canım kadar sevdiğim, sevgilim ile buluşacaktım. Ona nail olmak için öyle sabırsızlanıyordum ki... Heyhat... Bu kuyruk modası da çok canımı sıkıyordu. Dişlerimi sıkarak beklemeğe başladım. Ve en nihayet sıram da gelmişti. Küçük değerini ödeyerek sevgilimi elime aldım. Belki de hayret etmişsinizdir. Sevgilim kim diye... Söyleyeyim! "Sinema dergisi"... Bu sevgilimin içinde, yazısı veya küçük bir röportajı oldu mu, daha çok severim onu... İşte o zaman, dergiyi bağrıma basar, ne hayaller kurarım kendi kendime... (Cumhur Kansır – Aydın)⁸¹

⁷⁸ Sayar was both a belly dancer and movie actress.

⁷⁹ *Sinema* 64 (1962).

⁸⁰ *Perde* 25 (1964).

⁸¹ *Sinema* 37 (1961).

The quotation above consists of the opening statements of a letter written for Türkan Şoray.⁸² The letters quoted in the previous section suggest that films function for the audience mainly as a machine producing appearances especially star appearances. However as the quotation above reveals audiences' interest in stars extended beyond their screen appearances. In other words, consumption of Yeşilçam stars was not limited to the viewing of films in which they appeared. Audiences wanted to know more about stars' off-screen personalities and activities and to keep their contact with stars continuous in at an imaginary level. Cinema magazines were the main channels, which responded these desires by providing audiences with pictures, news, rumours, interviews, and biographies relating to stars. In this respect cinema magazines could be considered another place for the production and exhibition of star images. The fact that the majority of the requests mentioned in the letters were addressed to the magazines and that the letters were published in magazines to be read by other audiences, underlines the important role of cinema magazines in the construction of the social image of the star, audiences' relation to that image, and the interaction among audiences. The letters examined in this section underline the intersection and interchange between a multiplicity of spaces of production and reception that cannot be limited to film companies and movie theatres. Moreover they make explicit that magazine journalism was not simply a complement to film industry but an essential constituent of the cinema event.⁸³

Richard Dyer argues:

⁸² The remaining part of the letter that is quoted later in the section on Türkan Şoray reveals that the writer of the letter was also in love with Şoray.

⁸³ Kadri Yurdatap explains that after his success in magazine journalism he has been invited to work in the industry as a producer because people recognized him as someone who knows how to manage things in that business world. Telephone interview. 18 April 2002.

Stars are obviously a case of appearance -all we know of them is what we see and hear before us. Yet the whole media construction of stars encourages us to think in terms of “really” -what is Crawford really like? Which biography, which word-of mouth story, which moment in which film discloses her as she really was? The star phenomenon gathers these aspects of contemporary human existence together, laced up with the question of “really”. (Heavenly Bodies 2)

There are many letters in which audiences’ curiosities about stars revolve around the question of “really”. Some of the audiences were curious about the physical appearance of a particular star. The curiosity arised from a mismatch between the audience’s personal knowledge of a star’s appearance and her appearance in photographs printed in magazines. Sometimes the mismatch had become a matter of claim between the person and his/her friends and he/she was motivated by finding out the “truth” through writing to the magazine:

... Onuncu sayınızın kapağında Belgin Doruk’un çok güzel bir portresi vardı. Ama, bu çok beğendiğim yıldızın kendisine çok yakışan beni niçin sol taraftayken sağ tarafa geçmiş. Çok merak ettim. Acaba ben mi yanılıyorum, yoksa siz mi? (Liça Kuçopulo - İstanbul)⁸⁴

... Arkadaşlarımla bahse girdik. Tutturdu, Fatma Girik’in gözleri yeşil diye. Gerçi ben kendisini hiç görmedim ama, bu yıldızın gözlerinin açık kahverengi olduğunu kuvvetle tahmin ediyorum. Hatta geçenlerde bir mecmuanın kapağında çıkan renkli fotoğrafında apaçık kahverengi olduğu belli oluyordu. Yanılıyor muyum acaba? (Süheyla Şahin - Ankara)⁸⁵

... Yakından gördüğüm ve pek çok güzel olduğunu kabul ettiğim Peri Han’ın fotoğrafları acaba niçin güzel çıkmıyor? Yıldızı görmiyen arkadaşlarıma, kendisini methettiğim zaman mecmuadaki resimleri göstererek, pek hoş değil, diyorlar... Halbuki ısrarla söyleyebilirim ki, Peri Han fotoğraflarından çok farklı... (Mira Kinoleusan - İstanbul)⁸⁶

Again one of the letters addressed directly to Cavidan Dora centered around the question of “really” but extended the limits of curiosity beyond physical appearance of the star to her off-screen life. The writer of the letter not only pointed to the

⁸⁴ Sinema 19 (1961).

⁸⁵ Sinema 20 (1961).

⁸⁶ Sinema 24 (1961).

contradictory information about the stars' private life in magazines but also suggested that the star should also stop appearing in contradictory roles in her films:

Cavidan Hanım,

Önce merhaba. Sonra bu mektubu yazmamın sebebi. Bir defa hayatınız çok enteresan. Mesela ben sizi bekar olarak biliyordum. Bir de baktım ki bir gün Sinema mecmuasında çocuğunuzun olduğu yazıldı. Sonraları İzmirli bir klüp umumi kaptanı ile çok samimi arkadaş olduğunuz yazılı. Bu içinden çıkılmaz bir muamma. Bir de sizi seven bir hayranınız olarak sizden bir ricam var. Artık filmlerinizdeki tipinizi bulmanız lazım. Kötü, erkekleri baştan çıkarıcı, şuh bir kadın mısınız? Yoksa filmlerin güzel kadını mısınız? Bu yıl çevirdiğiniz son film "Yavru Melek" mi? Bu filmdeki rolünüzü daha önce Peri Han'ın oynayacağı, sonra bu filmin onun gözlerinin rahatsızlığı yüzünden size verildiği yazılmıştı. Bu doğru mu? (Ersin Koryürek - İstanbul)⁸⁷

Similarly another audience wondered about whether Gülistan Güzey is as innocent in her off-screen life as the woman she represents in her films:

... Gülistan Güzey'in perdemizde canlandığı masum kadın tipleri kendisine pek çok yakışıyor. Hakikaten kendisinin de munis ve çok masum bir yüze sahip olduğu sizlerce de malumdur. Acaba bu masum tipin altındaki kalbin haşin mi, yoksa müşfik mi olduğunu çok merak ediyorum. (Erdoğan Gülsen - İstanbul)⁸⁸

As these letters suggest audiences did not contend with the screen image or screen personality of stars. This implies that pleasures of cinema were not limited to the film text. Audiences continuously wanted to know more and more about stars' off-screen life, background, personality, and preferences through specific questions that they addressed to magazines or stars themselves:

... Ve sizden, mecmuanızda biraz daha Leyla Sayar'dan bahsetmenizi istiyorum. Mesela, doğduğu gün, burcu, anne ve babasının isimleri, hangi renkleri tercih eder, en çok sevdiği yemek, maskotu nedir, köpeği var mı (ismi, kaç yaşında, cinsi) hangi parfümü kullanır, sabahları kaçta kalkar, en son saç rengi ve şekli v.s... (Lale - Ankara)⁸⁹

Size [Göksel Arsoy'a] iki سوالim var.

- 1- Hangi ecnebi artistleri beğeniyorsunuz?
- 2- Hangi renk gözleri beğeniyorsunuz?
- 3- En çok hangi sporu seviyorsunuz?⁹⁰

Leyla Hanım,

Size bir kaç سوالimiz var...

⁸⁷ Sinema 64 (1962).

⁸⁸ Sinema 38 (1961).

⁸⁹ Sinema 26 (1961).

⁹⁰ Sinema 66 (1962).

- 1- Hangi tip erkeklerden hoşlanıyorsunuz?
- 2- Muzaffer Tema ile arkadaşlığınızın derecesi? İlerisi için neler söyleyebilirsiniz?
- 3- Tahsiliniz?
- 4- Nasıl artist oldunuz?⁹¹

Such questions might be written for an extra purpose, too. It seems that the easiest way to write to cinema magazines is to ask a few questions about a star. In this respect it could be argued that stars were also influential in the establishment of a continuous contact and relation between cinema magazines and their readers. However it must be noted that these questions do not seem to be aimed for a “chicken-talk” in which the purpose is not to exchange information but “cement civility” (Halberstam 65). It is more appropriate to conceive these questions as aiming for a kind of “bull-talk”, for “exchanging genuine information” through personal questions (Halberstam 65).⁹²

Some of the letters suggest that sometimes the extrafilmic was more important than the filmic for the audience. Cinema magazines also included topics other than stars such as news about the film industry, interviews with producers and directors, reviews and criticisms of films. However audiences seem to follow these magazines mostly to find out about stars, especially their off-screen lives. For example, in the letter presented below, one of the audiences referred to the magazine’s stage interview with Peri Han that revolved around events occurring during the shooting of a film. He argued that the interview did not meet his desire, which he figured as to “know the star more than he knew himself”, and asked the magazine for further information:

⁹¹ Sinema 64 (1962).

⁹² These “levels of talk” are defined by Fritz Perls. Perls mentions a third type of conversation called “elephant-talk” in which “deepest questions are accompanied by the body language of dramatic gestures” (Halberstam 65). The questions quoted here are not such questions. However in some of the expressive letters, especially those in which audiences express their feelings about stars, it is possible to sense such a body language accompanying the words.

... Çok hoş, çok güzel. Hayatımda okuduğum röportajlardan en iyisi. Herşeyden evvel, bir set röportajı olduğu için Peri Han'ın özelliklerinden bahsedememişsiniz. Zaten, diğer set röportajlarınızda da, filmde oynayan artistlerin özelliklerinden değil de, sadece filmin çevrilişinden ve o anda karşılaşılan olaylardan bahsediyorsunuz. Halbuki ben, çok sevdiğim Peri Han hakkında daha fazla bir malumat sahibi olmak istiyorum. Onu kendimden daha iyi tanımak istiyorum. Şayet mümkünse, onun bir röportajını neşretmenizi ve fırsat düştükçe daha başka sütunlarınızda da ondan bahsetmenizi rica ediyorum. (Cabbar Sakın - Adana)⁹³

In a similar vein one of the audiences emphasized the extent to which Cavidan Dora's supporting a particular football team, Beşiktaş, was important for him as a fan of her:

Kıymetli Akrisimiz Cavidan Hanım,
Ben de sizin hayranlarınızdan biriyim. Hele Beşiktaşlı olmanızla iftihar ediyorum. Sizden ricam imzalı bir resminizi göndermeniz ve aşağıdaki iki soruya mümkünse cevap vermenizdir.
1- En çok beğendiğiniz filminiz?
2- Aşk, para, şöhret. Bu üç şıktan hangisini tercih edersiniz? (Ateş Ersever - İstanbul)⁹⁴

Not only off-screen personality and preferences of stars but also their private life was among the information that audiences were curious about:

Efgan Efgan ve Muhterem Nur macerası hala bizler için muamma. Acaba gizlice evlendiler mi, yoksa uydurulmuş bir dedikodu mu? Bilmiyoruz. Geçenlerde Efgan'a bir soruda unutamadığı bir hatırasını sormuşlar. O da "Antalya'daki günlerimi unutamıyorum," demiş. Antalya'ya ise Meryem filmi için gitmişti ve Muhterem Nur'la birlikte oynuyordu. Buna göre bizler biraz şüpheye düştük. Önceleri olmaz diyorduk ama, şimdi meraklandık. Acaba aralarında böyle bir şey geçti mi? (M. Kinolesan - İstanbul)⁹⁵

In fact private life is an important constituent of a particular mode of stardom. Christine Geraghty divides stardom into three categories and distinguishes between "star-as-celebrity", "star-as-professional", and "star-as-performer". In the celebrity mode, the star's fame "rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work" and the star is "famous for having a lifestyle". In other words, in the celebrity mode, "the emphasis is on the private sphere" and the films' contribution to

⁹³ Sinema 38 (1961).

⁹⁴ Sinema 64 (1962).

⁹⁵ Sinema 29 (1961).

star's celebrity is relatively weak. The celebrity of the star is constructed through extrafilmic elements such as "gossip, press reports, magazine articles and public relations". Whereas for the "star-as-professional" and "star-as-performer", "the relationship between star and audience is based much more substantially on the film text." The star-as-professional is famous for his/her work, in that it makes sense through "the combination of a particular star image with a particular film context". Geraghty argues that the star-as-professional "arises when we check whether an actor's presence in a film seems to correspond with his or her professional role". Such stars are identified with a particular genre and a stable star image is of crucial importance for their existence as a star. In other words stars as professionals act as themselves. "Star-as-performer" is distinguished from "star-as-professional" in its being based not on a stable star image in films but on the power of acting or performance. Geraghty notes that "stars as performers are marked by an emphasis on 'impersonation', on a distinction between star and role which is effaced in the star-as-professional" (187-93). Based on Geraghty's framework of stardom, it could be argued that, the images of stars that the audience met in cinema magazines corresponded to the category of star-as-celebrity. Cinema magazines could be considered as the main channel that contributed to the construction stars-as-celebrities. The information and rumours about stars' private lives in cinema magazines could be considered as other fictions circulating outside movie theatre. Even sometimes these fictions resembled to soap operas. Some of the letters give the impression that audiences watched stars' private lives as if they were watching a film or a soap opera, as if they were face to face with another diegesis outside the movie theatre. However we must note that both fictions were constitutive of the particular cinema event. The below letter written to Belgin Doruk points to the existence of a

continuous flow between the star's on-screen and off-screen presence and its importance in the audience's interest and relationship to her:

Şimdiye kadar çok sayıda Türk filmi seyrettim. Fakat bunlar arasında sizin filmleriniz nedense bana sanki hakiki imişçesine tesir ediyor. Bunun sebebini ben, size olan hayranlığımda buldum. Aile hayatınızı ilgilendiren bir-iki sualime cevap vermek lütfunda bulunursanız beni çok memnun edeceksiniz.

- 1- Çocuğunuz kaç yaşında, ismi nedir?
- 2- Şimdiki eşinizle mesut musunuz?
- 3- Eşinizin Göksel Arsoyla film çevirmemeniz hususundaki kararı üzerinde ne düşünüyorsunuz?
- 4- Türk film yıldızları arasında kimleri takdir ediyorsunuz? (Çağlayan Kurdoğlu - Adana)⁹⁶

The poems written for three stars by one of the audiences imply that the social image of the star is an inter-textual construct; in other words it is constructed through a continuous interchange between a variety of texts such as films (i.e. screen roles), news and rumours in cinema magazines (i.e. private life), and the reception texts produced by audiences:

Çolpan İlhan
Bakışların getirir bizi dile,
Karagümrüklü Deli Cemile,
Çok yaşayın oğlunuz Kerem ile,
Size candan mesut nice nice sene!..

Muhterem Nur
Muhterem Nur iyi kalpli kadındır,
Evlennesi ya bugün ya yarındır,
Filmlerde her rolünde narindir,
Sinemanın sevimli Muhterem'i...

Sezer Sezin
Sana hiç diyecek yok Sezer abla,
Kocacığımı elinde iyi sakla,
Sulananları bileklerinden hakla,
Sen bilirsin işini be Nebahat abla!.. (Gülümser Kunt - İstanbul)⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Sinema 66 (1962).

⁹⁷ Sinema 27 (1961).

5.3.3. Audiences as the Third Channel of (Re)Production and Circulation

Audience letters examined in this study are full of requests. Parallel to stars' being at the centre of Yeşilçam event the majority of the requests mentioned in the letters are related to stars. Photographs of, interviews with, news, and gossip about stars were among the main requests addressed to magazines by audiences. Some of the letters were written solely for such a purpose whereas others had requests as an attachment to the ending part of the letter. Praising and appreciating the star before making the request was a common attitude in such letters. Audiences especially referred to a particular film of the star as a source of their appreciation:

Pek sevdiğim mecmuanızın birinci sayısında Cavidan Dora'nın mayolu bir resmi olduğunu hatırlıyorum. Çok beğendiğim bu fotoğrafı, rica etsem acaba tekrar neşreder misiniz? (Kaya Solağgil - İzmir)⁹⁸

Hemen hemen şimdiye kadar Nevin Aypar'ın bütün filmlerini seyretmiş gibiyim. Bilhassa "Toprak" filmindeki rolünü unutmam. Acaba sizden rica etsem, Nevin Aypar'ın son fotoğraflarından birini basar mısınız? (Aliye Karasunel - İzmir)⁹⁹

"Dokuz Dağın Efesi" ve "Üç Arkadaş" gibi filmleriyle kendisine hayran kaldığım Fikret Hakan'a ait bir röportajın gelecek sayılarınızda yayınlanmasını rica ederim. (Güzin Sayıl - İzmir)¹⁰⁰

However as Jenkins argues fans are not simply passive followers of the media; they also "assert cultural authority, claiming a moral right to complain about producer actions challenging their own interest" (Textual Poachers 87). There is a group of request letters, which we can consider in this respect. In these letters audiences criticized the magazine's unequal treatment of actors in publishing about them as a means to justify the reasonableness of their requests. Magazines were criticized for favouring only certain stars and neglecting others, particularly "character players

⁹⁸ Sinema 20 (1961).

⁹⁹ Sinema 19 (1961).

¹⁰⁰ Sinema 26 (1961).

(karakter oyuncularını)". Forgetting certain stars or intentionally not mentioning about them due to some private reasons are also subjects of criticism:

... Mecmuanızda devamlı olarak Muhterem Nur, Belgin Doruk, Leyla Sayar, Türkan Şoray, Göksel Arsoy, Orhan Günşiray, Ayhan Işık ve daha birkaç tane meşhurdan başka kimselerin kapak resmi çıkmamaktadır. Halbuki, Türkiye'nin en çok sevilen ve Türkiye'de en çok hayranı olan Ahmet Tarık Tekçe'nin resimleri diğerlerine nazaran, yok denilecek kadar azdır. Çevirdikleri film adedine göre dersiniz, herkesten çok filmde oynadığı muhakkak. Sanat dersiniz, en az diğerleri kadar sanatkar. Ama güzellik meselesi üzerinde duruyorsanız ona bir diyeceğim yok. Fakat, bence sanatkarlar hiçbir zaman, fizik güzellikleri ile mukayese edilemez. Türkiye'de en büyük seyirci kitlelerini peşinden sürükleyen ve en büyük sempatiyi toplamış bulunan sevgili ağabeyimiz Ahmet Tarık Tekçe'nin de diğerleri gibi sık sık kapak resminin basılmasını rica ediyoruz. (Faik Sefer - Yozgat)¹⁰¹

Hayranın olduğum, uzun süreden beri Türk sineması'nda kendisine yer edinmiş bir adamı bu 25 sayınız içinde, her sayı unuttunuz... Bu nasıl oldu? Aklım ermiyor bir türlü... Aktör Hüseyin Peyda'yı nasıl unutabilirsiniz? (Saim Geyikgil - Diyarbakır)¹⁰²

Asking autographed photos from stars had an important place among other requests. Audiences considered the ownership of such photographs as a means to "know the star better". Moreover asking an autographed photo seems to provide the person with the opportunity of communicating not only his/her admiration to the star but also the idea that there is a bond between the person and the star which makes him/her special among other audiences. The request of autographed photo seems to be a demand for the concretization of that bond and receiving such a photo from the star seems to be thought as the approval of the bond by the star:

Çok kıymetli Göksel Ağabeyciğim,
Size hayranım. Perde hayatınızda gösterdiğiniz başarılar, beni size bir kat daha bağlıyor. İmkan dahilinde buraya gelen filmlerinizin ekserisini gördüm. Bu zamana kadar çeşitli mecmualarda sizin için yazılan yazıları okudum. Sizi daha iyi tanımak istiyorum. Bunun için de sizden, yukarıdaki adresime imzalı bir resminizi göndermenizi bütün kalbimle rica ediyorum. Sevgilerimle. Kardeşiniz. (Gülser Özarlan - Bandırma)¹⁰³

Çok Kıymetli ve Değerli Aktör Göksel Bey'e;

¹⁰¹ Sinema 48 (1961).

¹⁰² Sinema 29 (1961).

¹⁰³ Sinema 65 (1962).

Sizi rahatsız ettiğim için önce özür dilerim. Fakat sizin filmlerinizi çok beğeniyorum ve aynı zamanda devamlı takip ediyorum. Sizden bir fotoğrafınızı rica ediyorum. Belki sizin için maddi değerden başka kıymeti yoktur. Fakat benim için ise... Bu rica geleceği günü sabırsızlıkla bekliyorum. Yalnız en son çektiğiniz bir fotoğrafınızı imzalayarak göndermenizi sabırsızlıkla bekliyorum. (İnci Kipmen - İstanbul)¹⁰⁴

Kıymetli Jönümüz Göksel Bey;

Diğer sanatçılar arasında en çok sizi beğeniyorum. Sanat kabiliyetinize hayranım. Her filmde ayrı ayrı mevzularda şahsiyetleri mükemmel bir şekilde canlandırılıyorsunuz. Bütün filmlerinizi görmeye çalışıyorum. Her filminizi beğendiğim gibi "Bülbül Yuvası" filmindeki Rock ın Rollunuzu çok beğendim onun için sizden rock ın roll yaparken bir resminizi rica edeceğim. Eğer yoksa başka bir pozunuzu yollayın. (Sibel Evliyazade - İstanbul)¹⁰⁵

Some of the audiences expressed that they took pride in owning autographed photo of a particular star. As the parallelism established between the autographed photo of a star and the book of a writer suggests it was the signature, which made such photos special among other photographs (e.g. those printed in magazines or sold in shops). The signature on the photograph could serve not only as a trace of the presence of the star but also of the contact with the star, which is something special and privileging:

Evimin bütün odaları Belgin Doruk'un resimleri ile dolu olmasına rağmen bence resimlerin en kıymetlisi, -onun imzasıyla süslü olanı- bu duvarlarda olmadığı için çok üzülüyorum. (Şule İmren - İstanbul)¹⁰⁶

Biz aynı sınıfta okuyan sekiz arkadaşız ve Hülya Koçyiğit hanımı çok severiz. Onun resimleriyle dolu bir albüm yaptık. Bir de kendi elleriyle imzalanmış bir resmi albümümüzde bulunsun istedik. Çünkü bu bize gurur verecekti... (İclal Aşkın)¹⁰⁷

Sayın Çolpan İlhan,

Kardeşinizin şiiirde, sizin sinemadaki sanatınıza hayranım. Sanatlarına hayran olduğum bu iki kardeşin birer hatırasına malik olmayı çok isterdim. Onun bütün kitapları var ama, sizin tek bir resminiz dahi yok.¹⁰⁸

We can describe audiences behind these requests as fans. The term "fan" is an abbreviated form of the word "fanatic" which has its roots in the Latin word "fanaticus" which meant "of or belonging to the temple, a temple servant, a devotee".

¹⁰⁴ Sinema 66 (1962).

¹⁰⁵ Sinema 66 (1962).

¹⁰⁶ Sinema 25 (1961).

¹⁰⁷ Perde 16 (1967).

¹⁰⁸ Sinema 80 (1962).

The term “fan” first was used in 19th century to describe followers of sports teams. Later it became a term used to describe “any faithful devotee of sports or commercial entertainment” (Jenkins, Textual Poachers 12). Based on this definition we can conceive the audience constructed by the letters as fans based on the fact that they are faithful devotees of stars. Jean-Noel Kapferer argues that “the fan wishes to conquer the star, but s/he remains unreachable”. In these circumstances the audience need to find substitutes for the star. Audiences’ demand for pictures, autographed photos, interviews, news, and rumours could have such a function in audiences’ relation to stars, too. It might be true that, as Kapferer suggests, “the fan who is unable to own the star would like to own a piece of him/her in this way” (220-1). However this does not seem to be the only reason for audiences. The demand for such materials also seems to be one of the most important constituents of a particular culture activated by the Yeşilçam event. The demand for such extrafilmic materials could also be conceived as a demand for becoming a part of the culture and collective activity formed around the star and inserting that into the intersubjective sphere. In other words fandom does not appear to be just a matter of devotion, adoration, or worship but also a sense of “belonging”. This “sense of belonging” which the root of the term “fan”, “fanaticus,” stressed has been overlooked in the latest uses of the term “fan” within the framework of the debates on stardom and fandom.

As it is argued by John L. Caughey “mutual acquaintances” about particular people in a society “often provides the primary basis for socializing” (32). In order act as a member of society, or at least a community, an individual needs to know about particular people who have a place within the cultural memory of that society or community. This is because such knowledge not only would help the individual in

involving in various conversations, but also his/her status and power in them. The requests mentioned in the letters examined in this study could also be interpreted within such a framework. It seems to me that what is requested through the demands mentioned by audiences extends beyond their explicit object. The knowledge and possessions that would be obtained in return to these requests could have social functions in the everyday life of the owner of the request. A female correspondent described how her ignorance about a star turned herself into an “outsider” in the eye of her company and how she became herself a fan of the star:

... o hafta bir arkadaşın evinde toplanmıştık. O gün herkes sanki daha heyecanlıydı. Konuşmak için acele ediyorlardı. Konuşmalar sırasında, danstan, figürlerden v.s. söz ediliyordu. Meraklanmıştım. Acaba daha benim öğrenmediğim bir dans mı icat olmuştu? Fakat, arada bir kız ismi geçiyordu. Kimdi bu? Tam ben sormaya hazırlanırken, bir arkadaş: “En çok sevdiğim moda bu oldu.” Dedi. Sonra da ilave etti: “Leyla Sayar modası...” Şaşırmıştım. “Kim bu Leyla Sayar?” dememe kalmadı, bütün başlar bana çevrildi. Hepsi hayret içinde, bana bakıyorlardı. Gülmeğe başladılar. Bana, bu cahilliğimden (!) dolayı acır gibi bakıyorlardı. Sonra da anlatmağa başladılar ... Ev sahibi hanım önüme bir dosya koydu. İçinde esmer, sarışın değişik pozlarda, benim de görür görmez çok sevdiğim, çok güzel, çok cici bir kızın resimleri vardı... Tabii, şimdi bende onun bir numaralı hayranıyım. Ve sizden, mecmuanızda biraz daha Leyla Sayar’dan bahsetmenizi istiyorum. Mesela, doğduğu gün, burcu, anne ve babasının isimleri, hangi renkleri tercih eder, en çok sevdiği yemek maskotu nedir, köpeği var mı (ismi, kaç yaşında, cinsi) hangi parfümü kullanır, sabahları kaçta kalkar, en son saç rengi ve şekli v.s... (Lale – Ankara)¹⁰⁹

In the letter above we observe the traces of the word “fanaticus” which meant “belonging to the temple, a temple servant.” The transformation in the writer of the letter could be interpreted as becoming a member and “servant” of an imaginary “temple”, an imaginary community, more than simply becoming a devotee of the star. Another letter by the same audience suggests that knowledge about the details of the life of a star was not only shared in conversations but it also became the basis of a style of life for the community:

Berberde bir arkadaşla karşılaştık. Konuşma sırasında kaçta kalktığı, hangi yiyeceği sevdiği geçti.
“-Leyla’nın kalktığı saatte!...”

¹⁰⁹ Sinema 26 (1961).

“- Onun en çok sevdiği yiyecekleri!...”

Gibi cevaplar aldım. Herhalde saçının şekli de onunki gibiydi. Kolejde en şüppe olduğumuz çağlarda bile böyle değildi durum. Şimdi Ankara sinemalarından birinde filmi oynayacakmış. Sinema kenar semtlerden birinde olduğu halde yer ayırttık. Herkes yüzüklerini orta parmaklarına takıyor. Herkes Fenerbahçe’yi tutuyor. Çünkü o da öyle yapıyormuş... Teyplerde Leyla şarkısı. Ama rekor bende. İçinde Leyla geçen bütün şarkıları banda aldım... (Lale – Ankara)¹¹⁰

We observe that the experience of a certain star image expands beyond its initial consumption through ongoing conversations and relations among audiences. According to Jenkins this is one of the characteristics of “fan reading” in general (Textual Poachers 45). Jenkins argues that “fan reception cannot and does not exist in isolation, but it is always shaped through input from other fans and motivated, at least partially, by a desire for further interaction with a larger social and cultural community” (Textual Poachers 76). Close interests in different elements making up the star image could also be conceived as the signs of a desire for membership into imaginary communities formed around these elements.

The letters imply that the image of the star does not remain in the media where it is originally produced but circulates through other media and in everyday life. Jackie Stacey who has examined the influences of stardom in everyday life has called people’s ways of becoming like stars or imitating them as “extra-cinematic identificatory practices” (Star Gazing 159). However it must be noted that, as the statements in the letters imply, the audience do not simply imitate the star image. They also contribute to the making of the image and its circulation in society. They add to or transform the image according to their interests; they reproduce it.

¹¹⁰ Sinema 34 (1961).

5.3.4. Imaginary Social Relationships: Bringing Stars Home

As has been mentioned before, the letters suggest that audiences' experience of cinema was not limited to the movie theatre and the film on a white screen. In most of the letters it appears that films were important in the sense that they were opening a space where people met stars who would become a part of their life outside the movie theatre.¹¹¹ The letters imply that audiences continued to engage in other relationships with stars after the experience of film watching, too. It is possible to argue that cinema magazines, which were full of articles, news, interviews, rumours and photographs of stars constructed an alternative imaginary space where the audience could meet stars and engage in a variety of imaginary relations and dialogues with them. However the letters continuously point to the fact that audiences' relation to cinema, namely stars, were not confined to the actual duration of media consumption, be it film watching or magazine reading / "watching". At that point we need to ask, as Altman does, "what kind of afterlife does the cinema event have?" (13), in other words, what is its residue and what happens to that residue?

The letters suggest that one of the residues of Yeşilçam was the formation of a space other than the space of film, movie theatre or cinema magazine where audiences could engage in "imaginary social relationships" with stars. "Imaginary social relationship" is a concept developed by John L. Caughey in his book entitled Imaginary Social Worlds. Caughey distinguishes between "actual social relationship" that involves actual interaction between real people and "imaginary social relationship" that is devoid of face-to-face interaction but still parallels a social relationship (17). He

¹¹¹ Of course the context in which these letters circulated might be effective on the formation of such a picture.

argues that '[o]ur "real" social world consists of the people with whom we actually interact'; but there are also "other beings who may be very significant to [us], but with whom [we do] not engage in actual face-to-face relations" (20-1). The media figures, according to Caughey, constitute one class of these beings. In 1960s Turkey cinema was the most popular media mainly due to its being one of the cheapest forms of collective entertainment.¹¹² Relatedly, Yeşilçam stars were among the most popular media figures. As the letters imply many of the audiences were concerned with a particular star or a group of stars in some way. The terms used in the letters in addressing stars suggest explicitly or implicitly that audiences' attachments to stars, which extended beyond films and magazines, paralleled an actual social relationship. Many of the audiences addressed stars through very intimate expressions in their letters as if stars were their friends, relatives, sisters, brothers or lovers and, depending on their attachment, they exhibited a deep concern in the successes or failures in stars' professional lives, their marriage, bad events such as sickness or separation from a lover in their everyday life. Audiences took these seriously and emotionally. The letters involve expressions of addressing such as "sister (abla)", "sister-in-law (yenge)", "my brother (kardeşim)"; signatures such as "your sister (kardeşin)"; and expressions relating to affects such as regret (i.e. "üzüldüm", "üzülürüm"), hurt (i.e. "kırılırım", "kırma beni"), and offence (i.e. "darılırım") all of which suggest a feeling of closeness and intimacy.

¹¹² There was no television yet.

Such an image contradicts the image of star as a divine person at some unreachable place. Fans' attachment to stars has generally been evaluated with respect to a certain notion of "escapism." Stacey argues:

Generally escapism is associated with leaving behind one's own life and participating in another imaginary world for a short period of time ... The differences between these fantasy worlds which the stars inhabited and those of the spectator provide the possibility for the spectator to leave her world temporarily and become part of the star's world. (*Star Gazing* 116-7)

Stacey makes this argument based on the accounts of actual female audiences of Hollywood stars in Britain that she has investigated. However the letters examined in this study suggest that rather than attempting to escape to the attractive world of Yeşilçam stars audiences, somehow, tried to bring them "home".

It is possible to conceive the process of "bringing home" as a form of "insinuation" that Certeau mentions as a mode of reading. "Insinuation" for Certeau refers to

the introduction of a supplementary element, bearing the mark of the individual subject, into a structured consumption of other elements in such a way as to alter the configuration and hence signification of these elements. (Ahearne 174)

The letters examined below seem to carry the traces of "insinuations" through which audiences rewrite the star text –as well as themselves- in terms of their private experiences, impressions, affects, and so on. Audiences do not leave behind their own life in their involvements with stars. On the contrary they seem to inscribe their own life upon the world the stars inhabit. In other words they bring stars home. However it must be noted that that the term "home" here does not refer to a physical space fixed in space and time, but rather to an imaginary space that is in a continuous process of becoming.

Some of the letters are marked with a melodramatic rhetoric. Here, following Brooks, we understand melodrama not simply as a set of themes, but, in a broader sense, as “a mode of imagining and representing” (vii); as “a mode of conception and expression ... for making sense of experience” (xvii). The melodramatic rhetoric in the letters reveals itself through direct and explicit uttering of emotions/emotional states, which somehow relate to stars, in an excessive manner. It must be noted that these emotions are not always “positive” emotions, but also “negative”. Negative “emotions” are mostly accompanied by moral judgements and morality is also a characteristic of melodrama as a mode of conception and expression. Even, Brooks argues that melodrama is “not only a moralistic drama but the drama of morality” (20). Melodramatic rhetoric, according to Brooks, “represents a victory over repression” in that it ‘provides the possibility of saying what is in “real life” unsayable’ (41). Brooks writes:

If we can sense its [melodrama’s] appeal (as well as its evident limitations), it must be because we are attracted to (though perhaps simultaneously repulsed by) the imaginary possibility of a world where we are solicited to say everything, where manners, the fear of self-betrayal, and accommodations to the other no longer exert a controlling force.” (42)¹¹³

It seems to me that melodramatic rhetoric, conceptualized in this way, could still be considered as providing the possibility of another form of “bringing home” if we understand “home” as an imaginary space where “sayable” / “unsayable” dichotomy loses its meaning because there is no “outside/other”, which determines these categories, in “home”.

¹¹³ Brooks also explains the negative appraisal of melodrama with melodrama’s constructing a space where everything could be said. He writes: “The critical resistance and embarrassment that melodrama may elicit could derive from its refusal of censorship and repression” (41).

In what follows we examine the letters in that category in terms of the types of “imaginary social relations” they represent, which could also be named as ways of bringing stars home.

5.3.4.1. “In Better Times, Hard Times...”¹¹⁴

The following quotations provide some insight to the extent to which audiences cared for their favourite stars as if they had a close relationship. They suggest that audiences not only followed the developments relating to on-screen and off-screen lives of stars but also transformed these developments into sources of personal satisfaction, proud, and sometimes pain. In fact some of the audiences seem to “exaggerate” their own importance while expressing their caring for the star.

... Ben Yılmaz Duru'nun hayranlarından birisiyim. Kendisinden sık sık bahsetmeniz mümkün değil mi? Hele bu değerli aktörümüzün setteki bir dövüş sahnesinde burnunun kanamasına ne kadar üzüldüm bilseniz. Acaba bu gibi şeyler hep Yılmaz'ın başına mı gelir? (Selma Nuray - İstanbul)¹¹⁵

Soley ablamla birbirinize çok yaklaşıyorsunuz. Siz [Göksel Arsoy] böyle tatlı bir eş seçtiğiniz için kardeşiniz çok bahtiyardır. Onunla beraber resim imzalayıp göndermediğinize çok memnun oldum. Siz aynı zamanda mazbut bir aile reisisiniz. Sizi her yönden takdir ediyorum. Kardeşinizden size, Soley ablama kucak dolusu sevgi ve sempatilerimi bildiririm. Biraz hırçın tabiatlıya benzersiniz. Soley ablamı üzmeyin de kimi üzerseniz üzün. Size tekrar tekrar yuvanıza neş'e ve saadetler temenni ediyorum. Manevi Kardeşiniz. (Akasya Akıncı - İzmir)¹¹⁶

As the last quotation implies sometimes the audience's attachment might extend beyond the star to his/her family. This might have several functions in the life of the audience. In that letter, the person seems to communicate her attachment to Arsoy by approving and appreciating his personal choice, his wife, but more than that she seems

¹¹⁴ “İyi Günde, Kötü Günde...”

¹¹⁵ *Sinema* 83 (1962).

¹¹⁶ *Sinema* 66 (1962).

to transform that to a common point between the star and herself -the point that they have an affection towards the same person.

The below letter, describing the effects of the death of Ahmet Tarık Tekçe on the writer of the letter exhibits not only a deep emotional attachment but also intimacy to such an extent that the person could express even her care for the star's wife and daughter who were left behind: "your beloved daughter and wife are entrusted to us."

Hastalığımı öğrendiğim zaman şaşkına döndüğüm gibi, o içimizi yakan ve dilimin söylemeye varmadığı uğursuz haberi de radyodan duyduğum an göz yaşlarımı tutamamış, zaptedilmesi mümkün olmayan hıçkırıklarımın bir zaman kalakalmıştı. Her gece yatarken o günkü kusurlarımı affetmesi için Allaha dua ederken seni bize bağışlaması için de çok yalvarmışım ... Bütün gece senin çeşitli mecmualardaki röportajlarını kitaplığımdan bulup saatlerce okudum. Resimlerine dalgın dalgın baktım. Bütün genç kızlar tığ gibi tabir edilen yakışıklı jönlere hayranken, ben de sana hayrandım. Ama bu hayranlığımın nasıl bir duygu olduğunu tarif edemem. Seni sen olduğun için eşin ve çocuğunla, filmlerdeki kötü karakterlerin, çapkın bakışların, dudak büküşleriyle çok beğeniyordum. Bundan böyle yerli filmlerimizdeki şimdiye kadar çevirdiğin kurdeleleri nasıl seyredeceğim, öldüğün halde seni diri gibi nasıl göreceğim. Zaten sen ölmedin ve seni seven biz sinemaseverlerin kalbinde daima yaşıyacaksın. Tanrı seni bizden daha çok sevdi. Rahat ve huzur içinde uyu. Çok sevgili kızın ve eşin bizlere emanet ... (Ülkü Aşımaz - Ereğli)¹¹⁷

5.3.4.2. Share About Themselves

Some of the audiences wrote to specific stars to share about themselves. We quote below from two such letters. In both letters, the audience used a very intimate language in addressing the star and both expressed how the star had affected his/her love affairs. The first letter was written to Göksel Arsoy by a male audience and the writer of the letter addressed Arsoy either with his first name or expressions such as "my brother" and "my friend". Moreover he implied that he was more than an

¹¹⁷ Ses 44 (1964). Ses magazine had a reader column, too. It did not print audience letters but only answers to their questions. This letter was an exception to that and we wanted to use it here despite the fact that Ses magazine is not considered in this study.

ordinary fan by stressing at the end of the letter that he did not expect him to send photograph or respond:

Merhaba Göksel,
Kardeşim darılma gücenme ama, sana bir zamanlar çok kıızıyordum. Bir kızla dalgamızı geçiyorduk. Senin yüzünden -tutkunluğu- ayrıldık. İlk günler beni bir kızdan ettin diye kızmıştım sana. Ama şimdi seviyorum seni. Meğer bana kesilen başka biri varmış ben konuşuyorum diye açılmıyormuş. Şimdi öyle güzel geçiyor ki günlerim. Nasıl olmuşta onu bu zamana kadar bulamamışım diye hayıflanıyorum. Gördün mü Göksel bey dostum? Şimdi seviyorum seni artık. Kızı kolundan tuttuğum gibi senin filmlerine götürüyor “bak bizim dümenimizi başlatan bu çocuk” diyorum. Anlayacağın devamlı iki müşteri daha kazandın. Bana resim gönderme, cevapta yazma. Sinema Mecmuasına gönderiyorum bu mektubu oku bakalım. (Ahmet Ertürk)¹¹⁸

In the second letter a female audience expressed that it was Orhan Günşıray who was responsible from her split from her fiancée. She also talked to Günşıray about her plans in the future, which also included him:

Merhaba Orhan Bey,
Lejyon dönüşüde sizi ilk defa görmüştüm. Sonra Fosforlu Cevriye’yi nişanlımla seyrettiğimi unutarak öyle bir dalış dalmışım ki, ister inanın ister inanmayın, zatı aliniz nişanlımla ayrılışımda en mühim amil oldunuz. Yok canım, üzülmeysin. Ben patavatsızlık ettiysem sizin neyinize ... Tabii günün birinde şartlar daha müsaitleşir de fırsat elde edersem perdeye geçmek tasavvurundayım. Ve o zaman da en büyük arzum sizinle bir filmde oynamak olacak. (Mina Atadeniz - İstanbul)¹¹⁹

5.3.4.3. Request Favour

One of the aspects of the social image of stars was that they endured a life in prosperity. Parallel to that a few audiences requested financial favour from particular stars. Below we quote from two letters that had such a request as their subject matter.

One is addressed to Fatma Girik and the other is addressed to Çolpan İlhan. Both of the audiences were male and imagined the stars as enduring a life in abundance. They both addressed them with terms such as “abla” and “yenge”, which involved feelings of not only respect but also closeness and intimacy.

Çolpan Yenge!

¹¹⁸ Sinema 53 (1961).

¹¹⁹ Sinema 64 (1962).

Senden benim için pek fazla önemli olan bir ricam var. Hayatımda ilk defa bu vaziyete düşünüyorum ve ilk defa yalvarıyorum. Bana bu ay sonuna kadar iki yüz lira lazım. Bu parayı elime geçen ilk fırsatta ödeyeceğime namusum üzerine söz veriyorum. Ne olur yenge beni kırma. Bu para belki senin cep harçlığından daha azdır. Ama, benim için binlerce lira değerinde olduğuna şüpheleniz olmasın.¹²⁰

Fatma Abla,

... Perde muhabirinin bir sorusuna karşılık katınızın 300 bin liraya mal olduğunu söylüyorsunuz. Güle güle oturmanızı dilerim. Şimdi sizden benim bir ricam olacak. Mert bir hanıma, mertçe teklif... 18.12.1966 tarihli Milliyet gazetesinde "Holstein" cinsi inek satışı yapıldığını okudum. Sayın Fatma hanım, benim gibi dertli, genç bir aile reisinin elinden tutacağınıza inanarak şimdi sizden felçli kızımın hatırı için bu satışı yapılan ineklerden bana, uzun vadeli borç mukabili, bütçenizin müsait olduğu nisbette inek alıverirseniz inanınız ki, hayatınızda ilk ve son iyilik bu olacaktır. (Hamza Saçma - Manisa)¹²¹

It must be noted that the image of the star as a rich but also good hearted and brave person in these letters, relied upon a knowledge which is a combination of information obtained from magazines and stars' screen roles. Especially good heartedness and braveness were distinguishing aspects of some of the characters played by both stars in films.

5.3.4.4. Request Personal Contact

Some of the audiences did not contend with photographs, news, or interviews of stars and they wanted to contact the star personally. The reasons for contacting stars were different. Sometimes the person wanted to contact the star as a friend, sometimes because he/she admired the star, or for a personal affair. However all of the audiences who wanted to contact the star addressed him/her in an intimate way as if they knew them very well or as if they lived with them side by side. Self-confidence was a distinguishing aspect of such audiences:

Kıymetli jönümüz Eşref [Kolçak] Bey,
Sizinle 3 sene önce Süleymaniye'deki Hacı Baba lokantasında yani kayınpederinizin lokantasında tanışmıştık. Yemek yemek için tesadüfen o lokantaya gelmişim ... Ne yazık ki sizi ilk ve son olarak gördüğümden bu güne kadar 3 sene geçmiş bulunuyor. Bu

¹²⁰ Sinema 80 (1962).

¹²¹ Perde 8 (1967).

müddet içinde 10 defa İstanbul'a gelmeme rağmen artık sizi göremiyorum. Çünkü randevu yerimiz sayılan Hacı Baba lokantasının tabelasında (ERCİYAS) lokantası yazıyordu. Mart ayı ortalarında Allah izin verirse İstanbul'da olacağım. Sizden ricam Hacı Baba lokantasının yeni adresidir. Yani 1,5 ay sonrası için, şimdiden sizden randevu istiyorum gibi birşey... (Fuat Özyazıcı - Trabzon)¹²²

Gelelim isteklerime... İsteklerime dediğime bakmayın. Bana öyle resim gönderin, mektup gönderin falan demiyeceğim. Yılbaşı tatilinde İstanbul'a geleceğim. İlk ayın ikinci günü saat 14.30 da Roof-bar'da olacağım. Sizi [Göksel Arsoy] bekliyorum. Geleceğinize ve kendi güzelliğime inanıyorum. Buluşmamız için Roof'a gelmeniz yeter. Ben sizi tanıyorum ya... Şimdilik yalnız selamlarım sizin olsun. (Nesrin Eren - İzmir)¹²³

The below letter differs from the above ones in that it involves not simply a desire to meet the star, but more than that to establish a family connection. The writer of the letter, tried to persuade the star to engage her son to her sister. The letter is marked with an excessive form of intimacy felt on the part of the audience in that she addressed the star and her husband, who was also a film star, not as film stars but as parents, a family that her own family knew very well. Even she made a suggestion about where to make the engagement ceremony: "in your house or ours."

Çolpan [İlhan] ablacığım, benim Selma isminde bir kız kardeşim var. Oğlunuz Kerem'in yaşlarında. Bir görerseniz çok seversiniz. Eminim Kerem de sever. Kardeşim de Kerem'i seviyor. Mecmuadan kestiğim Kerem'in resmini bir türlü elinden bırakmıyor. Çolpan ablacığım diyeceğim şu: Kardeşim Selma'yı size getireyim, görün. Eğer beğenir, severseniz Kerem'le nişanlandırırım. Ne olur benimle alay edip gülmeyin size darılırım. Bu isteğimi Sadri Ağabey'e de söyleyin. Sadri Ağabey de Selma'yı görsün bir kere. Kardeşimi her istediğiniz zaman getirebilirim. Eğer bu isteğim olursa biz bütün ailece sevineceğiz. Bundan anne ve babamın da haberi var. Nişanı istersiniz sizin evde, isterseniz bizde yaparız. Ne olur Çolpan Ablacığım, bana bir cevap yazın. Sabırsızlıkla mektubunuzu bekliyeceğim. Kardeşim Selma'nın selamlarını Kerem'e söylemeyi unutmayınız.¹²⁴

5.3.4.5. Contact Through Fantasy

Audiences also sought to construct a bridge between stars and themselves through fantasy narratives in the form of poems, dreams, or daydreams. Hinerman remarks

¹²² Sinema 64 (1962).

¹²³ Sinema 53 (1961).

¹²⁴ Sinema 80 (1962).

that fantasises are one of the ways fans encounter stars, but in general they are associated with woman (109). He writes:

Perhaps in a patriarchal society, with many men raised to cling to the 'rational/concrete' side of discourse, women are simply more comfortable speaking about fantasies. Perhaps women, being denied in certain social classes certain forms of emotional support, are forced to turn to the fantasy with idealized male figures more often. (119)

In this study we observed that mostly male audiences wrote fantasy narratives. However it must be noted that we are dealing here with statements that were open to public reading. This might be one of the reasons why there is only a few fantasy narratives written by women. We cannot take the dominance of fantasy narratives by men as a challenge to Hinerman's argument, but we cannot ignore the fact that those male subjects who stand behind these narratives seem as "emotional" as female subjects, either.

Letters involved fantasy narratives in which audiences generated personal interactions with specific stars. The owner of the fantasy either constructed an imaginary scene where he/she is with the star or talked to the star in an emotional way as if the star's image was present at the moment of writing, in other words as if he/she was daydreaming. Hinerman describes the function of fantasises as follow:

Fantasies are, ... , one way humans have to negotiate a troubling situation. They bridge the gap that is created when desire is prohibited but the longing for full satisfaction is still there. Fantasies allow us to 'close the distance' between what we need or want and what we can have. (115)

Fantasy narratives in the letters might have such a function for their writers, too. However the majority of such letters suggest that audiences did not choose to "bridge the gap" by making an imaginary visit to the world of the stars, but brought them to home. We met only one fantasy narrative, written by a female audience, where there appears to be a visit in the world of stars. The writer of the letter imagined a "perfect

day” she spent with various male and female stars in İstanbul. However the person indicated at the beginning of her letter that it was an audience letter that she had read in a foreign cinema magazine which motivated her to produce a similar one by using Turkish film stars:

Benim için mükemmel bir gün:
Eğer imkanım olsaydı. İstanbul’a gelir ve günümü şu artistlerle geçirirdim.
MUZAFFER NEBİOĞLU ile sabah kahvaltımı yapar,
AYHAN IŞIK ile yüzmeğe gider,
BELGİN DORUK ile öğle yemeğini yer,
SUNA SELEN ile alışverişe çıkar,
GÖKSEL ARSOY ile akşam yemeğini yer,
ve geçirdiğim şahane günün neşesi içinde evime dönerim. (Şermin Akyol - Balıkesir)¹²⁵

Below are two other fantasy narratives both written by male audiences. A male audience communicated his platonic love for Türkan Şoray whose screen image had conquered him. He considered his being a “poor countryman” as the major obstacle to his love’s being returned and tried to “bridge the gap” by bringing Şoray to the atmosphere of his room where he wrote the letter:

Türkan hanım,
Gecenin saat 23.30u. Biraz önce filminizi seyrettim Şehir sinemasında? Büyülü güzelliğinizin altında hassas bir kalbe, asaletinize hayran olduğum bir ruha sahip olduğunuzu anlamakta gecikmedim. Ve hemen yazmak istedim hissettiklerimi.. O kadar samimi ve tatlısınız ki, size bu satırları karaladığım şu an bile, ıslıl ıslıl parlıyan gözlerinizi görebiliyorum. “Aşk Rüzgarı”nda sizi seyrettiğim günden beri varlığınıza yaşıyor, ve yaşayacağım her anımda... Bu hissin verdiği suçluluk altında ezilmekten korkmuyorum. Beni sevmenizi istemiye hakkım da yok zaten, fakir bir taşra genci olarak. Sizin beni hiç görmediğinizi de biliyorum tesadüfler bana yardım etmeyecek...^[126] Radyoda Nat Cing Cole’u dinliyorum şimdi size bu satırları yazarken... Tatlı bir melankoli altında size melodiyi tekrarlırsam duyabilir misiniz beni... Düşünüyorum... Tek taraflı sevginin de kendine göre tatlı bir tarafı var diye teselli buluyorum, her zaman yanımdasınız çünkü... Günün meşguliyetlerinden sıyrılıp gecenin geç saatlerinde müzik dinlemek ve sizi düşünmekten başka bir meşguliyetim yok inanın bana... Bir “My Heart in Song” şarkısını dinliyorum Sinatra’dan zamanımızın bütün melodilerinde kalbim kelimesi geçiyor, sanki ona hükmedebiliyor muşuz gibi... Gecenin 24 ü oldu... Sizden çok uzakta düşünerek geçirdiğim bu günde mazinin karanlıklarına gömüldü... Sizi rüyamda da görebilmek ümidiyle yatağıma yatarken, yarının daha mutlu olması için dua edeceğim büyük tanrıma sizin için...¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Sinema 24 (1961).

¹²⁶ The person seems to refer to the universe of melodramas where coincidences play an important role in the meeting of the main male and female characters.

¹²⁷ Sinema 41 (1961).

The following letter tells a daydream where another male audience imagines his being married to Fatma Girik and enduring together a life in prosperity. The person was influenced by the screen image of the star, especially her eyes. We will examine this letter in two steps:

Yeşil Gözlü afet Fatma Girik'e,
"Mahalleye Gelen Gelin"i gördükten sonra sizi bir türlü unutamıyorum. Sizin öyle romancı filan olmanıza lüzum yok. Bir erkeğin, sizin gibi bir karısının olması ne büyük saadet!... Sizi böyle, biblo diye bir köşeye oturtmalı. Ama arada bir kalkmalısınız, dolaşmalısınız, nefes almalısınız. Yeşil gözlerinizle yeşil yeşil bakmalısınız. Allahım, ne büyük bir saadet bu... Ben, ayda 600 lira yerine, 1500 lira kazanmalıyım. Bir şahane apartman katında oturmalıyız. Teyplerimiz, telefonlarımız, pikaplarımız olmalı.

Up to here the letter might look as if the person imagines an escape to the prosperous world of the star. However the way the letter continues suggests that the world escaped no longer belongs to the star; it is "insinuated" with personal images and metaphors and transformed into a home where the star is a personal asset carrying all the inscriptions of that "insinuation" on it:

Ben, akşamları saat 18 de eve gelmeliyim. Kollarımda kesekağıtları, ekmekler, etler olmalı. Sen, bana güzel bir içki masası hazırlamalısn. Saatlerce, günlerce, aylarca beraber olmalıyız. Hiç ayrılmamalıyız. Et-tırnak gibi ... (Ülkü Önder – İstanbul)¹²⁸

5.3.4.6. Complaint

Audiences' feelings to their favourite stars were not always in the form of love, praise, or appreciation. In some cases they also complained about stars. The way audiences complained about stars still paralleled an imaginary social relationship. The issues that became a matter of complaint shared a common characteristic. They were all related to certain attitude associated with the star, which broke the imaginary connection between the star and the audience, or, at least, which threatened the audience's

¹²⁸ Sinema 65 (1962).

emotional attachment to him/her. Audiences carried imaginary arguments with stars and complained about their attitudes and actions. Again letters involving such complaints were marked with a feeling of closeness and intimacy on the part of the audience despite the fact that they were not appreciative letters. Lefebvre argues that “in everyday life or in the full glare of the theatre footlights, human beings always behave like mystifiers, who manage to ‘play a role’ precisely by exaggerating their own importance” (136). In fact all of the complaint letters below seem to be marked with such operations as it is revealed in expressions such as “bir dediğimizi iki etmeleri gerekmez mi?” “çölde susuz kalmış bir kimsenin vaha görüpte aldanması gibi bir şey bu,” “hiç mi hayranlarını düşünmedi. Ama hiç mi?” “ben şahsen sizin yerinizde olsam bu mektuplara cevap vermem,” “ilk olarak ben kendisini terk ediyorum,” “biz de sen ve senin gibileri ile iftihar ediyorduk ama kursağımızda koydun sen.” Moreover some of the letters exhibit, what Neale calls, “an excess of effect over cause” (7), which reflects a self-esteem on the part of the audience. The letters point to mainly three types of “threat” to the attachment of audiences to stars, which they complained about: Non-responsiveness, marriage, and “bad” private life. In what follows we examine complaint letters with respect to these three categories.

5.3.4.6.1. Non-Responsiveness

Kapferer argues that the star does not own her audience; the reverse is the case. It follows that the star has duties to her audience, in that the audiences expect the star to respond, to recompense their admiration (221). This is also a point that a group of audiences stressed in their letters. Some audiences complained about stars’ not responding to their letters and especially not meeting their requests of autographed photos. Most of the audiences conceived stars’ not responding to the letters and

requests of their fans as the sign of their “arrogance”, “stinginess”, or “impoliteness”. In this respect, they invited stars to be modest and esteem their fans since “it was the people whom they owed their fame and status.”

Artistin bulunduđu adrese bir mektup yazarak, imzalı resim isteme arzunuzu iletiyorsunuz. Ondan sonra beklemeye başlıyorsunuz. Acaba nasıl bir poz gönderecek, ah keşke falanca mecmuada çıkan resminden gönderse, o pozu çok güzeldi. Ne olur bir de iki satır cevap yazsa ne güzel olur, filan diye... Bir hafta, 10 gün, onbeş gün, bir ay, iki ay geçiyor. Ne geçen günler, ne haftalar, ne de aylar, sizin bekleme gücünüzü kıramıyor. Siz yine beklemeye devam ediyorsunuz. Siz beklemeye devam ede durun, imzalı resmini rica ettiğiniz artist hanım veya bey kendi havasında... Gönderilen mektup, artistin eline geçse bile, cevap vermek tenezzülünü malesef göstermez. Belki, 10 kuruşluk posta ücreti, bir liralık resim parası bütçelerini sarsar. Fakat pavyonlarda, gece kulüplerinde etrafa cömertçe dağıttıkları binlikler, bütçelerine dokunmaz. Hayranlarını neden bu kadar küçük görürler? Acaba bilmezler mi ki onlara bu yaşadıkları hayatı, şöhreti, o beğenmedikleri, küçük gördükleri hayranlarının alkışları, candan sevgi gösterisi sebep olmuştur... (İlkül Bayraktar - Ankara)¹²⁹

Her nedense bizim aktör ve artistler fotoğrafa meraklı olmuyorlar. Bunun böyle olduğunu gönderdiğimiz mektuplara cevap verilmemesinden, istediğimiz fotoğrafların gönderilmemesinden anlıyoruz. Oysa hepsinin de biz, hayranlarına, seyircilerine karşı geniş alaka göstermeleri, bir dediğimizi iki etmemeleri gerekmez mi? (Sevda Sayar ve 12 arkadaşı - İstanbul)¹³⁰

Some of the audiences made comparisons between stars to individualize a specific star’s impoliteness:

Sırayla Hülya [Koçyiğit] hanımdan resim istedik. Aradan aylar geçti... Sizin geçen mecmuanızda çıkan röportajında ise sırayla gönderiyorum diyor. Aradan 4 ay geçti. Hala sıra gelmedi mi acaba? Biz sekiz arkadaş Türkan Şoray Hanımdan imzalı resim istedik, vallahi 15 gün sonra geldi... Zannedersen Türkan Hanımın hayranı, Hülya Hanımın hayranlarından daha fazla. 50-60 bin liralık Türkan Hanuma helal olsun! Eğer Hülya Hanım hayranlarına resim göndermiyorsa çuval dolusu gelen mektupları size gösterip gösteriş yapar gibi gönderiyorum diye büyük laflar etmesin. (İclal Aşkın)¹³¹

5.3.4.6.2. Marriage

Another subject of complaint was related to stars’ getting married. Marriage and family were conceived by the audience as important, respectable and honourable

¹²⁹ Perde 14 (1965).

¹³⁰ Sinema 84 (1962).

¹³¹ Perde 16 (1967).

institutions. Within such a framework the star's getting married was problematic for some of the audiences who had an emotional attachment to him/her. Marriage was received either as a barrier between the star and his/her art or between the star and his/her fans. While male audiences focused on the former female audiences focused on the latter. However, in both cases, letters were marked with feelings and expressions of shock and disappointment.

The marriage of female stars does not seem to be received as a threat to the male audience's attachment to the star. Male audiences mainly complained about stars' leaving cinema after getting married and argued that marriage should not be a reason for the star to leave her art:

... Altın Karındaş'ı artık ne sinemada ne de tiyatrodaki görememekten büyük üzüntü duymaktayım. Kendisi hakkında "evlenmiş de, sanatla ilgisini kesmiş" diyorlar. Halbuki herhangi bir sanatkarın evlenir evlenmez sanatını terketmesi mi lazım? Halbuki birçok evli sanatkarlar yok mu? (Sezai Kesikoğlu – Aksaray)¹³²

... Bir dansöz olan Nilüfer Sezer'i bu filmde [Ölüm Peşimizde] büyük bir kabiliyet olduğu meydana çıkaran Memduh Ün'e ne kadar teşekkür etsek azdır. Hal böyle iken Nilüfer Sezer'in İstanbul'da bir iş adamıyla evlenmesi ve bir daha perdede görünmeyeceğini söylemesi bizleri sükutu hayale uğrattı. Çölde susuz kalmış bir kimsenin vaha görüpte aldanması gibi bir şey bu. Nilüfer Sezer'in evlenmek hakkıdır. Fakat o artık halkın sevgilisi olmuştur, bu bakımdan sinemayı terk etmemesi lazımdır. Biz Nilüfer Sezer'in aile saadeti bozulmadan pek yakın bir zamanda tekrar sinemaya avdet edeceğine büyük bir imanımız var. (Orhan Candoğan – Uşak)¹³³

However male stars' getting married seems to be a serious problem for his female fans. This was implied in the letters in two ways. Two letters exemplifying these are quoted below. In the first letter the audience expressed her disappointment and sorrow in the face of the star's getting married. She also emphasized that the star's expressing his being very happy with his marriage increased her sorrow and claimed

¹³² Sinema 19 (1961).

¹³³ Sinema 42 (1961).

that stars who have female fans should never get married. The second letter does not involve any complaint about the star, but suggests that the audience feel an urge to change their emotional attachment to the star. The writer of the letter criticised fans who disturbed stars who were married.

Göksel Arsoy evlendi. Kendisinin çok, pek çok mes'ut olduğunu söylüyorlar. Acaba, bu içten gelen bir söyleyiş mi? Bu evlenmeyi niçin yaptı? Hiç mi hayranlarını düşünmedi. Ama hiç mi? O da biliyor ki hayranlarının büyük bir kısmı, hatta hepsini biz genç kızlar teşkil ediyoruz. Hayranlarının ekserisini genç kızların teşkil ettiği bir yön hiç bir zaman, tam şöhrete eriştiği sırada evlenmemeli. Hatta kıymetli jönlerimizden Muzaffer Tema'nın dediği gibi, bir sanatkar, gerek aktör ve gerekse aktris olsun, hiç bir zaman evlenmemeli... Evlendiği zaman muhakkak şöhretini kaybeder. Göksel Arsoy da, acaba hiç mi şöhretinin kaybolabileceğini düşünmedi veya düşünmek istemedi? Saadetten uçtuğunu her vesileyle çeşitli mecmualara söylüyor. Bunu söylerken biraz da bizi düşünmeli, bizim ne kadar üzüldüğümüzü anlamalı. Onun mes'ut olmasını çok arzu ederiz. Hangi insan, sevdiği ve hayranı olduğu insanın mes'ut olmasını istemez? Biz de onun mes'ut olmasını istiyoruz ama, bu isteyiş içten gelen, samimi bir isteyiş değil. (Harika İmren – İstanbul)¹³⁴

Göksel bey,
Sizi evlendikten sonra hiç bir zaman rahatsız etmek istemezdim. Fakat madem ki bir kardeş gibi "Sinema Mecmuası" sayesinde konuşacağız, o zaman size bir mektup yazmak aklıma geldi. Bazı anlayışsız kimseler iç sıkıcı mektuplarıyla sizi üzdükçe ben de onlara müthiş kızıyorum. Evvelce akılları neredeydi? Şimdi evli bir insan rahatsız edilir mi? Bunu idrak edemiyorlar mı? Bu herhalde size karşı olan aşırı sempatilerinden ileri geliyordur. Ben şahsen sizin yerinizde olsam bu mektuplara cevap vermem. (Neslihan Sadıkoğlu)¹³⁵

Like the writer of the last letter there were also other female audiences who received male stars' being married as something natural and, more than that, who appreciated married male stars who endured a respectable family life. It seemed to me that married male star represented to such audiences the ideal husband -something they wished for themselves- and that was one of the reasons why they approved their marriage. What such audiences complained about was that they were unable to see photos in magazines that pictured male stars together with their wives:

Göksel Arsoy, evlendiği zamanlarda, karısı ile beraber birçok resimleri çıktı. Buna karşılık Ayhan Işık, evlendiği zaman dahi resimlerinin çekilmesine izin vermedi. Ne

¹³⁴ Sinema 31 (1961).

¹³⁵ Sinema 55 (1961).

hikettir bilmiyoruz ama bu günlerde ne Arsoy'un ve ne de Işık'ın karlılarıyla beraber resimlerini göremiyoruz. Acaba beraber resim çektirmelerinde bir mahzur mu var? Halbuki her ikisinin de mesut olduklarını, çeşitli sebeplerle öğreniyoruz. Mesut bir aile erkeğinin ise, boş zamanlarının çoğunu karısı ile beraber geçirmesi en normal bir harekettir. (Aysel Kural – İstanbul)¹³⁶

Bir de en çok sevdiğimiz jönlümüzden olan Eşref Kolçak var. Onun da gece hayatı olmadığı gibi, evine ailesine bağlı tam manasıyla iyi bir insan olduğunu biliyoruz. Kendisinin ve ailesinin beraber olan resimlerinden niçin neşretmiyorsunuz? Bilhassa hanımının güzel ve iyi kalpli olduğunu duyuyoruz. Şöyle büyücek bir resmini koyarsanız, bizi pek çok sevindireceksiniz. Bütün evli artistlerimize saadetler dileriz. (Nur-Candan-Firdevs – Ankara)¹³⁷

5.3.4.6.3. "Bad" Private Life

Another subject of complaint among audiences was related to stars' private lives. Audiences desired to see stars as honourable, well-mannered ladies and sirs outside movie theatre. Therefore, they expressed their embarrassment in the face of bad manners exhibited by stars in their private lives and they charged themselves with the duty of warning them and showing them the "right" way. Audiences who carried imaginary arguments with stars in their letters despised several stars on the basis of their private lives. As the letter below implies, one of the most common aspects of private lives of stars was considered short-lived love affairs and stars' becoming subject to love rumours:

Birçok dergilerin sütunlarında, nişanlısı ve daha başka bir sürü hanımlarla resimlerini gördük, dedikodularını duyduk. Bizim anlayışımız mı değişti, yoksa onun davranışları mı değişti anlayamıyorum. Bu hal ne kadar böylece devam eder ki? Netekim devam etmedi de. İlk olarak nişanlısı kendisini terketti. İştittiğime göre bu havai hareketlerinden dolayı, diğer bazı kimseler de kendisi ile olan yakın alakalarını azaltmakta. Sinemamızı bilen kişilerin ve Türk sinemasının bütün seyircilerinin gayet iyi tanıdığı bir şöhretimizin, böylesine bir hareket tarzı seçmesi, benim gibi daha birçoklarını üzmektedir. Bu hal böyle devam ederse, pek yakında Hakan'ın hayranlarından birçoğunu kaybedeceği muhakkaktır diyorum, çünkü ilk olarak ben kendisini terk ediyorum. Diğerleri, kendileri düşünsün. Sinema Dergisi olarak sizlerden ricam, bu durumun Fikret Hakan'a en kısa bir zamanda duyurulmasıdır. (Saim Alkan – İstanbul)¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Sinema 48 (1961).

¹³⁷ Sinema 80 (1962).

¹³⁸ Sinema 40 (1961).

Another aspect of the private lives of stars, which was criticised, was their appearance in social atmospheres or in attitudes that contradicted with their images in films. Kapferer argues that the relationship between a star and his/her audience is based on a “contract” which is automatically set up between the two parties. Bad rumours are a sign of the break between the star and his/her audience because it means that the star has started to break the contract; he/she no longer fits the scenario, which has led to his/her popularity (224). The three letters that follow not only exemplify this fact, but also express the extent to which audiences cared for stars’ off screen lives and took them seriously and emotionally. In fact, more than expressing sadness or disappointment about the star, these letters are marked with excessive effects such as feeling betrayed, ashamed, or humiliated. Audiences wrote as if stars were their own honour; as if stars were from home and they dishonoured home through “unacceptable” manners. This is also revealed through the melodramatic rhetoric speaking in emotions, which dominates the letters.

Senin ilk resimlerini gördüğümüz zaman çok beğenmiştik. Herşeyden önce güzeldin, havalıydın. Tamam dedik Ajda iyi tutunur sinemada. Nitekim filmlerin geldi Adana’ya - Kendini Arayan Ada- Adanalı Tayfur. Herkes bizimle aynı fikirde idi; güzel kız deniliyordu senin için. Bizde sen ve senin gibileri ile iftihar ediyorduk ama kursağımızda koydun sen. Neler yapmadın ki. Sadece güzellik yetmiyordu sinemada. Seyirci sevdiği, beğendiği kişiyi her şeyden önce biraz da namuslu görmek istiyordu ... Bu derece uçarı olmana sebep ne idi? Zaten mesleğin icabı hareketlisin, ne gereği vardı Pepino di Capri ile öyle kötü pozlara geçmene ve o ara Hilton’da kalmana?... Bizler kızlığımızdan utandık senin o öpüşürken resmini gördüğümüzde. Şunu bil ki gözümüzden fazlası ile düştün bu hareketlerinle... Bu tarz hareketlerine bir son ver Ajda... (Adana’dan beş kız)¹³⁹

Zeki Müren’i bilirdik... Bu kadarını değil ama... O pozları beni arkadaşlarıma karşı mahçup etti. Onun hesabına çok üzuldüm doğrusu... Hiç, ama hiç münasip görmedik ona o pozlarını... Bayağı, genç bir kadın gibi pozlar vermiş... (Gönül Çınar)¹⁴⁰

Şimdiye kadar Türk beyaz perdesinde gelip geçen ve hala devam eden yıldızlardan, birkaç tanesini tutmuş, fakat hiçbir tanesinin üzerimde tesiri olmamıştı. Fakat 1963-64 yıllarında perdeye geçen Hülya Koçyiğit, daha ilk filminde kabiliyeti ve güzelliği ile

¹³⁹ Perde 28 (1964).

¹⁴⁰ Perde 5 (1965).

üzerimde etki yaratmıştı. Daha sonraları Koçyiğit, daha yükselmiş ona kardeş gibi bilmiş, sevmeye başlamışım. Onunla iftihar ediyordum. Hülya abla, beni tanımaz ama ben onu tanıyor ve seviyordum. Birgün çalıştığım yere arkadaşım geldi. Elinde bir Perde mecmuası vardı. Mecmuayı açtı, Hülya ablanın Nihat Akçan'la çekilmiş resmini gösterdi. Ve bana dedi ki: "İşte iftihar ettiğin sayın Hülya ablandır bu." Bir an kendimden geçtim. Kendime gelince kalemi elime aldım. Nihat Akçan, Yıldız Kenterle evlendi ve çok sürmeden ayrıldılar. Tijen Par'la evlendi, onunla da ayrıldı. Anlaşıldığına göre Nihat Akçan, yuva kurmakta gözü olmayan bir insan. Sayın abla, sizi Nihat'a değil de Gürel Ünlüsoy'a layık görüyorum. Yol yakınken, aklının başına gelmesini dilerim. (Emrullah Özkul)¹⁴¹

In fact the letters above also involve certain holes through which one can see a "cursed" image of Yeşilçam world. This reverse image of Yeşilçam is characterized by sex, dishonesty, and moral corruption and constructed mainly by scandals and rumours around stars published in magazines. As the letters imply audiences wanted to keep their favourite stars away from becoming a participant of that image. Such a moralistic discourse around cinema has always been a topic of hot debate since the 1930s. It is observed that some of the audiences, especially female audiences, not only criticized stars becoming the subject of scandals but also described them as "victims". Therefore they took the responsibility of warning and advising stars, as well as star candidates, so that they can find the "right" way:

Sinemaya düşkün olan çoğu kişiler artistlerimizi aldıkları rolleri ile tanır. Çeşitli artist mecmualarını okumayanlar da daha doğrusu skandallardan haberleri olmadığından artistlerimizi tanımazlar. Hanım hanımcık, beyefendi diye bildiğimiz artistlerimiz, ki onları çok beğeniriz, ama malesef onlar ahlaka, cemiyet kurallarına sırt çeviren kişilerdir. Bazı artistlerimiz de genç kız, hanım rolleri verilmediğinden mecburen seks rollerini çevirdiklerini beyan ederler. Madem filmcilerimiz onları hep seks sahnelerinde göstermek istiyor, onlar da (artistlerimiz de) filmi bırakıp temiz bir iş sahibi olsunlar ... Bu satırlarımı okuyan efendi ve hanımlığıyla tanınmış artistlerimiz rica ederim, alınmasınlar. Biz takdir edilen ve edilmeyen artistlerimizi ayırdederiz. Genç artistler; siz de dikkat edip hemen tanınacağım diye seks rollerine çıkmayıp iyi rollere çıkın ve cemiyetteki davranışlarınızı ayarlayın ki, hiç bir şeyi kaçırmayan gözümüz aksi gibi hemen sizi görmesin. Sizler bizlerin sevgisini kazanmak istiyorsanız Belgin Doruk gibi hanım, Göksel Arsoy gibi beyefendi artistlerimizi kendinize örnek tutun. Bizler daima Göksel Arsoyları ve Belgin Dorukları sever, onları takdir ederiz. (Nuray Özgür – Lüleburgaz)¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Perde 15 (1965).

¹⁴² Perde 11 (1965).

As the ending part of the letter suggests audiences distinguished some stars from others based on their “good” social image -enduring a private life away from scandals and bad rumours. Such stars were appreciated by audiences for their being well mannered. Below are some other letters in which audiences express their appreciation of stars who contributed to the “good” image of Yeşilçam. These letters also provide insight to why audiences took their favourite stars’ appearing in wrong “atmospheres” and manners too emotionally.

Yaşadığınız hayatın, güzelliğinizin, hanımefendiliğinizin hayranıyım. Bütün artistlere örneksiniz. Ne olur, bütün artistlerimiz sizin [Belgin Doruk] gibi olsalar da Türk gençliğinin, Türk sinemacılığına merakı artsa, yeni kabiliyetler çıksa. Ama ne yazık ki, sinemacılığın adı kötüye çıkmış. Artist olan beyler veya bayanlarımızın ne kadar çabuk değiştikleri, kaprisler yapmağa başladıkları ortada. Ama siz bambaşkasınız; sanki siz, bu sahanın insanı değilsiniz. Öyle merak ediyorum ki yetiştiğiniz muhiti, sizi bu kadar olgun, kibar yetiştiren ailenizin hayranıyım. (Yıldırım Atalay – Ankara)¹⁴³

Beyaz perdede, sinemayı seyreden ve sinema ile ilgilenen herkes, (A. Işık, E. Kolçak, G. Arsoy) diyorlar da, başka birşey demiyorlar. İşte bu kıymetli aktörlerimizin şöhretleri ve kazançları bir misli daha artıyor. Bunlar mutlu birer aile reisi. Dedikodudan uzak yaşıyorlar. Bazıları ise, sayısı belirsiz, aşk maceraları yüzünden, isimlerinin üzerine bir kara leke konduruyorlar. Evet işte, bu kimseler kendilerini bile bile harcıyorlar... (Tahir Ulusoy)¹⁴⁴

Evet, Ayhan Işık adı halen bütün canlılığıyla ayakta duruyor ...Yakışıklı adam bu şöhretini nasıl muhafaza ettiğini birçok kereler anlatmıştır. Mazbut bir aile hayatı, mesleğini sevmesi ve işini zamanında yerli yerinde yapması ... Ayhan Işık, birçok genç kızın hayatına girip evlilikte rekor kırmasını; meyhanelerde, barlarda kadeh tokuşturmasını, gazete ve mecmua sayfalarında dedikoduya konu olmasını bilemez miydi? Bilirdi hem de su gibi bilirdi. Ama terbiye ve karakteri buna mücadele etmedi. Efendi ve centilmen kalmasını her fırsatta bildi. (Nevzat Özen - İzmir)¹⁴⁵

It could be argued that stars such as Belgin Doruk, Ayhan Işık, Göksel Arsoy were conceived as “social types” in the sense that a “social type” is, as it is defined by O. E. Klapp, “a collective norm or role behaviour formed and used by the group: an idealized concept of how people are expected to be or to act”. In other words they are “heroes of social acceptability” (qtd. in Dyer, Stars 47). The social image of certain

¹⁴³ Perde 25 (1964).

¹⁴⁴ Perde 4 (1965).

¹⁴⁵ Perde 26 (1964).

stars, especially the ones representing a good marriage and a faithful spouse, also affected the way audiences addressed them in the letters they wrote to stars:

Size bu mektubu yazmak cesaretinde bulunuşum yüzünden beni affetmenizi dilerim. Ama sağa sola bakıyorum da şöyle doğru dürüst iki çift laf edilecek bir erkeğe rastlıyamıyorum. Hepsi başımıza keskin zampara kesilmiş. Sokakta gidersen laf atarlar; otobüse, tramvaya binersen sıkıştırmaya kalkarlar, evine kadar peşine takılırlar. Öyle çok ki bu cins erkek. Ta işsiz güçsüz serseri güruhundan, sizlerin arasına kadar her yerde var bunlar, sizinle, Ayhan Işık'tan başkası da devamlı çapkın pozundalar. İşte Göksel [Arsoy]bey sizi en çok evinize, karınıza bağlı olduğunuz için seviyorum. (Sevim Genç)¹⁴⁶

Göksel Bey; sizden bir arkadaş gibi ricam şudur; tabii ki mümkünse... Sizin bir adet imzalı resminizi samimi ve bir kardeş hissi ile bekliyorum. (Aysel Kınık - Karagümruk)¹⁴⁷

5.4. Audience to Audience: Collective Backbite and Gossip

Cinema magazines and audience letters provided not only a space for an imaginary dialogue and interaction between audiences and Yeşilçam, but also, and perhaps more importantly, among audiences themselves. The letters that will be examined from now on are distinguished from the previous ones, in that they are letters responding to each other, or provoking each other. It is observed that certain issues raised in some letters led to agreements and disagreements among audiences and divided them into sides. In this respect several groups of letters, when taken together, look like forums or interactive debates among audiences on particular issues. Stars are again at the focus of these debates. One of the common characteristics of the audiences involved in these debates is that they take side, better to say, they take side with their favourite stars against others -including audiences- and support them forever. In other words they act as if they are advocates. However it must be noted that these letters constructed a discursive space where audiences not simply expressed their opinions

¹⁴⁶ Sinema 54 (1961).

¹⁴⁷ Sinema 66 (1962).

about stars, but also articulated their concerns about broader social issues such as sexuality, gender roles, and morality.

These letters confirm in the most explicit way that Yeşilçam audience was not a homogeneous, passive, and silent mass of people. However we cannot ignore the effect of a productivity of the cinema event, which enabled audiences' active involvement in the event, either. In fact not everything led to a debate among audiences. There were mainly two types of issues that led to passionate debates. One was the "provocative" statements of a certain star, usually a newcomer or a less popular one, about another star or stars who had a valuable image in the eye of certain audiences. For example Leyla Sayar's statement about Belgin Doruk and Muhterem Nur, Yıldız Tezcan's statement about Zeki Müren, Öztürk Serengil's statement about Ayhan Işık led to disagreements and harsh debates among audiences. Sometimes it was a comparison made by one of the audiences that led to such debates such as between Yılmaz Güney and Göksel Arsoy. We have already mentioned in section 5.3.4.6.3 that stars such as Belgin Doruk, Ayhan Işık, and Göksel Arsoy were "heroes of social acceptability" and had a very good image in the eye of their fans. Naturally statements attacking these stars, in other words disturbances to the order of things, had caused some of the audiences to react and take side. The other type of issue was related to stars' love affairs, especially their "unhappiness" deriving from their "bad" treatment by their partners. Muhterem Nur-Efgan Efekean love, Semra Sar-Muzaffer Tema love were among the topics of such debates. However it was Türkan Şoray-Rüçhan Adlı love that had been the longest and most participatory debate among audiences. Audiences took different sides with one of the partners against the other as well as against each other in those debates.

It must be noted that both types of issues described above were activated by gossips and rumours published in cinema magazines. Rumour and gossip have always been among the elements characterizing magazine journalism. Kapferer argues that rumour or gossip is also an invitation -an invitation to talk about something together. He adds that rumour or gossip is at the same time an exciting form of communication in that it encourages moral interpretations, personal opinions, and reactions (76). Similarly Hermes writes:

written gossip tends to create closeness or familiar faces in a wider world by helping the reader to bring celebrities into her or his circle of family, friends and acquaintances and by inviting readers to share in a moral universe that is at times petty, and at times rich. (121)

Kapferer remarks that some news do not provide information but guides. Rumours and gossips in cinema magazines could be conceived as such, too. Kapferer explains:

The first reaction of a reader in the face of a news is to repeat it to someone else: it becomes a topic of conversation, leads to interpretations, and probably, to discussions. However, it is observed that the discussion shifts quickly from the event told (news) to the conclusions it produce, to questions it creates, to lessons that should be drawn from it. In conclusion, when it is departed from a news (an event) in a paper, not a discussion related to the event but rather a discussion about what one should think about the event arises. (65)

This is the case in the letters responding to each other, too. Another common characteristic about the letters is that they all speak in a language that could be described as “backbite”. The backbite in the end turns into a type of collective gossip, which can be considered an alternative form of reception and involvement.¹⁴⁸ In addition to the melodramatic rhetoric, gossip and backbite observed in the letters seem to be other residues playing a role in the diffusion of the cinema event

¹⁴⁸ In general gossip has been conceived as a form of communication characterized by passivity and associated with women (Hermes 119). However the letters suggest that gossip and backbite are serious and pleasurable forms of involvement both for male and female audiences. In this respect we prefer to conceive them as particular forms of reception.

throughout society and culture. However as Kapferer remarks gossip as a form of reception and involvement never remains glued to its subject matter. Often what happens to the subject in the mouth of participants of the gossip becomes more interesting than the subject matter itself. It is observed that in the letters, regardless of the type of the subject discussed, audiences usually ended up with discussing issues and drawing conclusions within the framework of social norms and morality. It could be argued that gossips in cinema magazines served not only as a source for the formation of interpretive communities among audiences but also moral communities. The letters that follow not only exhibit the formation of imaginary moral communities in the pages of the magazines, but also suggest that these pages provided a space for already formed moral communities –actual or imaginary- to express themselves, to make their voice heard in public. Only in the letters examined in this section that we observed collective signatures such as “Sevim İnceberber and 98 friends of her,” “35 young girls,” “In the name of young girls from Ankara.”

These letters point to multi-discursive aspect of the cinema event, its serving as “the intersection of a variety of discourses, framed by diverse groups and addressed to populations varying from single individuals to the entire culture” (Altman 10) and as a site of continuous interchange between cinema and culture. In what follows we present a few examples of letters responding to each other by categorizing them on the basis of the subjects they are activated by.

5.4.1. The “Untouchables” and the “Arrogants”

Mecmuanızda Ayhan Işık, Gürel Ünlüsoy ve Sezer Sezin’in bir fotoğrafı gözüme çarptı. Ayhan Işık’ın Gürel Ünlüsoy’un yanında bir hizmetçi gibi, veyahut amirinden emir bekleyen bir kimse gibi durur fotoğrafını görünce, içimden ağlamak geldi. Evet, film

icabı böyle bir olay olabilir ama, mecmuada Gürel Ünlüsoy'u tanıtan bir resim de olması bizi üzdü. Türk filmciliğinin eşsiz aktörü Ayhan Işık'a yakışır bir fotoğraf değil. Gürel Ünlüsoy'u tanıtmak istiyorduysanız, Ayhan Işık'ın yanında hazırol vaziyette bekleyen bir kimse olarak durmasına lüzum yoktu. (Şerafettin ve Aptullah - Erbeyli)¹⁴⁹

As the letter above suggests some stars, especially those with whom audiences recognized and loved Turkish cinema, had a special place in the heart of their fans. Other letters imply that some of the audiences were too sensitive towards representations of these stars in the media by the media, or by other celebrities, or by audiences. The below letters revolve around “degrading” statements of certain celebrities about stars who had a valuable status in the eye of audiences. Such statements were usually taken as a sign of “impoliteness” and “arrogance” by a group of audiences. However in all cases audiences were divided into two sides and involved in a hot debate where differing views and arguments “competed” against each other. In some cases, the debate among audiences, especially the “harsh” expressions that they used to counterattack certain celebrities, caused the magazine intervene and ask audiences avoid degrading statements.¹⁵⁰ In this case audiences reacted to the magazine and blamed it for taking side.¹⁵¹

As an example, one of such debates occurred among female audiences around Leyla Sayar's statement, as it is quoted in a letter: “Şu piyasada üç kişi varız. Muhterem Nur, Belgin Doruk ve ben, onlar niçin dansetmiyorlar ve soyunmuyorlar diye soruyorlar bana. Onlar tabi ki soyunamazlar. Hangisinde vücut var? Muhterem mi soyunacak? Belgin mi dansedecek?” The response of the author of the letter to that statement was:

¹⁴⁹ Perde 2 (1965).

¹⁵⁰ Perde 15 (1967).

¹⁵¹ Perde 32 (1967).

Leyla hanımın şu belirttiğim hususları bilmelerini arzu ederim. Birincisi; Meslek arkadaşlarına bu şekilde hitap etmekle hem kendilerini küçültmüş oldular, hem de seyircilerini ve hitap ettiği şahısların antipatisini kazandılar. İkincisi: Belgin Doruk ve Muhterem Nur şayet dansetmeyi arzu etseler, vücutları bu işi yapmağa mani olmaz. Fakat onlar hiçbir zaman bir dansöz olarak sahneye çıkmayı düşünmemişlerdir. Beyaz perdede daima muvaffakiyet kazanan bu iki şöhretimiz sinema seyircileri nazarında şüphesiz ki Leyla Sayar'dan çok daha üstün ve başarılıdır. Üçüncüsü de: Vücutlarını teşhir etmek lüzumunu duymamışlardır. (Şule İmren – İstanbul)¹⁵²

Similar responses came from other audiences, too. They criticised Leyla Sayar for her “impoliteness” and “arrogance”. They accepted that there was a difference between Sayar and Doruk and Nur but it was this difference that made them superior to her. Besides they also defended the beauty of Doruk and Nur. In fact these audiences not only defended Belgin Doruk and Muhterem Nur but also attributed Leyla Sayar “negative” characteristics such as “belly-dancer”, “exhibitionist”, “foreignness (ecnebilik)”. It could be argued that they used “degrading”, which Sayar used against Nur and Doruk, as strategy of defence and counterattack.

Leyla Hanım, sizin piyasanızda siz kaç kişiniz bilmem ama, Belgin Doruk ve Muhterem Nur'un yanında sizin lafınız bile olmaz. Geçenlerde sizinle yapılan röportajı okudum ve ardından katıla katıla güldüm. Çok doğru söylediğiniz bir laf var orada. Belgin Doruk ve Muhterem Nur tabiki sizin gibi olamazlar. Eğer sizin gibi olsalardı, bugünkü durumlarını sağlayamazlardı. (Afet Kural – İstanbul)¹⁵³

Leyla hanım herhalde bunları söylerken bir hususu unutmuş olacaklar. Çünkü Belgin Doruk'un çirkin bir vücudu olsaydı 1953 yılında yapılan Güzellik Müsabakası'nda herhalde derece alamazdı, değil mi? Sonra, Belgin Doruk ve Muhterem Nur kendisinden kat kat güzeldir. Ve Leyla Sayar hanım kendi vücudunun o hantal görünüşünü biraz inceltip (Belgin Doruk gibi zayıfladıktan sonra) de öyle konuşsun. Dahası da var... Belgin Doruk şerefini korumuş hanım hanımcık bir artistimizdir. Hiçbir zaman bir dedikoduya adı karışmamıştır. Kendisi ise bu söylediklerimin tamamen aksine... Ona tavsiyemiz, ecnebi artistleri taklit edeceğine kendi benliğini bulmasıdır... (Ayla Bolkazan – İstanbul)¹⁵⁴

However another audience disagreed with the others in terms of the issue of beauty and emphasized Sayar's femaleness, which, in her opinion, the others lacked:

Afet Kural, Ayla Bolkazan, Şule İmren arkadaşlarıma... Sizler iyice düşünmeden köpürmüşsünüz. Şöyle bir düşünseydiniz, Leyla Sayar'a hak verirdiniz. Çünkü doğru

¹⁵² Sinema 17 (1961).

¹⁵³ Sinema 27 (1961).

¹⁵⁴ Sinema 27 (1961).

söylemiş ve şimdiki duruma göre konuşmuş. Belgin Doruk 1961 güzellik Müsabakasına katılsaydı derecesi ne olurdu? Muhterem Nur güzel sayılabilir ama, dansetmeye hiç de elverişli değil. Güzellik herkese göre değişen bir şeydir. Şunu unutmamak lazım ki, bir kadında aranan şey dişiliktir. Leyla Sayar'da bundan fazlasıyla mevcut olduğunu unutmayın... (Aynur Emre – İstanbul)¹⁵⁵

Another debate articulated a disagreement among male audiences about Öztürk Serengil's statements that "devalued" Ayhan Işık, one of the most appreciated stars of Turkish cinema. Serengil was criticized for claiming his equality with and, sometimes, superiority to Ayhan Işık as a "character player". Some of the audiences stressed that Serengil was only a "character player" of poor acting whereas Işık was a "king" in the eye of many people:

Bay Öztürk, siz bir çuval inciri berbat ettiniz. Zira haddinizi bilmeyerek Ayhan Işık gibi Türk beyaz perdesine yıllarca hizmet edip, emeği geçtikten sonra mükafatını son iki yıldır görmeye başlayan bir dev'e herkesin takdir edip beğendiği bir krala karşı yakışmıyacak lakırdılar söylediniz. Siz daha henüz parlamaya başlayan bir karakter artistisiniz ... Onunla senin aranda dağlar kadar fark var. Onun beyaz perdede görünüşü yeter de artar bile!... Beyaz perdede gözünüzü kırıp ayaklarınızı çaprazlaştırdıktan sonra yan yan bakmaktan başka ne marifetiniz var acaba?!... (Nihat Özcan - İzmir)¹⁵⁶

There were also audiences who took side with Serengil by arguing that Işık was arrogant and emphasizing the value of character players in the face of stars who played main characters in films:

Son zamanlarda burnun Kafdağına çıktı galiba ... Ben Öztürkle aynı fikirdeyim. Jönler hiçbir zaman karakter artistlerinin seviyesine çıkamazlar. Halk jönü unuttur fakat karakter artisti asla unutulmaz. Bugün bir Sadri Alışık, bir Öztürk Serengil olmasa sen ne yapardın acaba?... Ayhan fazla gurur iyi değildir.¹⁵⁷

Sometimes audiences directly addressed the writer of a specific letter and criticised him/her with degrading and humiliating statements:

Ayhan Işık'ın kaliteli filmlerini arzu eden seyircilerden birine cevaben: Kardeşçimiz Ayhan beyin burnu Kafdağı'na falan çıkmadı. Belki sizinki çıkmıştır ne dersiniz? ... Şurasını unutmayınız ki jönler de karakter yaratırlar, yani bir bakıma onlar da karakter artistidirler ve konu en çok onların etrafında döner. Karakter artistleri ikinci planda yer

¹⁵⁵ Sinema 29 (1961).

¹⁵⁶ Perde 21 (1964).

¹⁵⁷ Perde 24 (1964).

alırlar. Kardeşim, sizin sinema kültürünüz sıfırın altında galiba, bilakis jönlere her zaman daha iyi hatırlanır ... Sadri Alışık ve Öztürk Serengil olmasa ne yapabilir? Diyorsunuz. O kadar saçma bir soru ki cevap vermek bile istemiyorum. Mübarek, beyaz perdede tek başına oynayacak değil ya... İsterseniz rejisörlük yapın gelinde! ... Öztürk Serengil filmlerinde mugallata ve safsatadan başka bir şey yapmıyor ve yapamaz da... (Nevzat Özen - İzmir)¹⁵⁸

A similar debate was activated by a comparison between Yılmaz Güney and others such as Ayhan Işık and Göksel Arsoy made by one of the audiences. The audience compared both stars on the basis of the dichotomy of beauty versus artistic ability:

Soruyorum: Ayhan Işık, Göksel Arsoy gibi aktörler, Yılmaz Güney'in "Kara Şahin"deki rolü gibi bir rolle seyirci karşısına çıktılar mı? Hiç görmedik. Çıkamazlar da. Çünkü jönlükleri bozulur, ama unutmamaları ki "Sanat sanat için" yapılmalıdır. (Salih Eryiğit - Zonguldak)¹⁵⁹

These statements provoked a female fan of Arsoy to respond negatively. She considered the "negative" arguments about Arsoy as an "unforgivable crime" and attacked the other audience through humiliating him:

... Bilhassa Göksel Arsoy hakkındaki yazınız affedilmez bir suç bence. Göksel Arsoy kim, Yılmaz Güney kim? ... Onun yerini değil Yılmaz Güney, kimse dolduramaz. Göksel güzelliği ve yakışıklılığıyla değil, sanatıyla da sevilen ve aranan bir aktördür. Yılmaz Güney de iyi bir aktör olabilir. Ama müsadenezle, Göksel'le onu mukayese edemeyiz ... Sizin Göksel'i ve Ayhan'ı sevmemenizin sebebi ne? Yoksa kendinizi onlara rakip mi görüyorsunuz? Belli, siz sanattan çok anlıyorsunuz! (Rahime Kozbek)¹⁶⁰

It must be noted that the presumption of an attack to Göksel Arsoy had been sufficient to provoke this audience to respond. In fact this is a common type of responding among audiences. It seems that audiences were motivated first by protecting their favourite stars, their own preferences, rather than discussing an argument. Another example of this type of responding is observed in a debate that occurred around Erksan's statement that "it is not possible to make good film in Turkey because there are no good actors." The statement led to a disagreement

¹⁵⁸ Perde 26 (1964).

¹⁵⁹ Perde 13 (1965).

¹⁶⁰ Perde 15 (1965).

among male audiences. Some of them accused Erksan for his “arrogance” whereas others defended the truthness of his argument.¹⁶¹ However when one of the audiences argued that even Belgin Doruk, a “qualified” actress, played in “rubbish” films, just to suggest that Erksan was right, a female audience intervened because she “could not stand any criticism against Belgin Doruk.”

Kaya beyi, Belgin Doruk’un çevirdiği “Şoförler Kralı” ve “Bitirimsin Hanım Abla” filmi şaşırtmış üzmüş, acaba neden? Bu filmler gayet güzeldi. “Şoförler Kralı” filmindeki köylü rolünü her artist oynayamazdı. Fakat Belgin Doruk bu rolünü büyük başarı ile canlandırmıştı. Acaba Kaya bey, Belgin Doruk’un başarısını niçin takdir etmiyor? Muzaffer Tema’nın çevirdiği “Vahşi Kedi”, ve diğer filmlerini, aynı zamanda Öztürk Serengil’in de filmlerini hiç mi görmemiş? Asıl saçma filmler onlardır. Belgin Doruk’a önemsiz de olsa söylenen sözlere gönlüm razı değildir. Ben kendisini çok seviyor ve herkesten çok takdir ediyorum. (Aynur Emre - İzmir)¹⁶²

5.4.2. Stars in Love

The second type of issue leading to debates among audiences was related to stars and their loves, especially their “unhappiness” deriving from their love relationships. As the audience cared about the successes and failures of their favoured stars in their professional life they cared about their happiness and unhappiness as well. Sometimes audiences blamed one of the partners as the source of the other’s unhappiness and this was the leading activator in the debates that followed. Kapferer remarks that information, which affect people by causing them identify with other people, spread quickly among people. The concern about presentations in the media about the happiness or unhappiness of stars could be considered parallel to that. One of those debates, which again exhibited a melodramatic rhetoric marked with emotional excess, was centered on Muhteren Nur-Efgan Efekean love:

Bu aşkın evlenerek sonuçlanacağını zannediyordum. Fakat bu sayıdaki Sinema’da darıldıklarını, Muhterem’in intihar etmeyi düşündüğünü, çok üzgün ve solgun olduğunu okuyunca nasıl üzüldüm bilemezsiniz. Muhterem’i de, Efgan’ı da çok severim. İkisinin

¹⁶¹ Perde 1, 4, 6 (1965).

¹⁶² Perde 9 (1965).

de hayranıyım. Üzümlerini asla istemem. İlk fırsatta size bu mektubu yazıyorum. Mektubumu yazarken, canımdan çok sevdiğim Muhterem'in güzel yüzünü solgun ve üzgün görür gibi oluyorum. Beni nasıl üzüyor, bilseniz. Şeker Muhterem, intiharı hatırlıdan çıkar ve böyle fena şeyler düşünme. Darılma ama Efgan, sen de aklını başına topla. Muhakkak Muhterem'i seviyorsun ama, onu niye üzüyorsun. Ben ve bütün sizi sevenler ikinizin de üzülmemenizi istiyoruz. Bütün kalbimle barışmanızı temenni eder, ikinize de saadetler dilerim. (Funda Ay – Eskişehir)¹⁶³

The author of the letter seems to be identified emotionally with Muhterem Nur who represents the unhappy side. In fact Özgüç remarks that Nur had also always been the “crying woman” of films (Türkan Şoray 79-80).¹⁶⁴ This letter could be a good example to justify the idea that Yeşilçam not only offered a fictional world through films but also another fictional world circulating outside films, which was so engaging for audiences. It must be noted that the audience was so emotionally involved in the matter that she even gave advice to both stars as if she is a close friend or sister of them.

Another letter, which was signed as “Sevim İnceberber and her 98 friends” commented on the same love but, totally took side with Muhterem Nur and accused Efgan Efekean of exploiting her fame and money. Moreover in an attempt to prove the “fakeness” of Efekean’s love for Nur the letter referred to Efekean’s similar attitudes in his previous love affairs in a way that imitated a detective’s investigation. The letter also criticised a magazine for taking side with Efekean in this love affair and writing about girls who congratulated Efekean for his leaving Nur through letters and phone calls:

Onlara ve Efgan Efekean’a söylenecek bir sözüm var: Size telefonla memnuniyetlerini bildiren hoppa genç kızlar varsa, Muhterem’e de gizliden gizliye memnuniyetini bildiren

¹⁶³ Sinema 32 (1961).

¹⁶⁴ Six years after, in another letter, Muhterem Nur appeared one more time as “the exploited unhappy woman” of a love relationship. This time, “the man who betrayed” Muhterem Nur was Yılmaz Duru. See Perde 11 (1967).

temiz kalpli, dürüst Anadolu halkı var. Onu hiç bir zaman ezemezsiniz. Çünkü ne yapsanız o, Anadolu'da bir ilahdır... (Sevim İnceberber ve 98 arkadaşı – Bursa)¹⁶⁵

It must be noted that the writer of the letter, like in the case of other letters that follow, not only expressed her opinion about the actions of others, but also talked implicitly about herself. In fact this might be an opportunity and satisfaction provided by gossip and backbite. As Jenkins remarks “gossip is ... a way of talking about yourself through evoking the actions and values of others” (Textual Poachers 81). In a similar manner, the naming of certain group of girls as “hoppa” in the letter above to distinguish them from “pure Anatolian people” had provoked another female audience from İstanbul to take side with and defend liberty in love:

... Evet, yazınızda Efgan Efekan'ı yalancılıkla itham ediyor ve İstanbul kızlarını da çekemiyerek züppe diye adlandırılıyorsunuz. Size evvela şunu hatırlatmak isterim ki Bursa gibi adı sayılır bir şehrimizde hiç züppe bayanlar yok mu? ... Anladığıma göre siz ve 98 arkadaşınız sinema dünyasında olan her tabii olayı reklam vasıtası olarak kabul ediyorsunuz. O halde bayanlar, sinemamızın en sevilen yıldızlarından Belgin Doruk da yedi senelik yuvasını yıkarken reklam yapmayı mı düşünmüştü? Muhterem Nur ise şimdiye kadar, hayat mücadelesinde ilk darbeyi yemiş değildir... Bir insan sever de, darılır da, ayrılır da... Hiçbir zaman mecmua ve dergilerden yalan yanlış okuyarak, kimsenin hususi hayatına karışmayın Sevim hanım... (Ayşe Gül – İstanbul)¹⁶⁶

The love relationship between Semra Sar and Muzaffer Tema was another subject of debate. This time it was the female partner who was blamed. A letter signed by 35 young girls from Kırşehir criticised Semra Sar for her statements in several magazines about her ex-lover Muzaffer Tema. The writers of the letter argued that the way Semra Sar treated Muzaffer Tema whom she loved once did not suit to a young girl. Moreover, they criticized Sar for being disrespectful to the “holiness” of love:

Tutumunuz, bütün genç kızları üzecek kadar kötü ... Budalaca iddialarınızı ispatlamak için, seven bir insanı, telefonda konuşurken başkalarına dinleterek, aklınızca küçük düşürmek, bilmiyoruz, bir genç kıza yakışır mı? ... Aşk gibi ulvi hislerle radyo programlarında eğlenecek kadar hissiz bir kız olarak görüyoruz sizi ... Seven insan, hiç olmazsa eski hislerine hürmet eder, bu duruma düşmezdi... Şimdi soruyoruz size Semra

¹⁶⁵ Sinema 33 (1961).

¹⁶⁶ Sinema 34 (1961).

hanım; bu olaydan sonra hangi erkeğin aşkını dilenebilirsiniz? Hangi erkek size sevgisini vermek cesaretini ve budalalığını gösterir? Bir gün, size kalbini verecek talihsiz de, Tema'ya oynadığınız oyunu oynamıyacağınızı kim temin edebilir?... Bizlere öyle geliyor ki, Amerika zannetmişsiniz Türkiye'yi... Skandalla kendinizden bahsettirmek hevesine kapılmış ve aşkınızı alet etmişsiniz. Oysa, bir atasözü vardır bizde, sizin eski bir flört olarak kabul ettiğiniz şeye dair. Sevgili değiştirmek erkeğin (Tema'nın) yeni yakası, kadının (Semra'nın) yüz karası diye... Modası geçer zannetmeyin, her zaman böyledir Türkiye'de durum ... Bugün kime sorsanız, Muzaffer Tema'yı tanır. Çocuğundan büyüğüne kadar... Genç kızların gözünde ise, gerçekten bir dev şöhret Tema ... Sizler gelmeden önce, Türk sinemasında tek isimdi o! ... Genç kızlar adına, Muzaffer Tema'yı alay vesilesi etmenize asla müsaade etmiyeceğiz ... Tema'dan sizin için özür dilemek isterdik, genç kızlar adına. Ona aşkta anlayışlı kızlar, size de dikkatli davranışlar temenni ederiz... (35 Genç Kız – Kırşehir)¹⁶⁷

The letter provoked the response of a female audience who signed her letter in the name of young girls from Ankara. The owner of the letter named “35 ladies from Kırşehir” as 35 “jealous” ladies who had “bad taste” and defended Semra Sar, who represented modernity with her European appearance, against Muzaffer Tema, who represented being old-fashioned and conservativeness for them:

Ayıp ettiniz!... Beyaz perdenin bu çok tatlı, çok genç ve güzel kızını öyle şeylerle itham etmişsiniz ki, hepinizin mantığından şüpheye düştük. Çünkü bu gün Türk sinemasında yaşı 45'e gelmiş, gerdanı sarkık omuzları düşük Muzaffer Tema'ya yer yoktur ve olamaz da... Sonra siz 35 kıskanç hanım, kendinizi 30 milyonun tercümanı zannetmek gafletine de düşmüşsünüz bizce... Bu gün kime sorsak Temayı gayet tabii tanır ama genç kızların gözünde (35 zevksiz hanım hariç) hiç bir zaman dev şöhret olamaz. Bugün Muzaffer Tema, Türk filmciliğini gelişmesinden çok geriye, yani kendisinin 20 sene evvel şöhret olduğu devreye götürmek istiyor. Ne yapsın zavalıcık, o zaman oynadığı 8-10 filmin tesirinden kendisini kurtaramamış, hala elinde kemarıyla 20 sene evvelinin nezleli aşkını yaşıyor ... Türk filmciliğindeki gelişmeyi ise ihtiyar Tema değil genç Semra Sar daha layikiyle yaptı kanaatindeyiz. Filmlerimize zerafeti küçük kalkık burnu, ince uzun boyu ile Avrupai bir hava getirdi... Bunu kim inkar edebilir, bıkmışlık şişkoları seyretmekten!... Her neyse, Kırşehirli kardeşler, bizim cevabımız bu kadar; sizleri 45'lik Tema'nın ihtiyar hayaliyle başbaşa bırakıyoruz. (Ankaralı Genç Kızlar Adına – Y. Gülçin)¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Perde 19 (1964).

¹⁶⁸ Perde 22 (1964).

5.4.3. Türkan Şoray Phenomenon: An “Epic of Love” and a “Drama of Morality”

Dyer remarks that stars have “an existence in the world independent of their screen / ‘fiction’ appearances” (*Stars* 20) and stardom is “an image of the ways stars live” (*Stars* 39). Christine Geraghty, like Dyer, characterizes the star image with a “duality”, which is based on “a contrast between the glamorous film world and the surprisingly ordinary domestic life of the star.” Geraghty argues that “it is this duality of image which is deemed to mark a star, a duality which emphasizes a balance between the site of fictional performance and life outside” (184). Although this is already something implied by the letters examined so far, it could be argued that Türkan Şoray, as the “beautiful” and “honourable” woman of films but a “mistress” outside the screen, was the most visible representative of the duality of the star image within Yeşilçam context. In this section we examine two debates that had Şoray at their centre. Both of the debates –one occurring during Şoray’s early days in Yeşilçam, the other at the peak of her stardom- give the impression that Şoray had been a social phenomenon in the 1960s. This was not only due to her different and appealing screen image but also her off-screen life, which challenged the social and moral values in the 1960s Turkish society. It is observed that Şoray had become a social vehicle for the articulations of desires and aspirations, as well as social and moral concerns, inner and outer conflicts for many people in that period. Although the issues of love and morality are the two themes that dominate already the letters about other stars that are quoted above, as it will be presented in this section, Şoray’s was an “epic of love” and a “drama of morality”.

Şoray joined Yeşilçam in 1960, at the age of 17, with Türker İnanoğlu's film Köyde Bir Kız Sevdim. However it was her second film, Nevzat Pesen's Aşk Rüzgarı (1960) that made her not only a favourite actress in movie industry but also among the audience. Şoray was appreciated as an unknown "dark girl (kara kız)" by movie industry and the audience in her early days as an actress. Atilla Dorsay argued that it had become apparent, early in the gala of Aşk Rüzgarı, that the audience would approve of Şoray because when Göksel Arsoy choose another woman rather than Şoray according to the plot of the film the audience shouted: "marry to that dark girl" (28).

Şoray, like many stars, passed through the same preparatory stages of stardom. Cinema magazines, particularly Artist magazine, published articles praising Şoray's beauty, interviews with her, and several love rumours about her between 1961-1962 (Büker and Uluyağcı 31). Agah Özgüç writes that Şoray learned quickly how to make up, sit and get up, look, and walk. Moreover she started to look with faint eyes, half open wet lips. Thus, Özgüç states, a slogan was found for Şoray: "Türk sinemasının süzgün bakışlı, ıslak ve aralık dudaklı dişisi". Şoray started to have a strong impact among the Yeşilçam circles and the audience with her eyes and lips. Özgüç writes that she was the woman of Turkish cinema with whom most men fell in love. (Türkan Şoray 54). Kapferer argues that one cannot become a star by chance. Star is a combination of a body with a type of identity expected by society at a specific period (223). It is argued that Turkish society soon accepted Şoray as someone who was like them (Büker and Uluyağcı 21). With her attractively fleshy body, tick lips, dark hair and eyes she represented the sexuality of a typical Turkish woman in the eye of many people. Büker writes:

In the 1960s, magazines and newspapers claimed that she was a typical Turkish woman. The public searched for an idol with certain qualities, found these qualities, and selected 'one of its own'. She conformed to a stereotype of desirability that combined fairness of complexion with a well-proportioned and plump body. She was the longed woman ... Finally the audience spotted its Middle-Eastern and rural face on the screen. (158)

The first debate among audiences that is examined below was activated by the publication of an interview that Agah Özgüç made with Türkan Şoray in Sinema magazine in 1961, when Şoray was only a candidate for stardom ("Cennet Bahçesinde"). Özgüç's interview with Şoray could be conceived as one of the texts that contributed to the formation of Şoray's star image. However the interview did not consist of typical questions aimed for obtaining information about Şoray. It was rather in the form of Özgüç's passionate expressions about Soray's lips, fingers, legs and so on. The interview, particularly its erotic aspect, attracted several responses from male audiences.¹⁶⁹ The responses differed in their point of address as well as in terms of positivity or negativity. Some of the audiences addressed Özgüç or the magazine, others addressed Şoray. Some expressed their disappointment whereas others appreciated Özgüç or Şoray. One of the audiences received the interview as being "immoral, enjoyable for men but not suitable for women":

... Bir aşk mektubunu andıran yazınızda bilhassa şu cümleler dikkatimi çekti: İçinde kötülük yokmuş, titremişsin, korkmuşsun, kendinden geçmişsin, ölümü bile istemişsin. Sen ona aşık olmuşsun, aşk romanı yazmışsın, röportaj değil... Tahrik edici yazınıza bakarak bizler de bir hayli eridik, bittik. Birçok mecmualarda röportajlar okudum, buna benzerine rastlamadım. Bu röportajda, Türkan Şoray'ın doğduğu yeri, tahsili, filmleri, hayatı hakkında bir malumat edinmedik de, dudaklarının arzu dolu kıvranımlarını, parmaklarının nemini, bacaklarının güzelliğini ve pembeliklerini öğrendik... Sinema dergileri kültür dergileri değil, bunu biliyorum. Hafif dergiler, eğlence dolu dergiler, gençlik dolu dergiler... Ama ahlaka hiç bir zaman aykırı değil. Erkeklerle hitap edercesine yazılmış, ama bunu okuyacak kadınlar düşünülmemiş. Sarhoş musun!... İçinde kötülük yok. Bizim de yok. Ama olmaz ki. Böyle de yazılmaz ki!.. (Muzaffer Başaran)¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Özgüç explains that he included in the interview only what he "really" felt for Şoray during the interview, but people had not been accustomed to that yet. Telephone interview. 11 April 2002.

¹⁷⁰ Sinema 37 (1961).

However the interview was very normal according to a university student who was in favour of novelties in magazine journalism:

... Agah bey size mesleğinizde sonsuz başarılar. Türkan Şoray isimli bir yıldız namzedi ile yaptığınız röportaj bir harika. Öyle tahmin ediyorum ki, okuyucu basma kalıp yazılardan bıktı, yenilik istiyor. Türkan hanım ilk önce gayet olgun davrandı. Fakat sonra kızcağıza tesir ettiler galiba. Tutumu birden değişiverdi. Tıpkı acemi siyasetçiler gibi. Bir okuyucu bey de size bu yazınızdan dolayı sarhoş demiş. Müsaade ederseniz sizin namınıza bu kelamı kendisine iade edeyim. Röportaj gayet normaldi ve hiç bir surette ahlak kurallarının dışına çıkmamıştı... Size birşey söyleyeyim mi Agah bey, biz tümcek Türkan hanımın reklamını yapıyoruz. Çok talihli kızcağız doğrusu. Her yazının kahramanı! (Vural Semerkant – Dikili)¹⁷¹

Another audience who seemed to conceive Şoray as his imaginary lover expressed the shame and pain he felt from seeing his lover's treatment in an immoral way. In fact, as we have argued before, the audience meet stars only within media texts. Of course every star had a body and personality outside these texts but, once the star is associated with a certain image constructed through various texts he/she is forced to comply with that image by the audience. Şoray, like all female stars of Yeşilçam, had played untouched honourable woman regardless of the type of characters she was in. In this respect the letter, which resembled to the fantasy narratives that we have mentioned before, wrote that the interview presented the person's "lover" as a bad woman:

O gün de gene, Şoray'a ait fotoğraf veya yazı vardır ümidi ile, hayal dolu olarak, kuytu bir köşeye çekildim. Daha dergiyi açmadan, orta sahifeleri açmıştım ki "Cennet Bahçesinde Bir Şiir" başlıklı röportajla karşılaştım. İşte bu benim, baştanberi anlattığım canım, cananımdı... Yazıları okudum. Okudum ama, gelin siz benim halimi sorun. Halinize de ne oldu demeyin Allahınızı severseniz. Bu kadar açık bir röportajı şimdiye kadar ne gördüm, ne de göreceğimi düşündüm. Sevdiğim ve cananım dediğim bir kimseden bu kadar kötü olarak bahsedilmesi beni ne kadar rencide etti bilemezsiniz. Sevmiştim sizi ve derginizi... Sevmek bir suç mu? Ama siz bu sevgilerimi tarumar ettiniz. Bir an olsun, hiç düşündünüz mü? Ben hayranınız gibi, başka hayranlarınızın da gönüllerini kırdığınızı. Hayranlarınıza neden bu kadar cephe alıyorsunuz? Ta ondan¹⁷² ... -malesef söyleyemiyeceğim-bahsetmek hoşunuza mı gitti bilmem?

¹⁷¹ Sinema 42 (1961).

¹⁷² The person refers to the statement about the colour of Şoray's panties, which took place in the interview.

Not: Her ne kadar bu işte Türkan hanımın da suça %50 iştirak ettiğini de biliyorsam da, ayrıca kendisine mektup yazdığımdan, burada bahsetmeyi lüzumsuz buldum. (Cumhur Cengiz – Aydın)¹⁷³

While Türkan Şoray was an imaginary lover for the author of the above letter she was a potential companion for another audience. Departing from the statement of Türkan Şoray that “she needed the sincerity of a tolerant man” this audience who was a teacher proposed his friendship to Şoray:

Türkan Hanım,
Ben mütevazı bir insan, bir öğretmenim. Halen İzmir’de öğretmenlik yapmaktayım. Sinema dergisinin devamlı okuyucularından olduğum için her haber ve dedikoduyu dikkatle okurum. Geçenlerde de size ait bir röportaja rastlayınca sevincim sonsuz olduğunu bildirmeye bilmem ki lüzum var mı? Size ait olan o röportajda, sanat ve çalışmanıza mani olmayacak, sizi anlayabilecek dürüst bir erkeğin samimiyetine muhtaç olduğunuzu söylemişsiniz. İşte ben de sizin bu sözlerinizden cesaret alarak, size içimi dökmeye ve samimi itiraflarda bulunmaya karar verdim. Röportajı yapan ve yazan Agah Özgüç’e hitaben yazılmış ve bu beye hücum eder mahiyette olan mektubu da okumuş bulunuyorum. Orhan Veli’nin bir şiirinden adapte ederek yazdığı son satırlara bakılırsa, o arkadaş size karşı bir yakınlık ve samimiyet duymakta. Fakat, ben onunla aynı fikirde değilim. Herşeyden evvel, hakikatlerden bahseden o arkadaşta, en samimi teşekkürlerimi sunmak en büyük vazifemdir. Karakter olarak ben geniş bir insanım. Öyle basit hakikatler karşısında fevran etmek ve öfkeye kapılmak cahillere has bir özelliktir. Bu bakımdan, sizinle çok iyi anlaşacağımızı tahmin ediyorum. Şayet kabul ederseniz size candan bir arkadaşlığımı teklif ediyorum. Kabul etmemekte serbestsiniz.... Daha fazla uzatarak sizi lüzumsuz şeylerle rahatsız etmek istemiyorum ... Derin sevgilerimle...¹⁷⁴

1963 marked the beginning of a new period in Şoray’s private and professional life.

This was the year when she met Rüçhan Adlı, a rich and married industrialist in his forties. As Özgüç remarks, besides being her lover, Adlı would be one of the creators of Şoray (Türkan Şoray 68). Cinema magazines were invaded by rumours about the love relationship between Şoray and Adlı, especially starting from 1964. In fact this relationship was in conflict with Şoray’s screen image since she, like all heroines of Yeşilçam, had always been the pure, innocent, virtuous and moral woman in films

¹⁷³ Sinema 37 (1961).

¹⁷⁶ Sinema 40 (1961).

regardless of the type of the role. Having a love relationship with a married man older than herself, in other words enduring a mistress life, was not morally acceptable within the universe of Yeşilçam films which complied with the social values that are assumed to be dominant. In fact Şoray not only loved Adlı but also preferred him to her mother who was against this relationship. In this respect, it could be thought that she also damaged the respectability and holiness of motherhood in the universe of Yeşilçam and Turkish society.

These events became the subject of a hot debate among the readers of Perde magazine, too. Between 1964-1965 nineteen audience letters on that topic were published in the magazine. Bükler and Uluyağcı argue that although magazine journalism objected to Şoray's relation to Adlı this was not the case for the public. The authors based their argument on F. Alberoni's statement that the audience is ready to tolerate stars whom they perceive as a group of elites (40). However this is not the entire image conveyed by audience letters. The debate centered on the issue of morality. In fact, it could be conceived as "a drama of morality" by itself. Şoray-Rüçhan love and Şoray's preference of Adlı over her mother were considered scandalous by some of the audiences who thought that it was subversive of the values of Turkish society. Some of them addressed Şoray and warned her because they loved her and wanted her happiness whereas others supported her just for the same reasons. While some audiences argued that Şoray was about to break up not only Adlı's home but also her own family, others blamed Adlı for exploiting Şoray as well as her fame and money.

"Türkan Şoray Rüçhan Adlı ile evleniyor," başlıklı yazılarla, diğer makaleler bütün yurttan olduğu gibi şehrimizde de bomba tesiri yaptı. Halbuki beyaz perdede seyircinin gözünde ne kadar sevilmiş, ne kadar tutulmuş ve takdir edilmişsiniz ... Zavallı annesiz

Meliha Hanım, sizi Rüçhan Adlıdan ayırabilmek için nelere başvurmadı ki... Halbuki siz hiçbir şeyden habersizmiş gibi davrandınız. Hiç bir şeye kulak asıp alakadar olmadınız ... Evet Türkan Hanım, üç yıl beyaz perdede şöhretinizi muhafaza ettiniz. Belki bunda annenizin büyük yardımı oldu. Bu bakımdan annenizi terk etmemelisiniz. (Burhan Çelik-Kars)¹⁷⁵

Beyaz perdemizin bu güzel yıldızını çok seviyorum. Fakat Rüçhan Adlı ile izdivaç yapmasına taraftar değilim ... Bir defa Adlı ile aralarında büyük bir yaş farkı var. Türkan hanım 20sine henüz girdi. Fakat Rüçhan bey 45 yaşında. Benim naçiz kanaatimce aradaki bu yaş farkıyla zannetmemki mesut olsun ... İkinci sebebe gelince (Fakat bu sözlerimden Türkan hanımla Rüçhan bey sakın alınmasınlar) acaba Rüçhan bey Türkan hanımı hakikaten seviyor mu, yoksa şöhretine veya parasına binaen mi seviyor gözükmek istiyor? Acaba ileride (Allah göstermesin) Türkan hanım bir Muhterem Nur bir Suzan Avcı bir Muzaffer Nebioğlu gibi gözden düşse de Rüçhan bey yine onu sevecek mi, yoksa karısı gibi boşanmaya mı kalkacak? Bütün temennim, ikisi kalplerinin sesini dinlesinler öyle karar versinler ki, sonra bedbaht olmasınlar. Kolay mı bu, birisi ailesini boşuyor, birisi gençliğini feda ediyor. Türkan hanımın hiç bir zaman bedbaht olmasını istemem, daima mesut olmasını isterim. O mesud olursa ben de mesut olurum. (Avni Akça-Buldan)¹⁷⁶

... maalesef bugün için Türkan hanım sevildiği kadar yine haklı olarak tenkit ediliyor. Bütün kalbimle bu tenkitlerden faydalanmasını ve bizi sevindirmesini arzu ediyorum. Annesi ile arası düzelsin. Karşılıklı münakaşadan vazgeçsin. Rüçhan Adlı ismini tatlı bir hatıra olarak saklasın. Onunla bir an için evlendiğini kabul etssek bile, sonu daha acı olacak. Çünkü evlilik aşkı daima öldürmüştür. Henüz 20 yaşına giren bir kimse, neden gelinlik giyememek, neden çok özlediği anne olamamak korkusu içinde yaşasın? Acaba çok değil, 5 sene sonra da “bütün yasalara kurallara boş veriyorum, sevdiğim erkek yine Rüçhan Adlı’dır diyebilecek mi? (Türkan Sandıkçı-Amasya)¹⁷⁷

The last letter above provoked a 17 year old lady, Filiz Aygün, to take side with Şoray because she could not tolerate other people’s writings about Şoray whom loved “more than her life”. The lady mainly emphasized the “untouchability” of love:

... Türkan Şoray yuva yıkıp ta Rüçhan’ı zorla baştan çıkarmış değil. Zannederim Rüçhan bey de Türkan’ın Rüçhan’ı sevdiğinden çok daha fazlasıyla seviyor Türkan hanımı. Bunda ne Türkan hanımın, ne de Rüçhan Adlı’nın kabahati var. Gönül bu, insan istediği zaman sevip, istediği zaman nefret edemiyor. Bütün dileğim, Türkan hanımın bütün ömrü boyunca Rüçhan Adlı ile olması. Sizlere şunu da söyleyeyim ki, ben Türk sinemasının bu şeker kızı Türkan’ı canımdan fazla seviyorum. Her gördüğüm resmini defalarca öpüyorum. Çok sevdiğimden olacak, hakkında yazılan şeylere tahammül edemiyorum. (Filiz Aygün – Ankara)¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Perde 24 (1964).

¹⁷⁶ Perde 7 (1965).

¹⁷⁷ Perde 10 (1965).

¹⁷⁸ Perde 3 (1965).

This letter not only determined the second axis of the debate but also made its author the second subject of criticism because she represented young girls in the eye of other audiences. In fact, according to a particular point of view Şoray was not a socially acceptable heroine, in other words, she was a bad model. Therefore supporting her was considered by some of the audiences as an attitude as “unacceptable” as Şoray’s. One of the audiences who objected the relationship between Şoray and Adlı described Şoray as a “home destroyer (yuva yıkıcı)”. He/she also put Şoray in the same category with a group of other female stars who had an “unfavorable” life style.

Serbest kürsü köşesinde Ankaralı bir küçük hanımın yazısını okudum. Türkan ve Rüçhan Adlı’yı müdafa ediyor. Ve yine bir beyefendinin aynı şahıslar hakkında yazmış olduğu kötümser yazıyı doğru bulmuyor. Bence bu beyefendinin yazısı çok doğru. Türkan Şoray meseleleri tam manasıyla idrak edemeyen bir insan. Evli ve çoluk çocuk sahibi bir insanla münasebet kurmak istemesi ve özbe öz annesine haddinden fazla saygısız oluşu, basit iki misaldir. Bir de Gönül Yazar var. O da Türkan Şoray’dan da baskın bir yuva yıkıcı. Şunu da ilave etmek isterim ki, Hülya Koçyiğit, Ajda Pekkan, Leyla Sayar’ı da fazla hoppa buluyorum. Onların yaşayış tarzları kışkırtılacak bir yaşayış tarzı değil, kaçınılacak bir hayat tarzıdır. (E.Ö.-İstanbul)¹⁷⁹

Similarly a female audience questioned the nature of the love between Şoray and Adlı and stated that Şoray had lost many of her fans with her attitudes which suited to a “mistress”. She also accused Filiz Aygün for approving such a life style.

Bu yazımda Ankaralı Filiz hanıma cevap vermek istiyorum ... Türkan Şoray’ı seven bir kız, onun yıllarca, sevdiği adam dahi olsa, metres hayatı yaşamasını istemez. Türkan Şoray’ı seven adam, onun paralarını yemez, çarçur etmez. Seviyorsa neden evlenmiyor? Bu soruma cevabını nasıl verebilir acaba? Ben şahsen Türkan hanımı çok severdim. Ama artık benim gözümde bir hiçtir. Yalnız benim değil, binlerce kişinin gözünden düştü. Zaten, “Yılbaşını Rüçhan’cığımın kolları arasında geçirdim” diye bar-bar bağırarak kişiliğini ortaya koymuştur. Bundan başka, mecmualara bir hafta evlenmeyeceğim, öteki hafta Rüçhan isterse karısıyla barışsın; onların aile dostu olurum diyor. Acaba Rüçhan beyin hanımını kendisi gibi mi sanıyor? Hangi hanım kocasının metresi ile dost olur? Perde mecmuasında çıkan bir röportajında, yakında gelinliğimi giyeceğim diyordu. Hani?... Aradan aylar geçti, hala bir haber yok. (Hülya Güzey)¹⁸⁰

However from another perspective Şoray also represented another social type: “the woman who loved and suffered for her love”. In this respect she might turn into a

¹⁷⁹ Perde 8 (1965).

¹⁸⁰ Perde 6 (1965).

social heroine in the eye of certain circles, especially young ladies such as Filiz Aygün.

Dyer writes:

Stars frequently speak to dominant contradictions in social life ... in such a way as to appear to reconcile them ... stars can affirm that it is possible to triumph over, transcend, successfully live out of contradictions (Only Entertainment 66).

It seems that Şoray's image had such a function, too. The letters that follow support that. Several audiences took side with Şoray as well as Filiz Aygün and questioned the validity of the accusations concerning Adlı and Şoray and the function of money and age in love.

Bayan Filiz Aygün'ün bu sütunlarda çıkan yazısına ben de hak veriyorum ... Bence Türkan hanımla Rüçhan bey birbirlerini sevdiklerine göre mesut bir yuva kurabilirler ... Aralarındaki 25 yaş o kadar mühim değildir. Aşkta yaş haddi diye birşey yoktur. Yeter ki her iki taraf birbirine aşırı sevgi beslesin!... (A. Rasim Çayır-Eskişehir)¹⁸¹

Türkan Şoray, daima samimidir. Ben de 6. sayıda Ankara'lı Filiz hanıma cevap vermek isteyen Hülya hanıma cevap vermek istiyorum. Siz Hülya hanım, hiç sevdiniz mi? Ve sevmekle, sevilmenin ne olduğunu biliyor musunuz? Eğer bilseydiniz böyle cevap vermezdiniz ... Size şunu belirtmek isterim ki, seven insanların arasında değil paranın, hiç bir şeyin maddi kıymeti yoktur. Rüçhan Adlı da Türkan Şoray'ın parasını değil, kendisini seviyor. Biz hayranları, Türkan Şoray'ı daima seveceğiz. Perdede de zevkle seyredeceğiz ve onun sanatını takdir edeceğiz. Bütün dileğimiz onun mesut yuva kurması ve bu gibi üzüntülerden uzak olmasıdır. (Tahsin Aydın)¹⁸²

Dyer argues that “stars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when they act out matters to enough people” (Heavenly Bodies 19). The letters suggest that Şoray's love with Adlı had become a social matter, a “gum chewed collectively” in the 1960s.¹⁸³ Kapferer states that “female star represents the woman in love” and rumours feeding the myth around the star also tells “the uninterrupted epic of love”: A rumour of engagement is followed by a rumour of marriage and these become the basis of other rumours such as

¹⁸¹ Perde 9 (1965).

¹⁸² Perde 10 (1965).

¹⁸³ We borrow this term from Kapferer who used it to describe urban legends (73).

disagreements between couples, reunitions, divorce and so on. This story is marked with a continuous search for love (222). It could be argued that Şoray's relation to Adlı and the rumours surrounding their relation was such an epic of love. It must be noted that, as the letters indicate, audiences contributed to the formation and continuation of that epic, too. It seems that this "epic of love" formed an imaginary space where audiences could also experience the pleasures and pains of that love either by identifying with Şoray or/and Adlı and projecting themselves onto the web of social limitations, possibilities, and impossibilities facing such a love. It seems to me that this is even the case for audiences receiving the relationship as a scandal and offering moral judgements about it. In other words, it seems to me that, regardless of their being pro or con audiences took pleasure in that "epic of love" and "drama of morality".

The debate on Şoray, like other debates, did not remain glued to her love relationship Adlı. In fact, a general characteristic of such debates is their focus' being continuously changed since participants involved into the debate at the points which challenged their own interests, privileges, and tastes. For example although the letters presented below seem still centered on the discussion of Şoray-Adlı relation from a moralistic perspective we observe a slight shift towards the question whether Şoray lost her fans because of her scandalous private life or not.

Perde'nin 6. Sayısında Hülya Güzey adında bir hanımın, Türkan Şoray hakkındaki yazısını okudum. Şimdi de ben ona cevap vermek istiyorum. Türkan Şoray için, binlerce kişinin gözünden düştü diyorsunuz. Acaba bunu nereden biliyorsunuz? Bir anket mi yaptınız? Siz Türkan Şoray'ı sevmiyorsunuz diye binlerce kişi demi sevmesin? Eğer sizin dediğiniz gibi olsaydı, hangi prodüktör ona 40.000 lira verip film çevirtirdi? ... Türkan Şoray'ın Rüçhan Adlı ile ilgisi hakkındaki düşünceleriniz de çok değişik. Onların münasebetlerinin sizin zannettiğiniz gibi olduğunu pek tahmin etmiyorum. Öyle

olsa bile, size soruyorum, bu gün hangi artist o hayatı yaşamıyor? (Metin Ertan - Ordu)¹⁸⁴

Bana, anket mi yaptınız diyorsunuz. Ya siz Metin Bey, Türkan Şoray'ı sevenlerin, sevmiyenlerden çok olduğuna dair anket mi yaptınız? Yaptınızsa lütfen bu sütunda yayınlayın da görelim ... Türkan Şoray ile Rüçhan Adlı'nın münasebetleri herhalde bir baba-kız münasebeti değil. Madem onu o kadar seviyorsunuz, öyleyse neden onun metres hayatı yaşamasını istiyorsunuz ... Hem ne olursa olsun kendisine bakan, bu yaşa getiren annesine o sözleri söylememeliydi ... Türkan hanım kendisine yazık ediyor. Geçen sene birçok yıldız kendisini geçmiştir. Eğer mecmuaları okursanız bunun doğru olduğunu öğrenirsiniz. Temennim Türkan hanımın kendisini hakikaten seven bir adamla evlenmesidir. (Hülya Güzey)¹⁸⁵

Evet ben anket yaptım. Yalnız bu anket tabii ki büyük çapta değil. Ancak yakın çevremi içine alıyor. 124 kişi arasında yaptığım bu ankette, Türkan Şoray 71, Hülya Koçyiğit 20, Fatma Girik 17, Belgin Doruk 6 oy aldı. Geri kalan 10 oyu da diğer artistler paylaştı. Erkeklerde ise Fikret Hakan 41, Ediz Hun 28, Tanju Gürsu 25, Cüneyt Arkın 21 geri kalan 9 oyu ise diğer artistler aldı. Siz buna belki inanmayacaksınız ama, gerçek bu ... Bir de şu hususa dokunmak istiyorum. Bu sütunlarda bazıları Belgin Doruk'un kabiliyetli bir artist olduğunu yazıyorlar. Ben, onların nasıl sanat görüşü var anlayamadım. Hiç mi yabancı artistleri seyretmemişler? Belgin Doruk memleketimizin, hatta dünyanın en kabiliyetsiz artisti. Onda kabiliyet olmadığı gibi güzellik te yok. Bütün hareketleri suni. Bunu herkes de böyle kabul ettiği halde, o şahıslar bunun aksini iddia ediyorlar. (Metin Ertan - Ordu)¹⁸⁶

The negative statements about Belgin Doruk in the ending part of the last letter above totally shifted the focus of the debate from Şoray-Adlı love to whether Şoray or Doruk is more beautiful or talented. The debate turned into a competition between the fans of Şoray and the fans of Doruk. The two stars were compared in terms of their acting, beauty, and private life.

Hayret!... Sizin o meşhur Türkan Şoray'ınız, Belgin hanımın, ancak eline su dökülebilir. Bu mesele sizin gibi gözleri kör ve estetik güzellikten anlamayan insanlardan sorulmamıştır. Kabiliyetine gelince; imkanları nisbetinde fazlasıyla göstermiştir... Sizi, tombul ve ancak bir bebek kadar güzel Türkan Şoray'ın hayaliyle başbaşa bırakırım. (Y. Tosun – Büyükkada)¹⁸⁷

Ben de Y. Tosun'a cevap vermek istiyorum ... Her iki artisti bundan iki ay kadar önce İstanbul'da gördüm. Ve bende şu kanaat hasıl oldu. Şoray, Doruk'tan çok daha güzel. Bir defa Belgin Doruk'un boyu kısa. Ve bunun gibi birçok kusurları var. Şoray'a gelince yüzü kusursuz diyebileceğim kadar güzel. Vücudu ise son zamanlarda zayıflamak suretiyle bir hayli güzelleşmiş. (Ali Şengül)¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Perde (1965).

¹⁸⁵ Perde 11 (1965).

¹⁸⁶ Perde 14 (1965).

¹⁸⁷ Perde 17 (1965).

¹⁸⁸ Perde 21 (1965).

Sorarım size T. Şoray'ın kabiliyeti herhangi bir Avrupalı figüranda rahatlıkla bulunamaz mı? Ayrıca sinemada güzellik şart değildir ... Kaldı ki senelerin eskitemediği Doruk çirkin değildir ... Bir toplum içinde görgüsü, oturuşu ve hareketleriyle Türk filmciliğini Şoray mı, yoksa Belgin gibi hanımefendi bir artist mi temsil edebilir? Yaşından belki de 10 yıl fazla gösteren Şoray, özel hayatındaki fırtınalı ve dedikodulu yaşayışla, tamamen çokmuştür. Güzellik bakımından Doruk kaç senedir kendini formda tutuyor ama acaba Şoray da böyle yapacak mı? (Suat Akın-İstanbul)¹⁸⁹

Atila Dorsay argues that Türkan Şoray was a social phenomenon. The letters support this idea, too. However writers approaching Şoray as a social phenomenon have mostly focused on the appeal of Şoray's screen image to people, including intellectuals. Although it is not possible to ignore this fact, as the letters imply, the representations of Şoray's off-screen life in magazines had also played an important role in her becoming a social phenomena. In fact it could be argued that the contradictions portrayed by her social images, the challenge of her love to the dominant social values had opened a space for public reflection and confession.

¹⁸⁹ Perde 21 (1965).

6. CONCLUSION

As it was described in Chapter 4, the 1960s constitute an important period in the history of Turkish cinema. From a particular perspective, this period constituted the golden years of Yeşilçam cinema as well as of Turkish cinema with huge numbers of film production and movie attendance. However, according to another perspective, “Yeşilçam cinema symbolized all the negativenesses in Turkish cinema” and it marked the “the dark ages” of Turkish cinema with its “poor” industry; “unqualified”, “exploitive” films; “stereotyped” and “unrealistic” stories and characters (Özön, Karagöz 32; Türkiye 466). Besides the fact that both perspectives persist within intellectual circles and academia today, we also witness the remembrance of Yeşilçam cinema with a sense of nostalgia since the 1990s, especially through the representations of the media. Be it melodramas or comedies screened on television, or ironic sketches in television commercials¹ or programmes,² or special sites on the web keeping archives of images, incidents, and dialogues from Yeşilçam films,³ these representations show that Yeşilçam cinema has become an element of our cultural memory and imagery.

¹ See Bingo washing-powder commercials as allegories of Yeşilçam melodramas. These commercials depict a couple in love who speak like characters in melodramas and who solve the socio-cultural conflict arising from their belonging to different economic classes by realizing the sameness of the whiteness of their clothes.

² See for example Okan Bayülgen’s show Zaga, Hande Ataizi and Cem Davran’s show İkikerekiki on Kanal D, and Nurseli İdiz’s quiz show Telekolik on ATV.

³ See for example www.replik.8m.com.

Despite they differ in terms of their responses to and treatments of Yeşilçam the three types of reception above share the common point of conceiving it exclusively in terms of a body of films. However, this study, which has looked at Turkish cinema of the 1960s from the perspective of an audience discourse that is reconstituted from the audience letters published in two cinema magazines, reveals that this “cinema event” that we denote with the term Yeşilçam could neither be limited to a film industry simply producing hundreds of films each year nor be understood in terms of a cinema-audience relationship simply limited to moviegoing and film viewing. The spaces of knowledge and engagement observed in the letters imply that as the social experience of cinema does not start in the movie theatre, nor does it end outside of it. This study reveals that printed materials about the movie industry, especially stars, and social interactions among audiences are two other channels which play an active role in the production, diffusion and continuation of cinema in everyday life in extrafilmic forms. The letters point that movie theatre is only one among several other places of encounter between cinema and audiences and that cinema as event covers a social space produced through intersections, relations and interactions among a variety of constituents diffused outside the movie theatre.

The letters’ continuous reference to content of cinema magazines point that magazine journalism, as an important constituent of Yeşilçam event, was one of the most prominent channels that formed a link between movie theatre and other arenas of everyday life (e.g. home, school, work place), between cinema and society. The letters are marked with the signs of a continuous contact between cinema magazines and audiences both in terms of their point of address and subject matter. Moreover audiences’ intimate engagement with the (re)presentations in these magazines

suggests that more than being a supplement to the film industry producing and exhibiting films, these magazines, served as a separate production and exhibition field that could even function as a rival to the movie theatre with its own images and fictions. The letters imply that stars were at the center of the social experience of cinema and the most apparent aspect of magazine journalism is that it turned stars into tangible and portable images that could be brought home through photographs, news, interviews, and rumours. These extrafilmic forms seem to be as effective as films in the social experience of cinema and cinema's meaning to audiences. In this respect, this study points to the necessity of further studies on these magazines, which form a productive field of research, yet unexplored until today, within the framework of cinema studies in Turkey.

The letters suggest that cinema is made meaningful by audiences not simply through an engagement with fictional worlds presented in films or their interpretation because films constitute only one of the spaces/levels of existence of cinema. In this study we noticed three other spaces acknowledged by the audience. We observed that besides and aesthetic existence cinema had a discursive existence that is constituted and activated by a variety of discourses on Turkish cinema; a material existence constituted by a multiplicity of people, work branches, and activities holding together the cinema industry; and a "starial" existence constituted by everything that is said, written, shown, imagined, and collected about stars. These spaces of existence are not mutually exclusive or jointly exhaustive, but each points to Yeşilçam event from a different window. Each constitutes a different part of the image of Yeşilçam "activated" by the audience and became a particular space of relation, involvement, and expression. We observed that each space of existence/involvement operates

within a particular “sensitivity” and we tried to interpret differences between responses, which sometimes sound contradictory, not with the differences in audiences, but with the differences between these sensitivities. It must be noted that a sensitivity is not a pre-given solid context in which a pre-given text is situated. It is rather something variable, in continuous flux, which reforms the text, too. This study suggests that Yeşilçam’s productivity and popularity lied not simply in the appeal of its films, magazines, and stars per se, but more importantly, in its being able to open or activate spaces of sensitivities and expressions within the social lives of audiences through which they could also activate Yeşilçam. It must also be noted that each space of sensitivity produces its own forms of reception and expression.

Throughout this study we tried to avoid reducing Yeşilçam-audience relation to a matter of passivity versus activity on the part of the audience. Instead of this, departing from audience letters -a particular category of reception texts produced by audiences, we attempted to reconstitute an imaginary map of the Yeşilçam event through laying down not only the places, roads and stops, but also forces, vectors, and intensities holding it together. This map reveals that more than being an issue of passivity or activity the audience does not occupy an outsider’s position or that he/she is not an external observer and interpreter in relation to the cinema event. The image of the audience implied by the letters is not only of someone who follows cinema events closely and passionately, but also of whom can select, judge, take sides, produce his/her own debates. In short, the audience puts his/her own opinions, imaginings, and tastes into circulation. All these characteristics could be associated with activity. However the crucial point here is that these activities point to cinema’s being diffused throughout everyday life, its transformation into a participatory

culture marked with multi-discursivity, where it becomes difficult to decide where cinema ends and audience start or the reverse. In other words cinema becomes indistinguishable from the forms of activation that struggle to make it meaningful.

The study reveals that stars play a crucial role in the diffusion of the social experience of cinema outside the movie theatre and cinema magazines. However, audiences' engagement with Yeşilçam stars imply that it is not possible to exhaust the meaning and function of stars for audiences simply with the notions of identification and escapism, which have been the two key terms in both textual and ethnographic studies on stars in other countries. This study interpreted star-audience relations implied by the letters within the framework of "imaginary social relations" and ways of "bringing stars home". Especially the argument that audiences rather than trying to escape to a world inhabited by stars, tried to bring them home, might open space for a further study, which compares audience letters published in foreign cinema magazines and those published in Turkey, to test whether this relation, which we name as "bringing home", is something specific to Turkish society and culture.

In this study, it is also observed that stars were not simply bodies and characters in films; they were also the heroes/heroines of a fiction circulating outside the movie theatre which made up an important constituent of the cinema event. As it has been suggested in this study, Yeşilçam did not produce only one type of diegesis, namely filmic diegesis. It also produced an extrafilmic diegesis. Moreover, audiences' investment and involvement in this second diegesis, as it is exhibited through the letters, suggests an indefiniteness about which diegesis is the condition of existence of the other -about which one constitutes the inside or outside, about which diegesis

influence the other. In addition, the letters suggest that not only films, but also forms of communication such as rumour, gossip, backbite, which have an important function in the constitution of this second diegesis and audiences' relation to it, need to be considered as distinguished forms of representation that contribute to the circulation of the cinematic. In this respect, this study also points to the potential contribution of considering the practices and languages scattered throughout everyday life, which might look unimportant at first look, to the understanding of media-audience relations.

As a final remark, the intimate and emotional expressions in the letters relating to stars suggest that stars and the off-screen diegesis in which they existed were marked with an off-screen realism. Audiences received them as familiar as their friends, families, neighbours, and lovers and cared for their everyday relations, happiness, unhappiness, honour, mistakes and so on. This phenomena makes one ask what kind of an effect this off-screen realism might have on the reception of the star on the screen and the narratives in which they appeared? Or, it causes one to interrogate whether it is really possible to evaluate/judge realism/unrealism in Yeşilçam films, or other issues such as identification/distantiation by considering mere the space of the screen.

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