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Cinematic Search for Identity in the Shade of Turkey's 1960 Coup: The Social Realism Debate and *The Hope*

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Abstract

When the Turkish army seized power on May 27th, 1960, a new democratic constitution was carried into effect. The positive atmosphere created by the 1961 constitution quickly showed its effects on political balances in the parliament and it became difficult for one single party to come into power, which strengthened the multi-party-system. The freedom initiative created by 1961's constitution had a direct effect on the rise of public opposition. Filmmakers, who generally steered clear from the discussion of social problems and conflicts until 1960, started to produce movies questioning conflicts in political, social and cultural life for the first time and discussions about the "Social Realism" movement in the ensuing films arose in cinematic circles in Turkey. At the same time, the "regional managers" emerged, and movies in line with demands of this system started to be produced. The Hope (Umut), produced by Yılmaz Güney in 1970, rang in a new era in Turkish cinema, because it differed from other movies previously made in its cinematic language, expression, and use of actors and settings. The aim of this study is to mention the reality discussions in Turkish cinema and outline the political facts which initiated this expression leading up to the film Umut (The Hope, directed by Yılmaz Güney), which has been accepted as the most distinctive social realist movie in Turkey.

Keywords: 1960 Turkey coup; political climate; realism discussion; realist movies; social realism.

Introduction

The 1930s was largely the era of romanticism in cinema, where audiences were enthralled by the screen world portrayed by Hollywood. The art of Film immersed itself in narratives concerning the dashing hero and glamorous heroines that enabled audiences to escape their everyday concerns and family heartbreaks. Indeed, the silent pictures of the 1920s emphasised melodrama and visually stunning stunts and gimmicks to capture the interests of their viewers. However, with the advancement of technology in the area of sound, filmmakers started to focus on character development and conveying emotional intensity. Historical narratives covering bygone eras, relying on costumes and

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expensive sets culminated in such escapist epics such as *Gone With The Wind* in 1939 (Robins, 1984, p. 6).

Eventually, some filmmakers began to see the art of Cinema as means to explore and demonstrate realities on-screen, resulting in the social realism movement, to depict the economic hardships, social injustices, and the problems of the working class as the core of the film. Such narratives presented not the dashing heroes of melodrama, not the expensive sets of escapist fare, but characters who faced realistic struggles in realistic environments. Hence, the naturalistic settings replaced the lavish studio backdrops as the social realist movement fixated on working class lives as the subject, offering a leftist political orientation. And this movement was seen in many different parts of the world. (Seino, 2010).

The discussion of “realism” in Turkish cinema originated at the start of the 1960s. In order to understand how the realism discussion arose in the political system of the time, it is essential to address the era’s political and social circumstances. Indeed, 1960 was a turning point for Turkey, marking the beginning of the coup intervention. Previously, in the period of the Republic of Turkey’s establishment in 1923, during the Presidency of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, brief experiments concerning the multiparty system was initially allowed but later became inactive. Indeed, during that era, primary steps were taken to establish modern Turkey by removing religious officials from government posts, secularizing education, adopting the Latin alphabet, promoting western clothing, reformation of the Turkish language, and allowing women voting rights (Landau, 1984, p. xii). After the death of Atatürk, during İsmet İnönü’s rule of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People’s Party), political opposition was again allowed with the formation of *Milli Kalkınma Partisi* (National Development Party) on 5th of September, 1945 (Koçak, 2005, p. 178). Further, essential legal arrangements were finalized in 1946 and this saw more opposition parties beginning to enter the political arena (Timur, 2006, p. 30). Thus, the years between 1945 and 1950 witnessed the founding of many parties, large and small, and this process was mainly influenced by the regeneration of the political system in light of developments after the 2nd World War.

The most important party established in this era was the *Demokrat Parti* (Democratic Party, DP) formed by Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Fuat Köprülü and Refik Koraltan in 1946, which put an end to the one-party government of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP). It is related that the apparent listlessness of İnönü’s administration led to the rise in popularity of the *Demokrat Parti* (Eroğlu, 1998, p. 85). In the election of 1946, the DP secured 66 representatives under the leadership of Adnan Menderes, and further triumphed over CHP by taking 397 representatives from 487 representatives in the election of the 14th of May, 1950. As a result, the political power in Turkey, which had been influenced by the military and non-military elitists, was passed on for the first time since the republic’s beginnings in 1923. For Kayder, the



DP's accession to power in 1950 was a milestone in the history of Turkey because the public voiced their political choice and this ended the single-party tradition in Turkish politics (Kayder, 2005, p. 172).

Unfortunately, the DP was unable to solve the country's growing problems and increased pressure on the opposition. The DP's misconduct towards the opposition, syndicates, intelligentsia and media was about to reach a peak. In addition to all these developments, the economic system was not changing for the better either. Consequently, another era was closed when the military seized power on 27th of May 1960. Since that day, the military in Turkey proved itself a central factor to keep in mind whenever a crisis arose in governance; and people came to expect the military to intervene and takeover at such times. With the coup, political management was passed on to the military once again since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 (Eroğlu, 2006, p. 133).

During and after the 1960 Military Coup

President Celal Bayar, chairman of TBMM, Refik Koraltan and Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, together with many other members of the DP, were arrested when the military seized power on the 27th of May, 1960. Accordingly, the constitution and the Majlis (political council) were extinguished and political activities were called off. A military government which would last 1.5 years was established under General Cemal Gürsel, who had led the coup. Immediately, work commenced on the formation of a new Constitution and the establishment of political institutions and imprisoned members of the DP were transferred to Yassıada (Yassı Island) to be adjudicated. On the 29th of September, 1960, the DP was formally dissolved and the prisoners were convicted by the *Yüksek Adalet Divanı* (Supreme Council of Justice). As a result, 15 people were executed, 31 people sentenced to life, 418 people received various punishments, and 123 people were acquitted - Finance Minister Hasan Polatkan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatin Rüştü Zorlu were both hanged on the 16th of September, 1961, and one day later Prime Minister Adnan Menderes was hanged in İmralı Adası (İmralı Island). However, the penalties of Celal Bayar, Refik Koraltan and 11 others were turned into life sentences (Özdemir, 2005, p. 230-235).

At the time, the Military Coup of May 1960 was viewed quite differently by the various classes of Turkish society, and their perceptions are evident in the expressions used. For instance, some called it the "27th of May Revolution", some the "27th of May Reform", whilst others referred to it as the "27th of May Transformation." As Hikmet Özdemir (2005) puts it, the happenings on the 27th of May was not a kind of 'revolution' as was the the National Independence War; but it also cannot be regarded as a normal coup because the great majority supported this power shift to occur (p. 229).

One of the political milestones of the era was the coming into effect of the Constitution of 1961. It was prepared by the Constituent Assembly and justified

as a response against the DP government's charge (Özdemir, 2005, p. 238-239). The Constitution of 1961 created a positive atmosphere in society by adopting principles such as democracy and human rights. The process brought about by the Constitution with its democratic and liberal character set off social developments in every aspect of public life including politics, culture, and arts. In fact, Feroz Ahmad comments that the Constitution of 1961 offered the biggest political liberty to the Turkish people since the establishment of the Republic because it accorded rights to universities, students and workers (2006, p. 156). Therefore, the Constitution of 1961 played a central role as a modernization movement (Talas, 1979, p. 2), and even though it was put into effect under the military government after the coup, it was at the same time a most progressive Constitution (Daldal, 2005, p. 93).

Hence, free elections were held on the 15th of October, 1961, made possible by this political change. Results in the Majlis were as follows: *Adalet Partisi* (AP) 34.8 per cent and *Yeni Türkiye Partisi* (YTP) 13.7 per cent. *Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi* (CHP), led by İsmet İnönü, reached only 36.7 per cent. These results were not enough for either party to be able to rule on its own in the Majlis, however, the generals solved this problem by urging İnönü to form the first coalition government of three parties, which reigned from 1961 to 1964 (Ahmad, 2005, p. 157). Feroz Ahmad underlines the immense political instability during this period, but remarks that only through military intervention was this coalition able to come to fruition (2005, p. 157).

However, after the DP was dissolved with the coup and its president was hanged, the party's remaining officials reorganized around the *Adalet Partisi* (Justice Party) which gained strength under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel. This party was a coalition of traders, peasants, fundamentalists and Western liberals (Zürcher, 2005, p. 365). The AP, which was established as a successor of the DP (İnsel, 2005, p. 154) reached first place in elections on the 15th of October, 1965. The AP government stayed in power by winning the succeeding elections in 1969, until a new coup on the 12th of March, 1971. (Zürcher, 2005, p. 368-369).

However, these events, originating in late 1960s and peaking in the 1970s, derailed the political system in Turkey. The government proved unable to solve problems such as injustice of income distribution, poverty, urbanisation, unemployment, etc., and these problems set off an economic crisis. As a result, the modern, democratic mentality of a constitutional and social reform, which had come along with the 1960 coup, was hindered.

General Concept of Turkish Cinema in the 1960s

When the *Demokrat Parti* came to power in the 1950s, as a result of liberal politics, transport infrastructure and electricity had reached every part of Anatolia. Tax exemptions were also introduced for the benefit of local cinema managers, thus, "cinema management" became a profitable job and new cinema houses opened in cities all over Anatolia. The movies, which were mainly



produced with limited resources in Istanbul, were released in various areas of Anatolia by a large number of “regional managers” who fronted the money, ensured distribution and had control over the rights to these films throughout the 1960s (Kırel, 2005, p. 191).

Furthermore, it must be noted that these regional managers achieved the distribution of movies by dividing the country into several sub-regions such as Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, Ankara and Samsun (Okan, 1966, p. 26).

Serpil Kırel underlines the importance of regional managers during this period as they increased film production and sustained cinema in Turkey. Of course, by advancing the money to produce movies, they were also able to determine the narrative of these productions. According to the prolific screenwriter of the era, Safa Önal, the producers did not have a lot of money and production companies would suffer if one or two films failed to sell tickets. Therefore, films were only able to go into production when time drafts were sent by the regional managers, which usually ended up in the hands of loan sharks or bankers before it reached the producer. This meant that if the regional managers were removed, film production would cease in Turkey. And so, a cinematic world had started in line with the wishes of these sub-regions, establishing a culture of cinema-goers (Kırel, 2005, p. 105).

The 1960s and the early 1970s are considered a pinnacle for Turkish cinema as filmmakers produced movies in line with requests of regional managers, thus creating a competitive environment. From the mid-60s there was an increase in the annual production of film as many new movie theatres opened to meet the demands of a growing audience. In 1961, there were 68 indoor and 145 outdoor movie theatres in Istanbul, 213 in total. Numbers increased further until 1975, when the number of indoor movie theatres was 137 and the number of outdoor theatres 236, adding up to a total of 373. In those years, cinema in Turkey started to improve and became a profitable sector (Abisel, 1994, p. 98). For instance, while 442 films were produced in Japan, 332 films in India, and 300 in Hong Kong, Turkey lined up as 4th with 241 films in 1966 (Erkılıç, 2003, p. 113). This data clearly reflects the sector’s size and importance.

With the increased number of films and movie theatres, Turkish filmmakers started to produce movies explicitly aimed at family and female audiences. This period also introduced what came to be called the “star system” where movie scripts were written specifically for popular actors, and audiences chose the movie according to which star(s) performed in it. Hence, production companies shaped their movies by adhering to these requirements. In fact, during the 1960s, successful stars had more power and were more influential than producers (Kaplan, 2004, p. 43).

In the spirit of the times, the first private club for cinema culture was established under the name *Kulüp Sinema 7* (Club Cinema 7) in 1962. The *Sinema İşçileri Sendikası* (Cinema Workers Union) was established in 1963, followed by the *Sinematek* institution in 1965. In particular, discussions about social problems in local cinema was very central to *Sinematek*. As film critic Onat

Kutlar reveals, the aim of this institution was to collect and transmit all information concerning Turkish cinema history as a resource to future generations. (1985, p. 18).

An evaluation of the 1960s in Turkey shows that it was an era which saw the beginnings of urbanization, as well as provoking dreams of skipping class distinctions (Özçınar-Eşli, 2012, p. 212). Esra Biryıldız adds that during those times there was considerable internal migration, which accelerated irregular urbanization. The 1960s also saw a rise in social opposition and growing industrialization. At the same time, with the absence of television and video, cinema was the most important recreational activity in society and many important films were produced during this period (Biryıldız, 1993, p. 14-16). Indeed, the number of films produced annually increased each year; the industry was surely living its heyday. Also, the number of workers employed by the film business multiplied and local cinema evolved into an expanding sector able to support a community of technical crews and actors (Özön, 1966, p. 11).

Discussing Reality

“Reality” in cinema has been a topic of discussion ever since the first public screening in Paris on the 28th of December, 1895. The invention, which started with the motion of snapshots, was named Cinematographe and developed by Edison, the Lumiere Brothers, Max Sladanowsky and William Friese Greene. Artistic films were produced by Méliés, Chol, Griffith, Zecca and Linder (Fell, 1983, p. 9). The representation of reality in cinema, however, only became a current issue in Turkey during the 1960s.

Shortly after the invention of cinema, at the beginning of the 20th century, the new question to be considered was what kind of cinema should be made about the relationship of cinema and reality. In his book *Third World Film Making and the West*, published in 1987, Roy Armes relates the studies of Robert Flaherty and Dziga Vertov as the first ones to investigate “cinematic reality” and that cinema’s take on reality was envisioned similarly to 19th century’s naturalist novels by early filmmakers such as D.W. Griffith and Erich von Stroheim, as well as Jean Renoir’s work in the 1930s and Roberto Rossellini’s and Vittoria de Sica, and Luchino Visconti’s in the 1940s. Furthermore, the discussion of cinematic reality was also taken up by Akira Kurosawa and Yashiro Uzo in Japan, and Satyajit Ray in India.

Many different schools were established which dealt with the notion of cinematic reality in the films of relevant directors. These schools and their approaches were strongly influenced by the specific conditions of their countries, such as social, political and economic circumstances. For instance, after the worldwide economic crisis in 1929, “poetical reality” appeared in France. When fascism in Italy, under the leadership of Mussolini, was over by the end of the 2nd World War, the population was unemployed and poor. Thus, Italy was a shaken country and the “Italian New Realism” was born out of this social descent. It is possible to see likewise developments in Germany (German



Expressionist Cinema), the USSR (Soviet Social Realism), France (French New Wave and Poetical Reality), and in the UK (British Documentary School), to name a few. Hence, directors and film theorists started to reflect on social agendas and inequality throughout these works as social and economic conditions influenced the birth of numerous movements (Coşkun, 2003, p. 113-114).

While many European countries used a variety of expressive techniques, cinematic language and aesthetics, Turkish filmmakers faced difficulties in producing ordinary films until the start of the 1950s. Cinematic activities, started by the efforts of a small group of people during the Ottoman era, were under the hegemony of Muhsin Ertuğrul for a long time after the establishment of the Republic. During the dominance of one party (CHP), no efforts were made in Turkey to further develop cinema as an art. Some renaissance started in the sector with the change of power in 1950, and in the 1960s, social problems became the main focus. This way, the aims of the 27th of May coup (liberalization, modernization) came true, and the notion of “reality” started to be discussed in Turkish cinema during these years as well. Halit Refiğ comments on the 1960 coup in his book *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası (National Cinema Struggle)* that ‘social reality’ in local film was born as an effect of the 27th of May (1971, p. 22).

Aslı Daldal relates the movement directly to the 1960 coup and remarks that the birth of social reality in Turkey is directly linked to Adnan Menderes’ liberal rule being ended by the military and with the acceptance of progressiveness in 1961’s Constitution (2005, p. 56-57).

In the shadow of the 1960 coup, a few films dealing with social issues were made, and it was this movement that started a discussion regarding the depiction of reality in Turkish cinema. Ten notable films about social reality are: *Gecelerin Ötesi (Beyond the Nights, 1960)*, *Yılanların Öcü (Revenge of the Serpents, 1962)*, *Susuz Yaz (Dry Summer, 1963)* and *Suçlular Aramızda (Culprits among Us, 1964)* by Metin Erksan; *Şehirdeki Yabancı (A Stranger in the City, 1963)*, *Gurbet Kuşları (Migrant Birds, 1964)* and *Harem’de Dört Kadın (Four Women in a Harem, 1965)* by Halit Refiğ; *Otobüs Yolcuları (Bus Passengers, 1961)* and *Karanlıkta Uyananlar (Awake in the Dark, 1965)* by Ertem Görec; *Bitmeyen Yol (Unending Road, 1965)* by Duygu Sağıroğlu (Daldal, 2005, p. 60).

Other important films close to the movement and considered realistic for several aspects are: *Kırık Çanaklar (Broken Pots)*, *Yasak Aşk (Forbidden Love)*, *Seviştığımız Günler (The Days We Made Love)*, *Denize İnen Sokak (The Street Towards the Sea)*, *Son Kuşlar (The Last Birds)*, *Murtaza (Murtaza)*, *Suçlu (Guilty)*, *Acı Hayat (Bitter Life)*, *Üç Tekerlekli Bisiklet (The Tricycle)*, *Şafak Bekçileri (The Guards of the Dawn)*, *Murad’ın Türküsü (The Ballad of Murat)*, *Kızgın Delikanlı (Angry Young Man)*, *Yarın Bizimdir (Tomorrow is Ours)* and *Bozuk Düzen (Broken System)* (Daldal, 2005, p. 61).

Gecelerin Ötesi (Beyond the Nights, 1960) was the first film to be discussed in terms of social realism. The film tells the frustrations of seven working class

friends. Unhappy with their lives, they decide to participate in a robbery with the illusions of becoming rich overnight, but their journey ends in tragedy. In the film *Yılanların Öcü* (*Revenge of the Serpents*, 1962), the plot depicts the problems between peasants of a village, especially the bitter rivalries of two families concerning property rights. Özçınar-Eşli claims that the film adapts the reality and troubles of village life to cinema, as well as bringing new realistic mise en scene elements to cinema in Turkey (2012, p. 157).

Another film that examines the problems of village peasants in a realistic manner is *Susuş Yaz* (*Dry Summer*, 1963). The film relates the conflict about water distribution running through a peasant's land, addressing important topics like ownership, obsession and sexual oppression as well. These 3 important films were directed by Metin Erksan and *Susuş Yaz* won the prestigious Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1964. *Suçlular Aramızda* (*Culprits among Us*, 1964), another effort by Erksan, depicts the degeneration of the bourgeois and examines the social conditions that compel an individual to commit a crime. *Otobüs Yolcuları* (*Bus Passengers*, 1961) directed by Ertem Göreç, tells the story of the bus driver Kemal and his confrontation with a corrupt building company victimizing a neighborhood. *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* (*Awake in the Night*, 1965), also directed by Göreç, is the first film to deal with labour issues, democratic rights and to focus on struggles related to layoffs, fair wages and strikes (Güzel, 2001, p. 196). *Şehirdeki Yabancı* (*A Stranger in the City*, 1963) directed by Halit Refiğ, takes place in the miner's town Zonguldak and concerns a Turkish engineer, educated in the West, who encounters workers' exploitation when he returns to his country. *Gurbet Kuşları* (*Migrant Birds*, 1964), another of Refiğ's films, deals with the dissatisfactions of a family migrating from the small town of Maraş to Istanbul. Another film dealing with internal migration is *Bitmeyen Yol* (*Unfinished Road*, 1965) directed by Duygu Sağıroğlu. The film gives insight into the dreams of six impoverished individuals after their journey to Istanbul from their small towns.

Aslı Daldal states that there is no complete consensus in social realism about the films above, and adds that the movement lacks an exact charter. Daldal places the origin of the social reality discussion within the specific political, social and intellectual atmosphere of the time (2005, p. 57). Nezih Coş, a film critic, states that some new directors also appeared in the social reality movement after 1960, and these directors made several films which portrayed realistic values in some aspects, but were at the same time not completely consistent with the genre. This claim suggests that realistic films are not as a rule part of the social realist movement. Coş also adds that the social realistic movement lost its influence after the 1960s (1987, p. 51). Yet, the filmmakers who carried on the discussion after 1965 were very much divided under various groups such as "public cinema", "national cinema" or "reformer cinema". However, the directors faithful to the social realist movement were unable to produce a sufficient number of films expressing their ideas (Esen, 2000, p. 165-166).



Interestingly, film writer Nejat Özön does not accept films dealing with social reality which were produced after the 1960s as an école of social realism. In his opinion, they do not form a movement because the works covered social problems only peripherally, and in fact they showed social problems merely by inserting a few realistic scenes into the storylines of regular or traditional Turkish films. Moreover, according to Özön, there were filmmakers producing films based on social problems solely because it was a current trend to do so (Özön, 1975, p. 465).

As has been shown, the era's social realism discussions in Turkish cinema were a result of the 27th of May coup, in light of a search for national identity over the opposing lines of traditionalism and modernism. The social realism discussion was the artistic equivalent to the real-world struggle in socio-political areas, and it arose as a result of this search. After efforts by several directors and their notable films, social realism was unable to continue, because of changing attitudes in holders of political power as well as directors' ideological conflicts (Daldal, 2005, p. 58).

The First Social Realism Film in Turkish Cinema: *The Hope (Umut, 1970)*

Before examining the film "*The Hope*", it is important to mention something about the film's controversial director, Yılmaz Güney. Besides being an actor, scriptwriter, director and producer, he also succeeded as the author of several novels and stories. He tried to depict the situation of class struggles in Turkey (especially the feudal paradox of ethnic Kurds) by using a social realist cinema approach. Yılmaz Güney surrounded himself with anti-government radicals, and was caught for sheltering anarchist students which led to numerous lawsuits filed against him. Throughout the 1970s, he was on trial for various charges, and was also imprisoned for intentional murder, later reduced to involuntary manslaughter (Pope, 2012, p. 109).

Yılmaz Güney, born to a poor Anatolian family in 1937, educated in law and economics, initially started working in the film industry as an assistant in 1958. He gained fame in the cinema sector in Turkey as a star in the late 1960s and later as a director in the 1970s. During the 1960s, however, he obtained the nickname "Çirkin Kral" (Ugly King) based on the rough-hewn mythic antihero character he portrayed in many low-budget commercial films. Eventually, he would start portraying figures more concerned with a radical and socially conscious ethos, and was considered worthy of many awards, both national and international, including the Golden Palm at Cannes Film Festival in 1982 (Naficy, 2001, p. 181). In Particular, Vincent Canby's review for *The New York Times* on October 6th, 1982, describes Güney's partially directed film *Yol* (The Path) as a "big, angry epic of contemporary Turkey" which shared the top prize at the Cannes Film Festival with Costa-Gavras' "Missing" (1982), and also was seen worthy of two other subsidiary awards: the International Catholic Prize, and the International Critics' Prize (Canby, 1982).

Although, previously he had made quite a few unimportant films in the 1960s, Güney's first experiment as a serious director and producer was the film "*Seyyit Han*" in 1968 – a tragic love story set in South East Turkey, with a focus on honor killings, local traditions and vengeance.

His second noteworthy film was "*Aç Kurtlar*" (The Hungry Wolves), made the same year, where the protagonist, also played by Güney, is depicted as an invincible hero much in the style of Clint Eastwood's gunman in the Sergio Leone westerns – going so far to even incorporate a pirated score from Ennio Morricone (Armes, 1987, p. 275). The undertaking of these productions paved the way for filming "*The Hope*" in 1970, where he featured as the director, scriptwriter, leading actor and producer.

In the film, Cabbar (Yılmaz Güney), who works as a coachman in Adana, desperately scrambles to make a living for his family. Set in this southern Turkish city, new and modern buildings, bank advertisements and passing cars, as symbols of modernization, contrast the bleak ghettos of the unprivileged. In particular, one traditional job, the "carriage-driver", is about to disappear with the increased use of taxis.

Cabbar lives in the slums of Adana with his family (his wife, his mother and his five children). Because Cabbar's carriage is old and his horses are weak, his business is unprosperous. Cabbar always plays the lottery, since he sees it as the only way to rid himself and his family from the wretchedness of their destitute lives. His friend (Tuncel Kurtiz), on the other hand, tells him that the only way to improve his luck is to go to the riverside and look for treasure with the blessing of a powerful Hodja (a religious official who helps with ventures by performing a sermon). One day, a car runs down and kills one of Cabbar's horses and his pitiful situation escalates. Furthermore, the car owner scolds Cabbar and accuses him of damaging his vehicle. Cabbar turns to the police in search of justice, but is treated as the guilty party. Consequently, his wife advises him to ask for help from the old landlords, whom he visits one by one; only to face endless rejection.

Then, Cabbar persuades his wife to sell her valuables to buy a second horse, but his creditors show up at his home and take his only remaining horse together with the coach as payment for his outstanding debts. His sense of hope in the form of lottery tickets also prove a miserable failure; Cabbar has now reached the end of the line but is still determined to offer a better life for his family. Hence, his friend (Tuncel Kurtiz) finally persuades him to look for treasure instead. After gathering his tools, Cabbar, his friend and the village's Hodja set out for the river, looking for a certain auspicious tree which supposedly marks the treasure's burial place. They finally find the tree in an isolated area and start digging after the Hodja's blessings. Cabbar digs incessantly, even when all hope of finding treasure continues to diminish. When Cabbar finally realizes that there is nothing to be found, his courage breaks and he starts spinning in circles – Cabbar has lost his mind. This scene concludes the film.



A Closer Look at *The Hope*

In *The Hope*, hope and despair coincide, as hope is the product of despair and despair is a result of hope.

During this period in Turkey, the horse carriage-driving profession was gradually being replaced with the taxi car (automobile), as expected from the progressive development of a society with capitalistic leanings. Therefore, through the character of Cabbar, the gaining momentum of capitalism leads to Cabbar losing his horse carriage and this symbolizes the end of such a vocation in Turkey as the automobile era is ushered in. Equally important, Cabbar is an ignorant, uninformed and undernourished person, and along with the death of the horse-carriage profession, Cabbar also symbolizes the death of other similar small-time businesses such as the local grocery store, tailor shop etc.

It can be said that *The Hope* was a great contribution to the social reality realm of Turkish Cinema in the 1960s. Not that there wasn't a curious flow of films addressing social realism in Turkey with fluctuating results in terms of quality or sincerity, yet Güney's film is a most defining example and brought vitality to the genre, touching upon important points that were neglected by other local filmmakers during that era.

For instance, one of these important points is the fact that *The Hope* attempts to project its intense storyline in a style somewhat closer to that of a documentary than anything else made in Turkish Cinema before it. Therefore, the film is more concerned with reflecting the reality of the happenings rather than exaggerating the occurrences in melodramatic fashion as was popular in many Turkish films throughout the 1960s and 70s. Another important point is how the film is stripped of all complications and opts to tell the story in a simplistic manner. As a result, the life of Cabbar is dissected into small sections and then pieced together according to the chain of events that are affecting his immediate environment and himself.

Indeed, the film's introduction displays a series of shots edited in documentary fashion. The viewer is shown scenes of small tradespeople including horse carriage-drivers, taxi drivers, food stall owners and newspaper delivering children. On one corner of the train station are horse carriages, and on the other are their principal rivals – the taxi drivers. Here Güney points out that the horse carriages are a dying profession as capitalism gains impetus in Turkey, represented by the automobiles.

The audience first sees Cabbar awakening in his old horse-drawn carriage, which he has slept in overnight, dirty and unshaved. There is no breakfasting habit for Cabbar, as he lights a cigarette and relieves himself under the bank billboards that boldly assure the safekeeping of the accumulating wealth of their clients. The audience learns early that Cabbar is illiterate as his next action is to urge others to read him the newspaper, in particular the lottery sections, indeed the only section which interests him, though his lucky numbers are forever evasive. In fact, Cabbar's only salvation is the hope he places in winning the lottery. When his friend implies that he places too much faith in these lottery

tickets, Cabbar tells him that these tickets are a “doorway to hope to pay back his debts“. Clearly, Cabbar’s business suffers, as modern cab drivers replace the old worn-out horse carriages. Furthermore, it is a life of constant price haggling as Cabbar’s only potential customer is a peasant family who offer a measly 75 kurush, which Cabbar declines, as the distance is too far to travel for such a low sum. Interestingly, the peasant family, who are no better off than Cabbar himself, prefer to continue their journey on foot.

Additionally, it appears that poor people who either arrive or are living in the city have lost confidence in each other. This is demonstrated when the aforementioned peasant family arrives at the train station and the distrust shows in their bargaining with Cabbar. “This man will ask more money from us, he lives in the city and conforms to its rules” says the patriarchal leader of the Anatolian family as they hurry away from Cabbar. In their eyes, even Cabbar represents city folk, which are not to be trusted for they reside far away from traditional values preserved in the countryside. This is further highlighted when later in the film Cabbar is seen picking up his only customer: a drunk woman late one night in front of a sleazy night club. Just like the gradual collapse of the horse-carriage profession, the drunk woman symbolizes the decadence and decline of society in the city.

Yet, the turning point for Cabbar is when his horse is run down by a speeding car. All Cabbar’s investments in the name of hope are unyielding – even the police official stands on the side of the rich person responsible for killing Cabbar’s horse. In the following scene, the police official blames Cabbar for parking his horse-carriage irresponsibly by the side of the road, and thus provoking the accident. This part of the film illustrates that the helpless such as Cabbar sadly do not have the law on their side even when they are not at complete fault. In fact, the guilty party pities Cabbar and decides not to press charges for damaging the speeding car.

In particular, the strike scene in the film depicts the struggle of the poor workers and carriage-drivers to preserve their profession, though it is a lost cause in the face of modernization. Indeed, while all the other carriage-drivers gather to protest their rights, Cabbar who has lost his horse (and thus, his only source of income) joins the group of protestors carrying the Turkish flag only, saying he has nothing else left. During this part, protest signs shouting “hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder” and “we will not be exploited” are clearly displayed. Here, Güney supports the act with a huge Turkish flag, emphasizing the collective struggle against exploitation regardless of religion, ethnic background or opinion. Furthermore, this interesting scene is indicative that Cabbar still places hope that the plight of the needy will not fall on deaf administrative ears, as the national flag represents all Turkish citizens, their rights and the government obligation to hear collective complaints and take decisive steps in order to solve their escalating hardships.

Eventually naive Cabbar’s longing for wealth, which was represented in daily lottery tickets, is shaken and replaced with a final desperate dream in finding



lost treasure. At home, Cabbar's nagging wife of a 16 year marriage incessantly complains about their miserable and pitiful living conditions. Yet, Cabbar assures her that good days are nearby and soon they will be feasting in abundance, indulging in delicacies such as kebabs and baklavas. This, of course, is quite a promise given that Cabbar and his family are shown to gather communally on the floor, dipping bread and eating out of the same pots and pans. This gathering is later contrasted with the scene where Cabbar indeed does take his family to dinner and plates of kebabs are served.

Unforgettable are the striking images of the children wolfing down the food at the restaurant, indicating how special and rare an occasion this is for them. Also, it is unfortunately Cabbar's last scene spent with his whole family in the film before he begins his journey which he believes will transform his economic situation for good. As a result, the dinner sequence is Cabbar keeping his promise to his wife and celebrating somewhat prematurely. Here, with the divine aid of the Hodja, Cabbar sees the finding of the treasure as an already accomplished deed.

However, the endless digging starts to take its toll on Cabbar's mind as the treasure quest is not forthcoming. In fact, the so-called blessing of the Hodja fast becomes a spell of ruination. So much so, that Cabbar begins seeing treasure disguised as a black snake, which he chases, as it is believed that the treasure with the help of evil spirits can change form and escape the grasp of the diggers. Plainly, Cabbar's last hope also crumbles under the fake predictions of the Hodja, who has already been paid to bless the expedition with Cabbar's remaining money. It so happens that the only person who has true faith and keeps the doomed search ongoing is Cabbar even in the face of constant failure to find the buried fortune. The last scene sees the Hodja blindfolding Cabbar's eyes. With the aid of prayer, Cabbar is instructed to sense his way towards the hidden treasure. Instead, Cabbar begins spinning in circles, his madness has finally reached its peak. The blindfold is quite symbolic in a sense that even without it, Cabbar was not able to see that his unreal hope would only result in a nightmare of despair.

The Hope was chosen as the first social realist film in Turkish cinema by the journal of *Yeni İnsan Yeni Sinema (New Man New Cinema)* (S. 15, 2004, p. 43). *The Hope* aims at uncovering a disordered system through the poetic language of cinema employing the realistic approach of a documentary, at the same time. It should be understood that Yılmaz Güney shares part of his private life in the film. Indeed, Güney admits that during his childhood his father's friend was obsessed with the idea of finding treasure. Apparently, Güney's father started to show interest in the idea once he was unemployed. They believed that if they could find a treasure, their lives would be immeasurably better. Güney elaborates that, as a child, he personally experienced this adventure from beginning to end (Battal, 2006, p. 2003).

The sets of the film *The Hope* are real locations and the dialogues and acting are designed to be as close to natural as possible. In terms of representing

reality, it could be said that *The Hope* is comparable to the films produced in the Italian New Realism style. The film unveils, from an observer's perspective, the defects of the system by focusing on an average poor man's struggles and his failures. The plot, with its authentic characters, sheds light on the subjects of inequality between the well-to-do and the impoverished, the setbacks of the poor, and their illusory hopes created by the lottery and treasure hunts (both ending in misadventure). The film is illustrated simply but effectively through cinematographic skill, not so common in local films of the time.

When the famous Turkish-born director Elia Kazan first watched this film in Paris in 1974, he was highly impressed by this Turkish director he had never heard of before (Yılmaz Güney), and wrote to *Milliyet* newspaper in Turkey. Kazan notes how he became totally invested in the film due to its realistic handling which was neither European nor American, and grew concerned about the protagonist, his family and their future. Apparently, even after the screening finished, Kazan still kept on worrying about the fate of Cabbar and his children (Koloğlu, 2000).

The Communication Science Professor Ünsal Oskay remarks that Turkish cinema should be evaluated as before *The Hope* and after *The Hope*, as it represents a turning point in the country's filmmaking norms. Oskay also adds that *The Hope* was a starting point for those who wanted to create films with the expectation to precipitate social change or exhibit awareness. (Cited as Oskay, Battal, 2006, p. 202)

The Hope is undisputedly the best of Yılmaz Güney's movies and some film critics even saw *The Hope* as an announcement of the demise of traditional cinema in Turkey and the establishment of a new kind of style in Turkish cinema. *The Hope* greatly influenced the next generation, and several young directors started filming in a way similar to Güney because they were so impressed by Güney's approach to social realism in cinema and the film's overall cinematic language (Battal, 2006, p. 200).

Conclusion

Turkey's socio-political conflicts led some filmmakers to incorporate social problems in the films produced between 1960 and 1965. With the 27th of May coup, Adnan Menderes (Prime Minister for 10 years), Fatih Rüştü Zorlu (Minister of Foreign Affairs) and Hasan Polatkan (Finance Minister) were sentenced to death and enabled 1961's New Constitution to be declared.

In the ensuing political atmosphere, some sensitive filmmakers dared to depict social injustices and inequality in their films for the first time. Some of the films, in this manner, brought about the discussion of social reality in cinema in Turkey. The most outspoken realist films were not produced in this process, but a considerable number of directors tried to capture social reality in their cinematic work. Yet, both the changing attitude of power-holders to freedom of opinion, as well as filmmakers' ideological disputes and segregation had a very negative influence on social realist cinema in Turkey.



The Hope, directed by Yılmaz Güney in 1970, is a manifest of the social realism discussion in Turkish cinema. The plot, acting, and atmosphere, the dialogues as well as the settings of the film are very realistic and naturalistic. In its presentation of reality, *The Hope* is unique even in comparison with other Turkish films of the time and movement. It actualizes its specific narrative quality by disregarding traditional values of Turkish cinema, showing, from an observer's perspective, the defects of the socio-political system through the story of an average man's struggles and defeat. By doing so, *The Hope* became the most distinctive social realist film in Turkish cinema.

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