

FILMIC SPACE IN TURKISH MELODRAMA

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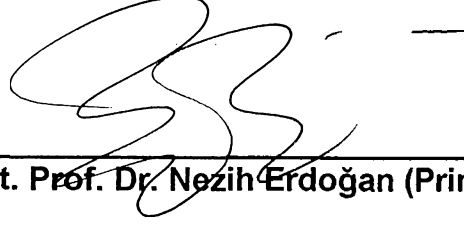
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June, 1997

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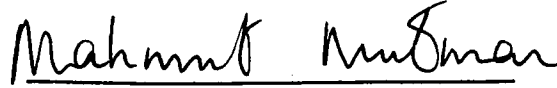
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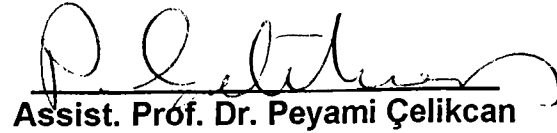
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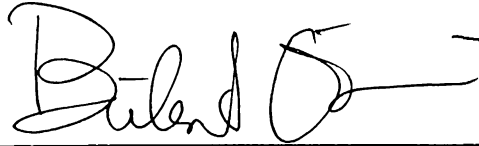
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ABSTRACT

FILMIC SPACE IN TURKISH MELODRAMA

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This study aims at analyzing filmic space in Turkish melodrama films that were influential between 1960-1975. In order to map the theoretical framework for such a study, different approaches to filmic space are reviewed and discussed. Among these approaches, some focus on the formal aspects of filmic space, regarding mise-en-scene, editing and sound. On the other hand, another group of researchers deal with the cultural and ideological preferences influencing representation of space. In the thesis, the Turkish melodrama is evaluated in terms of both approaches.

Keywords: Film, Space, Representation, Melodrama.

ÖZET

TÜRK MELODRAMINDA FİLMSEL MEKAN

Ahmet Gürata

Grafik Tasarım Bölümü

Yüksek Lisans

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Nezih Erdoğan

Haziran 1997

Bu çalışmanın amacı 1960-1975 yılları arasında Türk sinemasında egemen olan melodramlarda filmsele mekanın incelenmesidir. Bu tür bir çalışma için gerekli olan kuramsal çerçeveyi tanımlamak amacıyla, filmsele mekan konusundaki farklı yaklaşımlar değerlendirilmiş ve tartışılmıştır. Bu yaklaşımlardan bazıları filmsele mekanın, mizansen, kurgu ve sesi içeren, biçimsel yönü üzerinde durmuşlardır. Bazı araştırmacılar ise mekanın yenidensunumunu etkileyen kültürel ve ideolojik tercihleri incelemişlerdir. Çalışmada, melodramlar her iki bakış açısı da gözönünde bulundurularak değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Film, Mekan, Yenidensunum, Melodram

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Concept of Space

Today, space is an important category in evaluating the society and its relations, besides temporality. Nevertheless, the role of spatiality in evaluating the coordinates of the social realm was often neglected until recently. Under the influence of philosophy of the Enlightenment and modernity project, social sciences emphasized 'development.' Therefore, the evolution of the society is tested by historical time, and the history was based on linear development.

Space now becoming an important aspect in social science, with the questioning of the Enlightenment philosophy, to which the time-based rationality belonged. Today a number of researchers are working on a reordering of space and to conceptualize space together with time. The research into this new area of study focus on the passage from modernity to postmodernity, which involves "time-space compression" (Harvey 1990). The aim of these studies has been to evaluate the space in which we live in and how we make sense of it. These studies are reshaping the consideration of space.

"New possibilities are being generated from this creative commingling, possibilities for a simultaneously historical and geographical materialism; a triple dialectic of space, time, and

social being; a transformative retheorization of the relations between history, geography, and modernity.” (Soja 1989, 12)

In fact, the recent studies on space opened a new path in the postmodernism debate, while replacing temporal categories with spatial ones. The main theme for this ongoing research could be summarized as such:

“There are complex and multidimensional relations between the social structures and practices, and the conceptions of time and space. Social structures and practices affect our considerations time and space, whereas different time-space considerations shape social structures and spaces” (Işık 1994, 25)

The recent studies on space actually focus on three different paths, according to Henri Lefebvre. The first one is the ‘spatial practice’, which covers the organic and practical level of space, and the way that the space is perceived. The ‘representation of the space’ is related to the codes and signs derived from the relations of production, and scientific, theoretical and technological knowledge. Finally, ‘representational space’ signifies the space that is ‘lived-in’, and constructed by symbolic expression, cultural beliefs and traditions (1991, 40). The relations and distinctions between these three categories are crucial for studies on space.

Space is no longer a privilege of the geographers and philosophers. Different aspects of the term has been evaluated by scholars from various

fields. The representation of the space is such category which drawn a large multi-disciplinary attention.

1.2. Representation of Space

Representation of space in literature and the visual arts is a multi-disciplinary field of research that is constantly expanding. Social scientists, literary and film critics, as well as geographers, are studying different aspects of this wide subject. The multi-disciplinary research on this subject is an important part of the efforts for interpretation of our times. The research into this area also involves the study of cultural, economic and political processes that effect representation.

Representation has different meanings in religious, aesthetic, theatrical, political and semiotic terms (Shohat and Stam 1994, 182). These distinct realms are also interrelated. For example, the Judeo-Islamic censure of representation of human figures affects aesthetic representation based on mimesis. The mimetic experience is also linked with the power relations (related with the system of political representation). In Islamic miniature painting (as well as in pre-perspectival medieval painting) noble figures are drawn larger than the other figures whether they are near or far in space.

The representations of space is effected by the space that is lived-in (representational space) and in turn influence it in practical terms.

However these relations are not the same in the West and East. Lefebvre describe the difference thus:

“Whether the East, specifically China, has experienced a contrast between representations of space and representational spaces is doubtful in the extreme. It is indeed quite possible that the Chinese characters combine two functions in an inextricable way, that on one hand they convey the order of the world (space-time), while on the other hand they lay hold of that concrete (practical and social) space-time where in symbolisms hold sway, where works of art are created, and where buildings, palaces and temples are built” (1991, 42).

A complex relationship between the representation of space and representational spaces is also observed in the Islamic world. The Islamic miniature painting was not aiming to achieve a close to real depiction of the space. The reason for this lies in the Muslim reluctance for reshaping the space surrounding. Because, in Medieval Islamic society “the individual consider its surrounding place as the other space-heterotopias in Foucault’s terms-where the ‘civil’ desires of different classes in the society are reflected” (Sarıkartal 1994, 154). Thus, the influence of representations of space on the production space is different than the West.

The thesis aims at studying these differences in the representation of space in cinema.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The representation and construction of space in cinema is rather a new field of study. While discussing this subject, some problems related to the definition of the terms emerge. First of all, we have to distinguish the terms place and space. Space, derived from Latin *spatiari* (to wander), signifies a distance, interval, or area between or within things. Place, in Latin *platea* (a street), is a particular area or locality, or it is considered as the part of space occupied by a person or thing.

The employment of these terms in film studies is often confusing. The problem emerges from the divergence between different approaches to filmic space. Some theorists have given priority to the formal aspects of the construction of filmic space, while others emphasize the social and cultural motives behind the representation of particular spaces.

Thus, a discussion of these different approaches is a crucial starting point for this study. Another major concern of this study is the construction of filmic space in Turkish melodrama. In this context, the thesis questions in which ways Turkish melodrama differs from the classical Hollywood model. I believe, these differences also reflect some characteristics of the national identity. In order to evaluate this question, the notion of filmic space will be reevaluated.

1.4. Aim

In this thesis, I will try to give a brief account of these different approaches towards filmic space, and compare them. The aim is to uncover the shifting meanings of space in cinema. I believe studies in this field will enable us to reconsider distinct approaches towards the space surrounding us. Moreover, the thesis aims at analyzing filmic space in Turkish melodrama. Thus, the domain of the study is limited to the melodrama genre that was dominant in the Turkish film industry, especially between 1965-1975. That is the period when the industry was producing more than 100 movies each year. In this context, both the formal aspects of the construction of space and metaphors of certain representations of space will be considered. I believe, such a study can provide insights into both the Turkish cinema and the world it represented.

2. THEORIES OF FILMIC SPACE

The notion of space is one of the most important focus of interest in the realm of film studies. The function of the space, as well as the theoretical approaches towards the concept of space in cinema has changed throughout the history.

In its early days, the aim of the cinema was to capture reality, or as Louis Lumiere put it, to 'reproduce life.' Thus, "the space of film was the space of reality" (Heath 1981, 25). The films of the Lumiere brothers aimed to record certain events, such as the arrival of a train or a gardener watering the garden. On the other hand, there was another group of filmmakers whose aim was to create a fantasy world, rather than to reproduce reality. Melies is an example of these filmmakers. This contradiction about the aim of filmmaking later led to the formation of two distinct approaches in film theory: realist and formalist film theories. The realist tradition in cinema tried to reproduce 'real' life by staging events in real places. The theory developed on these works by Andre Bazin had given priority to long shots, and deep staging. This approach involved lesser use of editing. Formalist theorists, especially Sergei Eisenstein, were concerned with the opportunities that the editing could create in cinema. Their aim was not just to reproduce reality mechanically but to enrich the filmic

narration with editing. Another formalist theorist, Rudolph Arnheim, asserted that if film attempted to reproduce real life mechanically, then it did not constitute an art form (1971, 3).

Filmic space, at the start of the cinema, borrowed the stage setting model from the theater. The background of the theater stage was deployed as tableau-like picture. "Early films are typically organized as a series of fixed scenes, with a strict unity of time and place" (Heath 1986, 39). The focus was on the actors and the dialogue, but the problem of the movement of the actors was neglected. This problem could only be solved by achieving some codes of continuity: this has brought the rules for camera movement and angles, and movement from shot to shot. Thus, the tableau space of the early film was replaced by new continuity rules borrowed from other narrative models (e.g. parallel events editing from the novel). However, the organization of space between the landscape and the actors remained an important issue.

"It is only when the background scene becomes foreground/actor - a mise-en-scene, a dynamic place of action, a continuous space that draws in the spectator as a participant, a positioning and positioned movement - that cinematic convention becomes important" (Zonn and Aitken 1993, 17).

The background improved its importance with the deep-focus staging (the juxtaposition of distinct foreground, midground and background planes), which had been influential in 1940s in Hollywood. Through the development of technical devices in cinema, a certain disavowal is obtained by depth of field. Charles Affron explains this feeling as:

“The deep field presented to us on the screen, despite its lifelike aspects, is accessible to us with an immediacy the same field does not possess in life. The screen can relate the near and the far to such a high degree of visual coherence that it generates fictions of clarity, completeness, and depth.” (1982, 78)

Later, the conflict between the realist and formalist theories in film studies left its place to other discussions. The classic narrative system and its relations with the audience has started to be questioned. And these debates attracted the attention towards the construction of filmic space.

The early studies on filmic space focused on the dialectic between the on-screen and off-screen space, and the role of ‘editing’ in the construction of space (Burch 1981). Besides, some visual codes, such as lighting and camera movement, are also examined (Bordwell 1985). This latter approach involved the construction of the *mise-en-scène*¹ in cinema.

Another kind of spatial relationship that is evaluated is between the screen frame and the viewers (Bordwell 1985; Branigan 1981). This approach examined the illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat plane, and the positioning of the viewer (Cook 1993, 245). In this context,

¹ The term, originally derived from French, means “having been put into the scene.” It has been used in two different senses in film studies (Rowe 1996,94). Some writers limit it to the elements that are needed by the camera (objects, movements, lighting, shadow, color, etc.) (Bordwell and Thompson 1995, 119). And for some other *mise-en-scène* signify the art of recording itself (the distance and the movement of the camera). In this sense, the term includes those elements of filming except editing and the dubbing, that were once out of director’s control in Hollywood. In this study I will use the term in this broader sense, including both the profilmic features and the recording.

the theories of visual perception and the notion of perspective in cinema is reevaluated.

The movie camera, as well as the photograph and camera obscura, work on the principles of linear perspective. The linear perspective, most common form of the so-called 'scientific' perspective systems, involves the convergence of orthogonal lines to a vanishing point. The basis of this system was introduced in the early fifteenth century in Italy (the period known as the *Quattrocento*). This system aims at depicting three-dimensional objects upon a plane surface "in such a manner that the picture may affect the eye of an observer in the same way as the natural objects themselves" (G. Ten Doesschate qtd. in Heath 1981, 28). The illusion in linear perspective can be obtained when the spectator is using only one eye and this eye is placed on the central point of perspective.

The linear perspective is not the only way used in depiction of space in cinema. With the use of different camera lenses some other perspective effects can be created; however the filmic space usually depicted in accordance with linear perspective.

Another line of study on filmic space emphasize on the function of space in the narrative structure of the film (Heath 1981). Focusing on the formal

aspects of the filmic space, this approach tries to relate these with the narration.

Finally, some other theorists focus on the representation of space, and the ideological motives behind it (Aitken and Zonn 1994; Jameson 1992a; Mulvey 1992). These studies pay less attention to formal devices.

In this thesis, I will give a brief account of these different approaches towards the space in cinema.

2.1. Formalist Approaches

As mentioned above, some theorists concerned with the stylistic devices (mise-en-scene and editing) that affect the construction of space in cinema. Besides they are involved with the cognitive process of viewing and its role in constructing space.

2.1.1. The Space of the Editing (*Decoupage*): Noel Burch

Noel Burch had tried to theorize his practice in film making in *Theory of Film Practice*. This book was published in French in 1969 and then became influential in film studies, especially across the US. Ironically, as the book's reputation grew, so its writer's discontent about the book increased. In his foreword to the English edition, Burch admitted that the

book had been a great source of embarrassment for him because of its formalism. Burch describes his effort as “narrow and incomplete” (1981, Foreword *vii*). Despite his critical distance to *Theory of Film Practice*, Burch’s approach to cinema has gained a widespread group of followers.

In the first part of his book, Burch emphasizes both temporal and spatial articulations in cinema. According to Burch, there are five temporal and three spatial types of relation between successive shots. These relations together form what Burch defines as *decoupage*.

“An examination of the actual manner in which the two partial *decoupages*, one temporal and the other spatial, join together to create a single articulated formal texture enables us to classify the possible ways of joining together the spaces depicted by two succeeding camera setups and the different ways of joining together two temporal situations” (4)

The temporal articulations are : 1) temporal continuity: i.e. shot/reverse shot; 2) temporal ellipsis (time abridgment): a gap between two shots. i.e. detail shots; 3) indefinite temporal ellipsis: being measurable through the aid of something external (i.e. a line of dialogue, a title); 4) time reversal: i.e. flashback; 5) indefinite time reversal: identified as similar to indefinite temporal ellipsis. And the spatial articulations are grouped as: 1) spatial continuity; 2) spatial discontinuity; 3) radical spatial discontinuity.

The differences between these categories are not very clear, as Burch admits. The cinematic articulation is defined by two parameters, temporal

and spatial. While editing two successive shots, each time one temporal and one spatial kind of articulation is considered. Thus, there are fifteen (five times three) different ways of articulating two shots. Burch later revised his account of these articulations:

“Although I regard the first chapter of this book as in many ways the most seminal of all, the rather solemn pronouncement that there are fifteen types of spatio-temporal shot-association is assuredly one of the most useless pieces of information about film-making that has ever been set forth in print” (Foreword *ix*).

Burch also analyzes the division between the on-screen and off-screen space. The on-screen space includes everything perceived on the screen by the eye. The off-screen space is then what is left outside the frame, whether outside the four edges or behind the camera and set (*Ibid*, 17). Burch divides off-screen space into two categories: imaginary and concrete. When the viewer cannot define the space within a larger context, according to Burch, the space is labeled as imaginary. In the example of shot/reverse shot, the reverse shot converts an off-screen space that was imaginary in the initial shot into concrete space (*Ibid*, 21). The film works on this opposition between on-screen and off-screen space. This opposition is maintained by such devices as “off-screen glances, the shot and reverse shot, partially out-of-frame actors, and so on” (*Ibid*, 24). Another important device is on-screen and off-screen sound.

The dialectic between on-screen and off-screen opens up more complex possibilities in articulating two shots, which are implicit in the above mentioned spatio-temporal articulations, especially when articulations of imaginary and concrete space are considered. Burch aims at analyzing all these articulations with examples. However, his effort lacks any coherence in explaining the relationship between the articulations and the narrative.

Pascal Bonitzer, criticizing the distinction between imaginary and concrete off-screen space, states that the off-screen space does not automatically convert into on-screen space in film, since 'off-screen' implies what is always outside the point-of-view. The off-screen is converted to the on-screen by changing its nature. "Cinematographic space is articulated by on-screen and off-screen space through shifting of the regard (camera movement, scale change, re-framing)" (Bonitzer 1995, 15).

Burch, following the formalist tradition in film theory, mainly focuses on the role of editing (succession of two shots), and the dialectic between on-screen and off-screen space in the construction of filmic space. The latter involves camera and character movement. He does not take into account the role of lighting, color, focal length, etc. His detailed analysis, combining formal aspects with some abstract categories such as

fictional/nonfictional subjects, neglects the narrative totality and viewer's role.

2.1.2. The Space of the Mise-en-scene: David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson

David Bordwell distinguishes diegetic and mimetic theories of narration, and place his effort of film analysis under mimetic field. Mimetic theories "conceive narration as the presentation of a spectacle" (1985, 3), while diegetic theories emphasize the verbal activity (telling) in narration.

Bordwell, inspired by the constructivist theories of narration, analyzes the narration as a relation between *fabula* and *syuzhet*. *Fabula* is the imaginary construct that the viewers create both progressively and retroactively. It "embodies the action as a chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and spatial field" (1985, 49). *Syuzhet*, often translated as plot, is "the actual arrangement and presentation of the *fabula* in the film" (Ibid, 50). Another element in this relationship is the style, which signifies the use of cinematic devices. Yet another term proposed by Thompson is the "excess" in the system of narration. This term describe the perceived material which does not fit either narrative or stylistic patterns in the film, such as colors.

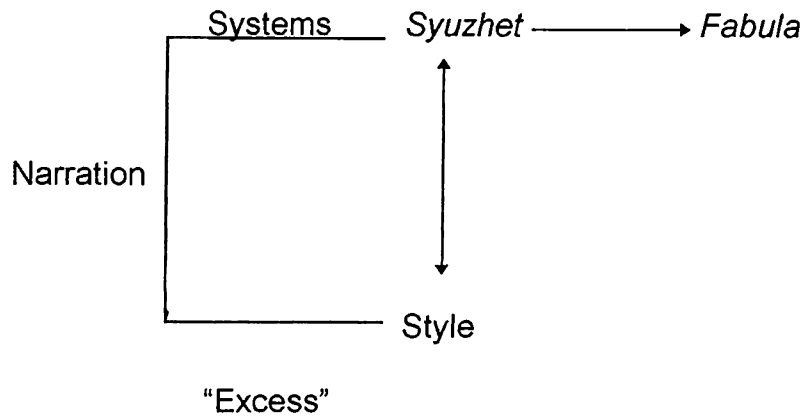


Figure 1. *Syuzhet-fabula* relation (Bordwell 1985, 50)

In this schema, narration “is the process whereby the film’s syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channeling the spectator’s construction of the fabula” (Ibid, 53). During this process syuzhet can control the quantity of fabula information to which the viewers have access, and the degree of pertinence that the viewer can attribute to the presented information. In the system, the main attribute in the construction of space is style.

However, this process is not only one sided; the viewers’ cognitive process also plays an important role in the construction of space.

Bordwell, after viewing recent trends in the psychology of visual representation, focuses on the constructivist theory of perception as a strong tool with which to analyze the spectator’s perceptual act.

Constructivist theory of perception deals with the “a priori mental set” that

is governing the viewer's way of scanning a picture. Applying this model to film theory, Bordwell emphasizes the role of the viewer's expectations, decisions and prior knowledge in creating filmic space.

Another important aspect in the construction of space is the perspective relations. Bordwell describes the role of certain depth cues manipulated by the lens lengths and the way they can create effects of different perspective systems rather than linear perspective.

Shot/reverse shot is one of the most important elements in the construction of space. Bordwell criticizes the psychoanalytic term of suture in cinema. He prefers to analyze space in the context of shot/reverse shot. Bordwell describes how shot/reverse shot system implies an offscreen space. The backing and filling movement associated with the shot/reverse shot stitches across a gap. This gap, which is a sign of absence (Absent One according to Oudart), is filled by the reverse shot. The Absent One is "an offscreen presence constructed by the viewer" (Bordwell 1985, 111).

Bordwell finally analyzes the role of "filmic cues" in the construction of space. Filmic space, according to Bordwell, is composed of scenographic space as well as some graphic aspects (compositional design and acoustical form). The scenographic space is defined as "the

imaginary space of fiction, the 'world' in which the narration suggests that fabula events occur" (Ibid, 113). This scenographic space is constructed out of three sorts of cues: shot space, editing space and sonic space.

Shot space is formed by a number cues affecting the visual formation of the mise-en-scene. These cues are overlapping contours (partial masking), texture differences, atmospheric perspective, familiar size, light and shade, color, figure movement, and monocular movement parallax. As we shall see below, Stephen Heath only focuses on character and camera movement among these cues.

Editing space is mainly constructed by the 180-degree principle of filming and cutting that minimizes the spatial disorientation over cuts.

"Maintaining the 180-degree rule guarantees that the background space of the scene will not change to any great extent" (Thompson and Bordwell 1976, 42).

Finally sonic space is created by the volume and acoustic texture.

Together these form what has been known as sound perspective in film.

Sound also has the potential of cueing us about offscreen space (Bordwell 1985, 120).

In the classic Hollywood paradigm, the construction of space is subordinated to the narrative logic of the film:

“In the classical paradigm, the system for constructing space (the ‘continuity style’) has for its aim the subordination of spatial (and temporal) structures to the logic of the narrative, especially to the cause/effect chain. Negatively, the space is presented so as not to distract attention from the dominant actions; positively, the space is ‘used up’ by the presentation of narratively important settings, character traits (‘psychology’), or other causal agents. Space as *space* is rendered subordinate to space as a *site for action* through several specific procedures...” (Thompson and Bordwell 1976, 42)

These specific procedures involve concentration on specific spatial points (usually the characters) seen as the loci of the drama, the 180-degree rule, the ‘use’ of space and objects as externalization of character traits (for verisimilitude or as ‘props’), and the continuity of graphic configurations (Ibid, 42-43).

However, the Hollywood paradigm, where the space is subordinated to the narrative logic, is not the only valid style in cinema. There are some non-mainstream examples where the construction of space breaks certain rules of narrative logic (i.e. 180 degree rule). According to Thompson and Bordwell, Japanese director Ozu’s construction of space in his films is such an example. Analyzing Ozu’s films, Thompson and Bordwell make a distinction between foregrounded and backgrounded space. They describe how these films generate spatial structures that radically differ from the Hollywood paradigm. Ozu’s films “lack both ‘compositional’ motivation and ‘realistic’ motivation; the motivation is purely ‘artistic’” (45).

In these films, space that is been constructed alongside and sometimes against the cause/effect sequence, becomes 'foregrounded.' In this way it becomes the primary structural level of the film. Thompson and Bordwell explain this situation with a analogy: The narrative logic is superseded by a different construction of space, like the way in opera, when text is superseded, overridden by autonomous musical structures (45).

Thompson and Bordwell explain how this foregrounding works in Ozu's films:

".. in all the films we have seen, such 'foregrounded' spatial structures are generated through an interplay of dominants and overtones. At times spaces with only the most tenuous narrative associations (and *no* place in the cause/effect chain) are dominant (i.e. compositionally salient); narrative elements may enter these spaces as overtones. At other times the narrative may be dominant, as in dialogue scenes, but spatial elements continue to function as overtones." (45)

This definition implies that the closed space of the Hollywood paradigm created by above mentioned specific procedures forms a 'backgrounded' space.

2.1.3. The Space of the Frame and the Spectator: Edward Branigan

Edward Branigan, though mainly focusing on the formal aspects (i.e. point of view shot) of filmic space, tries to relate these to the viewer's hypothesis about the construction of space. Thus, what he calls as the

rationalist theory of narration analyzes the spectator's comprehension of "the surface features of the text." (1981, 77). These features are the formal elements, including camera position, movement, angle, lens, distance; lighting, setting, color; acting, gesture, editing, sound, graphic composition, titles, optical effect, etc.

In his article, Branigan emphasizes the relations between the spectator and film space, through a comparison of empiricist and rationalist approaches of narrative. He defines film narration "as a positioning of the viewer with respect to a production of space attributed to a character" (1981, 55). There are four levels of narration according to Branigan. "A subject who presents the text (author), tells the story (narrator), lives in the fictional world (character), and who listens, watches, and desires that the story to be told (viewer)" (56). In this process his main concern is on what is labeled as character narration or subjectivity. This is none other than the point-of-view shot that defines what is seen from a character's point in space.

The text is a hierarchical series of pairs of subject and objects, since a certain subject or object could become an object for another subject in time. In order to understand subjectivity, we thus discriminate among the above mentioned levels of narration. This is a rather problematic process which is broadly solved either through "error" or through "hypothesis."

Before comparing these two distinct ways of comprehension, Branigan defines the position of the “camera” in subjectivity. He begins with an example of subjective shot between characters A and B. In the example, for a certain period we see the space as if through character A’s eyes. Thus, the hypothesis is that the camera is character A. However, character B’s reaction breaks this chain. B does not look into the camera, but 30 degrees to one side while conversing with A.

Branigan, interprets this break with two different approaches: according to “error theory,” the spectator is in error; “the space was and remains impersonal” (57). But this interpretation is misleading in the sense that it leaves no room for semi-subjectivity in the narration. It is an either/or theory. To overcome the problems of this approach, Branigan suggests that in the above example part of the camera movement is subjective and part is not. This is named as the “reading hypothesis” theory. Branigan states that “...the ‘error’ theory links the inexplicable camera movement to a mistake of the reader, to a trick, a trap (...) The ‘hypothesis’ theory asserts that reading includes making mistakes, even forgetting,” (58).

In order to define a changing point-of-view, then, we must consider how the character, camera, object, and perceiver change through time. This involves editing, camera and character movement, optical transitions, etc.

Branigan, drawing our attention to a more fundamental division in methodology, identifies hypothesis theory with rationalism and error theory with empiricism. The difference between these approaches are:

“the former (rationalism) posits certain unobservable, abstract entities while the latter (empiricism) holds that human knowledge and behavior derive solely from experience (stimuli) - that mental concepts are built up from simple, verifiable precepts” (64).

The main emphasis of Branigan’s rationalist approach is the perceiver’s hypothesis about film space and sound, and the “abstract principles that structure the text. Finally, the role of the formal devices (filmic cues) are not special in establishing a subjective narration. What is important is the assumptions of the viewer:

“In particular, it is not a ‘camera’ movement which is subjective but *our* relation to the text as measured through *our* changing hypotheses about the fluctuation of space. The formal devices in a film are held captive both by the narrative and by the ways we read.” (76).

Branigan focuses on the role of camera position and the way it constructs a subjective or impersonal filmic space. However, he neglects the fundamental role of on-screen and off-screen space, and editing in this process. His emphasis on filmic space’s interaction with both narrative and viewers’ hypotheses is quite innovative. The relations between the formal devices and these hypotheses are yet to be explained.

2.2. Narrative Space: Stephen Heath

Stephen Heath (1981) though focusing the formal aspects of the filmic space (he uses the term mobility, instead of grouping these aspects under mise-en-scene and editing), tries to examine their relation with the narrative. He criticizes Burch, Thompson-Bordwell and Branigan's formalist views on the construction of space. Heath labels Burch's efforts as phenomenological formalism since his main concern was the composition of film (59). Thompson-Bordwell and Branigan, in their texts on Ozu's films, try to explain autonomous use of space that is challenging the narrative causality. Heath says these critics ignore the role of "critical tensions of this autonomy in the *action* of the films" (61).

He aims at analyzing filmic space within the context of narration. He emphasizes the operations of narrativization, rather than some visual codes in construction of filmic space:

"A politically consequent materialism in film is not to be expressed as veering contact past internal content in order to proceed with 'film as film' but rather as a work on the constructions and relations of meaning and subject in a specific signifying practice in a given socio-historical situation, a work that is then much less on 'codes' than on the operations of narrativization." (64)

Heath evaluates film as "a series of languages, a history of codes" (26).

The reality effect, the match of film and world, that the film offers is a matter of representation. This representation is a matter of discourse

regarding the organization of the images. "It is the discursive operations that decide the work of a film" (26).

Before discussing the role of these discursive operations in construction of space, Heath makes a distinction between that of scenographic space (Thompson and Bordwell) and narrative space. The scenographic space is defined as "the space set out as spectacle for the eye" (Ibid, 30), while the narrative space (frame space) involves a composition in function of the human figures in their action. In the construction of filmic space Heath emphasizes mainly the role of mobility and sound.

The term mobility in film, which is the primary concern for Heath, involves the movement of figures 'in' film, camera movement and movement from shot to shot (editing).

The movement within the frame creates a tension between the space and place while producing some problems of composition. In classical painting, the principal figures were placed at the strong points of the picture frame. Whereas in cinema centering of the frame is based on action since the characters move. Thus the central point within the frame is defined by the narrative. In such a framework, the spatial clarity hangs on the negation of space for place. Heath explains this process as follows:

“It is narrative significance that at any moment sets the space of the frame to be followed and ‘read’, and that determines the development of the filmic cues in their contributions to the definition of space in frame (...) Narrative contains the mobility that could threaten the clarity of vision in a constant renewal of perspective; space becomes place -narrative as the taking place of film- in a movement which is no more than the fulfillment of the Renaissance impetus...” (36)

Then, the camera movement is deployed to appropriate the action within the frame. It is mainly regulated in the interests of the maintenance of scenographic space. Finally, editing indicates the filmic nature of film space. These movements are successive: “The figures move in the frame, they come and go, and there is then need to change the frame, reframing with a camera movement or moving to another shot” (38). What achieves a coherence of place in the transition of these successive images representing a space under different angles is what Christian Metz called the “trick effect.” This effect guarantees perception of space as unitary.

In the movement from shot to shot, one of the crucial points is the shot/reverse shot. This involves a series of looks structuring the narrative cinema: The looks between the characters at one another and objects in their field of vision, the look of the camera at the profilmic event and the look of the spectator at the screen. Heath explains this process:

“the spectator will be bound to the film as spectacle as the world of the film is itself revealed as spectacle on the basis of a narrative organization of look and point of view that moves space into place through the image-flow; the character, figure of the look, is a kind

of perspective within the perspective system, regulating the world, orienting space, providing directions.” (44)

For achieving spatial unity, the role of the character look is fundamental. It implies the presence of an off-screen space with the help of some other processes. The look of the camera is also functional in this process. Sometimes the camera takes the position of a character and show the spectator what s/he sees. Heath, then discusses the dichotomy between ‘subjective camera’ and ‘objective camera’ proposed by Burch. He believes that this dichotomy needs clarification. According to him “what is ‘subjective’ in the point-of-view shot is its spatial positioning (its place), not the image or the camera” (47). The image presented by the point-of-view shot is still objective, since what is seen from the subject position assumed is objective.

What sets round character as look and point of view are the rules for classical continuity. These rules give the moving space its coherence in time. The rules of continuity are defined by the movement between the on-screen and off-screen spaces. The system functions “according to a kind of metonymic lock in which off-screen space becomes on-screen space and is replaced in turn by the space it holds off, each joining over the next.” (45)

Finally, the look of the spectator is related with the process that constitutes himself or herself as the subject of the image: the suture. The

spectator, immobile in front of the screen, is moved with this positioning. "Film is the regulation of that movement, the individual as subject held in a shifting and placing of desire, energy, contradiction, in a perpetual retotalization of the imaginary" (53).

To sum up, the filmic space is constructed by the interaction of the movements described above (the movement of the characters, the movement of the camera and the movement from shot to shot), in relation with the looks (the look of the character, the camera look and the look of the spectator). In this construction, the space comes in place and the spectator becomes its subject in its realization.

"the spectator is *moved*, and *related* as subject in the process and images of that movement. The spatial organization of film as it has been described here in the overall context of its various articulations is crucial to this moving relation, to the whole address of film: film makes space, takes place as narrative, and subject too, set - sutured - in the conversion of the one to other." (62)

However, while focusing on three different types of movement, Heath ignores the role of other filmic cues defined by Bordwell, in the construction of filmic space. He merely emphasizes the role of sound in filmic space. According to Heath, it is the equivalent of the look in its direction of the image-track.

Heath is in favor of an aesthetic transformation. Such an aesthetic transformation could be achieved by political avant-gardism dealing with

the narrative space of the film. Heath conceives the roots of such a transformation not in the works of Ozu like Thompson and Bordwell, but in Straub/Huillet and Oshima.

Heath's arguments on narrative space are criticized by a number of theorists. Dana B. Polan labeled his strategy formalist since the implied reader is the effect solely of the invariant structures of the text (qtd. in Lapsley and Westlake 1988: 142). Polan also defined Heath's effort as essentialist for claiming a fixed identity to the cinematic apparatus. A harsher criticism came from Noel Carroll, who accused Heath of reductionism. In his review of Heath's *Questions of Cinema*, Carroll criticizes Heath for ignoring the role of cognitive psychology in spectators' response to film (1982, 131). Bordwell, on the other hand, claims that Heath reduced all representation as a matter of discourse. According to him, Heath establishes a false connection among four senses: "1) the implied physical vantage point created by an image in linear perspective; 2) a totalized sense of space across several images, a sort of mind's-eye view; 3) a coherent narrative 'point of view;' 4) 'subject position,' which refers to the stability and unity of the construction of the self" (1985, 25). Among these, senses one and two are related to space, the third sense involves narrative, and the fourth the subject position. According to Bordwell, Heath's attempt to assimilate film style and narrative to linguistic process was failed since he cannot show a logical relation

between these different senses (1981, 25). Finally, Lapsley and Westlake stated that “‘Narrative Space’ did appear to mark the limits of what could be said, and those who tried to advance it tended to fall back towards formalism” (1988, 148).

2.3. Phantasmagoric Space: Laura Mulvey

Laura Mulvey (1992), describing the interaction between sexuality and space in cinema, presents a metaphorical/psychological analysis of space. Her starting point is the narrative space and place of the melodrama world. Citing Thomas Elsaesser (1987), Mulvey states that the space of American melodrama is home, while Westerns represent outside space. The private interior space of melodrama connotes a female sphere of emotion. On the other hand, outside, the sphere of adventure, is a masculine space in Westerns (55).

According to Mulvey, this polarization between inside/outside “is not derived from the connotations implicit in the male/female binary opposition” (57). The reason lies in “a disturbance, iconographically represented in images of the female body, symptomatic of anxieties and desires that are projected onto the feminine within the patriarchal psyche” (57). Thus Mulvey considers the female body as a topography, a space.

She analyzes the active looking as the prerogative of masculinity and the female/masculine voyeuristic drive in Hitchcock's *Notorious*. In the film, the division between the inside and outside is derived from the image of closed hidden spaces, that are generated by enigmas and secrets associated with femininity. This effects the iconography of the female body, namely the phantasmagoric space: "an image of female beauty as artifact or mask, as an exterior, alluring and seductive surface that conceals an interior space containing deception and danger" (58-59).

To explain the iconography of the female figure in cinema, Mulvey refers to connotation between Pandora and her box. The contiguity of Pandora and the box, and the topography of the female body as an enclosing space connote other enclosing spaces (i.e. inside space in cinema). Therefore, the inside/outside opposition between the heroine's masked appearance and her inner secrets are reflected in the spatial composition (65). The spatial opposition of inside/outside acts as a nodal or transit point between the false signifier (the image of femininity as mask) and the signified.

Mulvey defines curiosity as "a compulsive desire to see and to know, to investigate what is secret and reveal the contents of a concealed space" (69). In this process, when the spectator refuses to accept the difference that the female body symbolizes there starts fetishism. Mulvey

summarizes the relation between curiosity (desire to solve the riddle) and fetishism as follows: "...the whole topography, should be seen to be a riddle, the solution of which points to the phantasmagories generated by male castration anxiety" (69).

Focusing on the narrative and the space of the mise-en-scene, she describes the ideologies and aesthetics of gendered place effecting these.

2.4. Para-narrative Space: Andrew Higson

Andrew Higson, in his analysis of British New Wave films (1996), explains the contradictory meanings offered by the landscape and townscape shots in these films. Borrowing Walter Lassally's terminology, Higson renames what is known as the British New Wave or social problem film as "kitchen sink" film, since these films presents a romantic, rather than a realistic, view of working-class people.

As summarized above, Thompson and Bordwell (1976) claim that the Ozu's deployment of some empty space scenes in between different acts was the foregrounding of the space. This break in the cause/effect chain was against the certain rules of narrative logic. Higson criticizes their

account, and he claims that the narrative system of the films is much more complex:

“There is always an undertow of meanings pulling against the flow of the narrative, always than the narrative can use, whether it is in the form of the spectacular, or in the form of descriptively authentic detail. In the case of the latter, the novelistic demand for a certain accumulation of ‘realistic detail’ transforms narrative space into a *real historical place*, much of the detail of which is structurally redundant to the narrative.” (140)

His analysis prove that the use of certain construction of space may involve a para-narrative function. Landscape and townscape shots have indeed a narrative function since they create “a *narrative space* in which the protagonist of the drama can perform the various actions of the plot,” but there is a tension (Higson 1996, 134). These places, as kitchen sink films presented as realist, have also a “historical” function to authenticate the fiction. This situation creates a tension between the demands of narration and realism. Thus, there are different ways of reading landscape and townscape shots. In certain instances, “place becomes a signifier of character, a metaphor for the state of mind of the protagonists” (134). Besides, “the shots can also be read as *spectacle*, as a visually pleasurable lure to the spectator’s eye” (134).

Higson also draws our attention to a stereotypical shot that is often returned: “That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill”. That is a shot presenting the empty space of a townscape. These shots are often coded as spectacular in kitchen sink films.

Narration in kitchen sink films not only spectacularize and historicize the space, it can also psychologize it. In this case,

“...the landscapes do not so much refer to real places outside the text as produce meaning *at the level of representation*, in terms of a system of differences: urban/rural, imprisonment/escape, the mass/the individual, social structure/bohemian fantasy, deferral of pleasure/wish fulfillment, the everyday/romance.” (144-45)

This implies a metaphoric narrative function of space in these films.

Spectators can make their own ways of reading these spaces. For example, as Higson states, the rural setting might represent the fantasy wish fulfillment of the person in the city (146).

2.5. (Mis)Representation of Space: Geographers' Approach

Another kind of approach on filmic space involves the representation of space.

Representation, in terms of human geography, involve four different modes: The first one, 'descriptive fieldwork,' is based upon observation. The second mode is a form of mimesis based upon positivist science. The third is postmodernism which represents a radical attack to those former modes and the search for truth. The fourth type is based on hermeneutics and it is interpretative (Duncan and Ley 1993, 2-3).

Some recent efforts to analyze filmic space, influenced by postmodernism and the critique of mimetic theories of representation, consider it as a social construction. They evaluate space in cinema as an ideologically motivated fabrication, depicted in accordance with the laws of cinematic reality. In this sense, every representation could be considered as a misrepresentation by this approach. As Jeff Hopkins explains that the power of the film image to (mis)represent the natural and social world lies in "its ability to blur the boundaries of space and time, reproduction and simulation, reality and fantasy, and to obscure the traces of its own ideologically based production" (1994, 48). This line of research on representation of space in cinema is pioneered by a group of geographers.

In *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle- A Geography of Film*, Aitken and Zonn summarize their aim as studying "the interrelations between film and the politics of social and cultural representation," and using film as a means toward "understanding our *place* in the world" (1992, Preface ix-x). They are concerned with the cultural, social and ideological structures that are reflected in the way spaces are used and places are portrayed in film.

"At one level, the *space* created by film is simply the frame within which a subject is located, and twenty-four of these frames pass before our eyes every second. This space enables the subject of the film to unfold in a variety of ways that may be controlled by the filmmaker. More than neutral space, however, these shots demand to be read as real *places* with their own sense of geography and history." (15-16)

In this context, the articles compiled by Aitken and Zonn usually emphasize the representation of place, rather than the construction of filmic space. They show the relations between the representation of places and the state of mind of the filmmaker.

They are suggesting that cinematic space be viewed as a “cognitive mapping” “that serves to reaffirm the *self* by partially apprehending the *real*” (20). This implies that the place portrayal becomes “a sign of reality.”

The term cognitive mapping, borrowed from another geographer, Kevin Lynch, is also frequently used by Fredric Jameson in his analysis of film and space. According to Jameson, cognitive mapping is “a way of understanding how the individual’s representation of his or her social world can escape the traditional critique of representation because the mapping is intimately related to practice” (1992a, Introduction *xiv*).

Jameson tries to describe how representation space is related to social, economic and political preferences. According to him, the possibility of representation is based on the nature of the social raw material (psychic and subjective), and the state of form (the aesthetic technique). These two aspects shape the categories of perception and the representation of space: Individuals’ mapping of the social surroundings is related to the

“natural and historically developed categories of perception with which human beings normally orient themselves” (Ibid, 3).

Finally, space in Jameson’s analysis signifies a geographical distinction. He classifies European, Soviet and Third World cinema under different groups, and emphasize their portrayal of place.

Works on space in film is not limited to these approaches. Charles and Mirella Jona Affron (1995) look into setting and the role of art direction in filmic space. Albrecht (1987) focuses on set design in classic Hollywood cinema. Bowman’s *Master Space* (1992) describe the configuration of space in film images from the work of Capra, Lubitsch, Sternberg, and Wyler. Jameson, in another study on spatial systems in the Hitchcock classic *North by Northwest* (1992b), prefers a semiological approach in classifying binary opposition between public and private space and its relation to the narrative. Malkmus and Armes, in their book *Arab and African Filmmaking* (1991), analyze the reality of place portrayal in African film and concerned with “the politics of space.” Murray (1994) and Kaçmaz (1996), on the other hand, focus on the representation of the city, and the relations between architecture and representation. Sobchack, in her book on American science fiction film (1987), explains the subversion of the landscape in these films. Finally, Thompson (1993) consider space

as geographical category distinguishing the place of what is known as the Third Cinema.

Theories of filmic space involve some distinct approaches and different areas of interest, categorizing these theories is a difficult task. However, Mulvey's distinction between the space of frame, the space of mise-en-scene and narrative space (1992, 56), seems as an appropriate tool for analysis. The rectangular space of screen frame is a minor interest for theorists. On the other hand, the space of the mise-en-scene, together with editing and sound, is the major concern of the formalist approaches. Heath's approach to filmic space can be considered as an effort to analyze the space of mise-en-scene in the context of narrative. The narrative space also involve some ideological and metaphoric motives that effect the representation. These aspects of the filmic space is examined by Mulvey, Higson and others.

In the following parts, I will try to analyze the filmic space in Turkish melodrama regarding these theories. The formal aspects of the construction of space, namely the space of the mise-en-scene, editing and sound, will be evaluated in the third part. Finally, the ideological motives that lie behind the representation of space will be examined in the fourth part.

3. THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE TURKISH MELODRAMA

Turkish cinema, once among the largest producers of films in the world, in the 1990's is experiencing one of its severest crises. The film industry today is weaker than ever, and has passed its employees to the newly grown television sector. The filmmakers, producers and critics are still searching for ways and means to overcome this recent crisis.

The golden age of the Turkish film industry had been the period between 1960 and the mid-1970's. And the distinguishing characteristic of the period was the dominance of popular melodrama form. The melodrama as adapted by Turkish cinema differs from the Hollywood model in terms of narrative content and form. However, this adaptation process is much more complex than it would seem. The ambivalent nature of the Turkish melodrama can be evaluated in terms of mimicry. A term used to define the characteristics of the colonial discourse², mimicry "is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as subject as a *difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 1994, 86). The discourse of mimicry in order

² Neither the Ottoman Empire, nor the Turkish state had been colonized by Western powers. However, the influence of the West in economic, social and cultural terms has increased enormously since the eighteenth century with the start of 'modernization' efforts. In this sense, the recognizable Other of the Turkish state has been the West; thus, the analysis of Bhabha is appropriate.

to gain effectiveness “continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Ibid, 86). According to Homi K. Bhabha, the ambivalence of mimicry derive from its indeterminacy:

“mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power.” (1994, 86).

This double articulation in Turkish cinema is based on two different, but interweaved strategies, according to Erdoğan. The first strategy blame Westernization process as the source of instability and underdevelopment. The second strategy involve the adaptation of Western norms and institutions to reach the level of modern civilizations. Both strategy is closely related since their reference point is common: the West. These strategies that are based on denial and approval are usually conflicting and interweaving in Turkish cinema (Erdoğan 1995, 182). The Turkish cinema while adapting certain features of the Hollywood cinema, unconsciously forms a local narrative structure which is influenced from the tradition. Script-writer Ayşe Şasa describes the conflict between the western and local influences as schizoid:

“‘Make films in Western style... Cinema is a Western art...’
Because of such advises, we tried to be Western, while opposing it. What lies behind this approach is a complex, inherited from the Ottomans: to remain different from the people, and to form a different language and attitude (...) The mimicry effort of the filmmakers derive from this ironic longing for different status.” (1993, 150).

In this section, I will try to examine the mimicry, and its difference or 'excess' in Turkish melodrama.

3.1. History of Turkish Popular Cinema

The cinematograph entered the lands of the Ottoman state in 1896, at almost the same time as the invention of the device. Alexandre Promio, a cameraman working for the Lumiere brothers, shot a number of documentary pictures in İstanbul. In the same year, a special screening of the Lumiere brothers' films was organized in the palace. A few months later, the first public screening was held in İstanbul by Sigmund Weinberg, a Polish Jew who later contributed to the foundation of Turkish cinema.

In 1908, Weinberg opened the first movie-theater, again in İstanbul. However, filmmaking came as a much later development in Turkey. What is known as the first Turkish film is a 150 m. documentary reel which covers the demolition of the Russian Monument in İstanbul just after the Ottoman State entered the First World War in 1914. This was shot by a young Turkish officer, Fuat Uzkınay. The Ottoman army, a year later, established a filmmaking department with the help of Weinberg and Uzkınay. In 1916, Weinberg, using the army's equipment, started to shoot a feature film called *Himmat Ağa'nın İzdivacı* (The Marriage of

Himmat Agha), an adaptation of Moliere's *Le Mariage Force*. However, he could not finish the movie since the actors had to leave for the war. The first feature films *Pençe* (The Paw) and *Casus* (The Spy) were shot by Sedat Simavi in 1917. Between 1917 and 1922, filmmaking was under the monopoly first of the Ottoman, then the Turkish, army.

The following period of Turkish cinema , from 1922 until 1939, was under the influence of one individual: theater director and actor Muhsin Ertuğrul. Ertuğrul's cinema has been often criticized for its insufficiency in using cinematic codes and overemphasizing stage acting . Unfortunately only a few of his 29 films survive, the majority having been destroyed in a fire in the İstanbul Municipality archives. The period of the 1940s was an intermediate stage before what is known as "the professional directors' period"³ started in the early 1950s. During the 1940's, Turkish cinema was still under the influence of theater directors and players. Besides, the burdens of the Second World War (e.g. economic crises and censorship) made the conditions for filmmaking worse. It was only after the 1950s that the professional directors (few of them were raised in theater) started filmmaking. Among these directors, another stage actor, Muharrem Gürses, started to shoot melodramas that were highly influenced by the

³ The history of Turkish cinema is often categorized under five distinct periods: 1) Theater director/actors influence (1922-1938; Ertuğrul's period); 2) Transition period (1938-1952); 3) Filmmakers' period (1952-1963); 4) New Turkish Cinema and Popular Movies' period (1963-1980); 5) The recent phase of Turkish cinema, since 1980 (Onaran 1994 and Özön 1968). There are also some other attempts to categorize Turkish cinema in relation to social developments (Erksan 1996).

Egyptian movies dominating the Turkish market during the Second World War⁴.

The film industry in Turkey experienced a boom between 1960 and 1975. During this period, more than 100 movies were shot every year in Yeşilçam⁵(e.g. in 1972, a total of 301 movies were shot, a record for Turkish cinema). The 1960s was the period, a social realist tradition, later labelled as the New Turkish Cinema, had been developed. The works of Lütfü Akad, Metin Erksan, Atif Yılmaz, and Halit Refiğ opened new horizons for Turkish cinema. Later, in the 1970s, Yılmaz Güney, Zeki Ökten, Şerif Gören and Bilge Olgaç joined the realist tradition.

However, between 1960-1980 the prevailing type of movie was of a popular kind, especially melodrama⁶. These melodramas drew large audiences. The success of these movies in economic terms was partly related to the influence of the distributors on the film market. The

⁴ During the Second World War, the Turkish film market was closed to European films and, partly, to US productions because of the embargo and state censorship. The Egyptian movies (melodramas) were cheap and available. Those movies were dubbed by stage actors and actresses. Even the songs were adapted by famous Turkish composers and singers. The Egyptian movies influenced both Turkish cinema and music.

⁵ The area of İstanbul where the film industry is based. The films of this period also labeled as the Yeşilçam films.

⁶ The genre classification in the Yeşilçam film market is rather different than the classical Hollywood classification. Melodrama is often grouped under a wider generic heading - the "family film" (which included melodrama, drama and comedy films). This name was invented in 1970's and was directed against the invasion of the market by soft-porn movies. For example, Yeşilçam labels all sorts of historical and science-fiction movies as costume-drama. One of the interesting generic titles of Yeşilçam is the "social-action" (sosyal karate) uniting the social problem film with the Hong-Kong style action movies.

organization of the film distribution was divided into five areas throughout Turkey. These area distributors were even more influential than the producers. They would suggest the plots, and male or female stars that the viewers were supposed to love. Among these area distributors, Adana, controlling distribution in 22 cities, was the most influential in terms of plot and stars (Kuzu 1996, 268).

The melodramatic style was also encouraged by the strict censorship rules imposed on the filmmakers. A critical approach towards social problems had always been prevented under the state control of films. Directors were left with no other choice than to shoot popular themes. Besides, the Turkish state, founding major forms of art (i.e. music, opera, ballet and theater) and organizing them under state institutions, left cinema alone. For this reason Turkish cinema, in order to guarantee financial viability, had to be popular.

The melodramas were the guarantee of financial success over a very long period. However, the genre was banished with changes in economic and social conditions. In the mid-1970's, Turkish cinema faced a serious crisis. The transition from black-and-white to color film had increased production prices. Besides, rapidly increasing exchange rates made it almost impossible for small production companies to purchase negative

film (Abisel 1994, 105-106). The cinema industry had made no previous investments to overcome the crisis.

The quick response was to shoot cheap soft-porn and action movies. This brought a relief for Yeşilçam, but these movies distressed family movie-goers.

After the military coup in 1980, soft-porn movies were banned and strict censorship was once again revived. This situation further worsened the conditions for Yeşilçam. In order to survive, Yeşilçam once again turned to popular genres such as melodrama and comedy, this time for the newly growing video market, especially in Germany, where a large number of Turkish workers had made their homes.

The video market provided a new source of revenue for Yeşilçam. This gave rise to a new and prosperous period of Turkish cinema which lasted until the end of the 1980s. A number of Turkish films won international prizes and attracted large audiences. But this success did not last long, since the video market was quickly saturated. And the production companies had once again neglected to invest in infrastructure during the good times. Now, the area distribution system was in the hands of major international companies. This development limited the number of movie theaters available for Turkish movies and led to the invasion of US movies in the market. Thus, the spectators' expectations changed. The

Turkish movie industry, especially in technical terms, was unable to meet these expectations.

Turkish cinema is still struggling to overcome this dilemma. The filmmakers, who had lost the state funding of the period 1990-1995, are trying to find their own idiom that will reunite them with their former audiences. In addition, today's directors are influenced by the critics to produce more 'artistic' works and to eschew the genres that had been so popular before (Güleryüz 1996, 56). This tradition has, meanwhile, been revived by the television serials in 1990's⁷.

3.2. Melodrama as Storytelling

Melodrama has distinct sources in different countries. In England it was influenced by the novel and the literary gothic, whereas in France it is rooted in costume drama and the historical novel (Elsaesser 1987, 42). Melodrama is also described as the degeneration of bourgeois tragedy. Raymond Williams, in his *Modern Tragedy* (1966), states that both the tragic value of the hero and the hierarchical structure in tragedy was intolerable for democratic ideals (qtd. in Gledhill 1987, 16).

⁷ Under the new private broadcasting law legislated in 1992, a number of private television channels were launched in Turkey. Still the prime-time hit for these channels are the old comic movies and the melodrama serials featuring old and new Yeşilçam stars.

Melodrama could be evaluated as a mixture of different genres and modes, or “a cross-class and cross-cultural form” (Ibid, 18) in aesthetic terms. It is based on the heroine/villain/hero triad, where moral values defined by hero and heroine are often transgressed by the villain. The narrative mechanism of the genre could be summarized as follows:

“Characteristically the melodramatic plot turns on an initial, often deliberately engineered, misrecognition of the innocence of a central protagonist. By definition the innocent cannot use the powers available to the villain; following the dictates of their nature, they must become victims, a position legitimated by a range of devices which rationalize their apparent inaction on their own behalf. Narrative is then progressed through a struggle for clear moral identification of all protagonists and is finally resolved by public recognition of where guilt and innocence really lie,” (Ibid, 30).

In this mechanism, the protagonist’s inadequacy in responding to the situation caused by the villain involves irony and pathos (Elsaesser 1987, 66). The irony lies in the privileging of the spectator vis-à-vis the protagonist. And the pathos results from the protagonists’ non-communication or silence against these forces beyond their control.

The realism of melodrama is highly debated. Some critics associate the contradictions that are lying between the protagonist and villain with the struggle between the poor and the rich. However, the “happy” resolution of these almost impossible contradictions stand in the way of the genre’s realism.

The plot of Turkish melodrama have some similarities with the mechanism described above. However, it is not basically mimicking the mainstream Hollywood example. It is highly influenced by the folk culture, especially by the popular theater. The most common forms of popular theater are puppet theater, *Karagöz*,⁸ *Ortaoyunu*,⁹ and *Meddah*¹⁰. The popular theater is not set on stage and it does not refer to any written text. It is not meant to be realistic, and comedy, dance and music are its characteristic features. The characters are stereotypical and are not represented in detail (And 1983, 13).

Common features of Turkish popular theater that are adopted by Yeşilçam are as follows:

- 1) Mimicry: this is the main method for characterization. It has got two meanings: Firstly, it is the mimicry of a play, an action. Secondly, it is the mimicry of certain people, animals and even objects. This latter situation involves parody of a dialect, behavior etc.
- 2) Antagonism: The relationship between two people is built on antagonism. One side gives a cue for the other.

⁸ A form of shadow theater. It has got two main characters, *Karagöz* (the ordinary/rude) and *Hacivat* (the elite/kind), and a number of other lesser figures.

⁹ The Turkish *commedia dell'arte*. A popular theater form which has similarities with *Karagöz*. It is based on the antagonism between two comic characters: *Pişekar* and *Kavuklu*.

¹⁰ "The dramatic story told by a single speaker called the *Meddah* (literally, praisegiver or panegyrist), a clever impersonator who 'does' many characters with appropriate gestures, voice modulations and accents" (And 1979, 14).

- 3) Music and dance: In every kind of performance (even in wrestling games) music plays an important role.
- 4) Improvisation: Since there is no written text, but just a plot, the players usually improvise their role.
- 5) Presentational/non-illusionistic form: This form involves limited action and is built on short cuts. There is no identification or realism in the play. The actor/actress sometimes directly addresses the spectator (And 1983, 16-17).

The popular theater, interacting with Western drama, later created the *tuluat* form in nineteenth century. The *Tuluat* form, possessing the same features as the popular theater, also have some distinct rules. During the 19th century, under the influence of the Westernization movement, the main forms of Western theater (i.e. drama, melodrama and even musicals) were adapted. In this adaptation process, some of the forms of the popular theater were incorporated. According to Metin And, this was not a conscious process: "Since the writers lacked sufficient knowledge about Western dramaturgy, their works were *sui generis*" (1983, 208).

The main characters of the *tuluat* form are: male protagonist (usually referred to as *jeune premier*), female protagonist, the comic (called *İbiş*, usually playing the servant, narrating the story and a key factor in the narrative), and the wise man (usually the father, who cues the comic)

(Ibid, 210). These characters were also adopted by Yeşilçam with minor differences. Usually there is a comic figure in Yeşilçam melodrama (most commonly a male friend of the hero/heroine, or a servant/relative of their families)¹¹ who is trying unite the hero and the heroine. The wise man character is superseded by a strong father figure (either of the hero or heroine) or a relative to the family¹². Again the role is to help the protagonists against the difficulties facing them.

The *tuluat* tradition, unlike the popular theater, originated in big cities. As opposed to that, another form of popular culture, the fairy tales and epics are told everywhere. These are also influential on Yeşilçam melodrama. The protagonists of the Yeşilçam melodrama possess some of the characteristics of the mythical hero of fairy tales. Bülent Oran, a well-known script writer who wrote/adapted hundreds of melodramas, states that the plot of Yeşilçam melodrama imitate popular fairy tales of *Keloğlan*¹³ (1996a, 285). According to P. N. Boratav, *Keloğlan* symbolizes “the struggle of an ordinary person against the upper classes” (qtd. in Alangu 1990, 183). This antagonism between the decent poor and

¹¹ The comic, together with the antagonist, is one the strongest figures of the narrative structure in Turkish melodrama. Usually the same actors play the role of the comic, namely Münir Özkul, Cevat Kurtuluş and Necdet Tosun.

¹² Among the actors playing this character the most well-known are Hulusi Kentmen and Nubar Terziyan.

¹³ *Keloğlan* (bald guy) is a mythical hero that is known under different names elsewhere in the Middle East. The character has similarities with the German fairy tale hero *Grindkopf* or *Goldener* (Alangu:1990, 169).

impertinent rich is commonly used in Yeşilçam melodrama. Oran

summarize the main features of *Keloğlan* type as:

“He has got no one else than his mother. He is desperate and suffering. He has got no hope. Since he represents a large majority of Turkish people, he is easily identified by the spectators. At the end of the fairy tales he finally solves complex matters and gains prosperity, as well as marrying sultan’s beautiful daughter. This encourages the spectators.” (1996a, 285).

Despite his decent portrayal, some of acts of *Keloğlan* could be labeled as immoral. He could kill somebody, but this is usually for good (Alangu 1990, 170). This also works for the Yeşilçam protagonists. The only difference between the *Keloğlan* character and the protagonists is their appearance: *Keloğlan* is bald and ugly, whereas the protagonists are always handsome or beautiful.

The popular culture was not the only source of Yeşilçam melodrama. In most cases, the plot of a classical Hollywood melodrama/drama which was screened in Turkey was adopted almost mot-a-mot. Script-writer Arda Uskan describe the adaptation process as:

“Firstly, the producer decides for the male and female stars. And then, he invites the projector of Atlas movie-theater Sarkis, who would know all the Hollywood movies. When he was told the stars and the main theme, he would suggest ‘I know an Ava Gardner-Gregory Peck movie which would perfectly fit your project’... Then I would record the sound-track of the movie and adapt it into Turkish.” (1997, 59-60).

This mimicry, of course, has its own rules. For example, an adapted Hollywood movie is presented as an adaptation of a Turkish bestseller-

usually as a novel by Kerime Nadir (Ibid, 60). Sometimes the film had featured a popular song of the period and named after the title of the song. However, the general plot does not differ much from that of the Hollywood melodrama. It is based on threat, separation and reunification:

- “1. The male and female protagonist meet and fall in love at first sight.
2. They are separated because of plot, coincidence, socio-economic condition etc.
3. The lovers seek reunification despite difficulties-they can be blind, deaf, paralyzed or have a new relationship.
4. They recover and either get married or die.” (Abisel 1994, 92)

3.3. Melodrama as Form

In this part I will analysis the formal features of the Turkish melodrama. I believe, the origins of these features lies in the historical achievements in other forms art. In order to uncover the links between the achievements of the past and the style of Turkish melodrama I will briefly focus on the Turkish visual culture. Then some visual and sonic codes of Yeşilçam will be considered.

3.3.1. Impact of Visual Culture

The emergence of the geometrical perspective system in Western painting, as mentioned in the second part, is closely related with the Renaissance, “a period of transition from the theocentric (i.e. God-centered) metaphysics of the Dark Ages to an anthropocentric (human-

centered) view of the universe” (Cook 1993, 245). The anthropocentric view was aiming to form a perfect representation of what had been created by God. This realistic approach tried to develop its technique with certain principles of illusion, in order to deceive viewers and create a close-to-reality feeling. And with the invention of the camera and cinematography Western painting started to search for a new understanding of ‘reality.’ Therefore, towards the end of the nineteenth century this geometrical perspective in painting is abandoned in the West.

On the other hand, the theocentric view of Eastern society, influenced the evolution of its art. The Eastern painting, in search of a mystical reality conception, ignored the Western kind of depiction techniques. The Eastern Art, without benefiting geometrical perspective, depict and schematize the landscape or architecture in a totally different way. For example, in the parallel perspective, observed in Eastern art, the orthogonal lines never converge, but run parallel. Another perspective system observed especially in Indian miniature is the inverted perspective, where orthogonals rendered as converging in front of the picture. This system positions the viewer as if “at the center of scene that surrounded him” (Tarabukin qtd. in Bordwell 1985, 5). On the other hand, Alberti describes the picture based on “scientific” perspectival system as seen through a window.

The perspective system, thus, not just a technical solution for depicting space. What lies behind it is the influence of cultural formation of a society. As Ernst Cassier points out perspective is a “symbolic form” in which “spiritual meaning is attached to a concrete, material sign and intrinsically given to this sign” (qtd. in Panofsky 1991, 41).

These different perspectival systems involve different approaches to the space. In the antique, as well as the Eastern painting, the distinctions between the body and the surrounding space is not clear. Erwin Panofsky states that in antique thought “bodies are not absorbed into a homogeneous and infinite system of dimensional relationship, but rather are the juxtaposed contents of a finite vessel” (1991, 44).

The Eastern painting had not witnessed a process like the abandonment of geometrical perspective like in The West. On the other hand, the ‘scientific’ perspective system was introduced as a model through the modernization effort, as in the case of Turkish painting. This process created a different representation of space in modern Turkish painting, which can provide insights to studies on Turkish cinema.

The Western perspectival system was introduced to Turkish painting in nineteenth century through the military academy, which initiated painting courses as a part of its modernization efforts. One of the students raised

from the military academy, Şeker Ahmet Paşa, experienced the problems of representation of space in Western style. In his picture *Orman* (The Forest), the vanishing point is not behind the scene, but somewhere at the upper side, and the diagonal axis breaks the fixity of the vanishing point (Figure 2). Besides, there is no subject in the picture plane (Ergüven 1992, 60). Ergüven, through this example, draws our attention to a paradox in pictorial space: "As much as the space depicted in accordance with the (Western) rules, it loses its originality. As much as the depiction of space mastered, the spiritual dimension is lost," (1992, 60).



Figure 2. *Orman* (The Forest) by Şeker Ahmet Paşa (Ergüven 1992, 61)

This problem of pictorial space in Turkish painting seems to be relevant for Turkish cinema, as the movie camera is based on the same “scientific” perspective system. Therefore, the analysis of the filmic space in Turkish popular cinema requires a close examination of the visual culture in general, a task which exceeds the limits of this study.

3.3.2. Mise-en-scene

The properties of the mise-en-scene differ according to different authors, as mentioned in the second part. Here, I will focus on setting, lighting, performance and the camera, all of which are closely related with the filmic space. Other properties such as costume or props will be excluded, since they are not directly related with this study.

3.3.2.1. Setting

The setting is perceived as the place where the events are happening. In Yeşilçam, the setting - whether indoor or outdoor- is not organized appropriately, as the conditions of filming limited the options. For example, the place is usually left unchanged, while the characters are aging.

The main aim is to shoot the film in a very short period. Therefore, missing sequences are often neglected for the sake of screening the movie on time¹⁴. Script-writer and critic Hüseyin Kuzu labels this fast production technique as the "synopsis cinema:" "It was difficult to consider the setting while writing the script. Because the location descriptions that is to be written on the left side of the script pages, were usually ignored by the director during the filming." (1996, 271)

The Yeşilçam directors had not got the opportunity to film in studio conditions. Films were set in 'real' locations. This requirement, dictated by the economic conditions of the film industry, helps the verisimilitude of the movie, according to Abisel (1994, 157). The setting in Yeşilçam melodrama will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter.

3.3.2.2. Lighting

The lighting in Yeşilçam films also differs from that of the classical Hollywood style. In classical Hollywood cinema "lighting involves a strong level of lighting on the main objects of shot with fill lighting designed to eliminate shadows" (Rowe 1996, 102). What is important in this system is the back lit that enables those elements at the front of the set to be

¹⁴ Between 1965-1974 some directors were shooting an average of ten movies a year. The record of Turkish cinema is held by Ülkü Erakalın, who had shot 157 films between 1961 and 1989 (Özgüç 1995, 50-51).

distanced from the background. This back lit give an illusion of depth (Ibid, 102).

In popular Yeşilçam films there is only a limited use of back lit. That creates a depthless atmosphere in film, where the figure and background are less distinguished compared to the classical film. Director Atıf Yılmaz labels this technique of two-dimensional representation as “miniature-type filming”. In *Yedi Kocalı Hürmüz* (The Seven Husbands of Hürmüz, 1971) (Figure 3) Yılmaz, searching for a “national” style of a narration, aimed at blurring the depth of field in the movie and capturing an effect of depthlessness like miniature painting. In the film each scene was equally lit and no back lit was used. Besides, the movie was shot with a single lens in order to achieve unity (Yılmaz: 1991, 166).



Figure 3. Still from *Yedi Kocalı Hürmüz* (1971)

The aim of lighting in Yeşilçam is just to achieve a visual clarity, thus atmospheric lighting is also rarely used. Atmospheric lighting involves the expression of certain feelings or the mood of the characters.

3.3.2.3. Performance and Movement

The term performance signifies the facial expressions, mimicry, and body positions adopted by the performer. The performance in film varies in different national cinemas, in relation with the cultural variations in body language. However, the Hollywood cinema has highly influenced the performance of national cinemas elsewhere.

Turkish melodrama is no exception to this process. However, the influence of the theater players is also evident. Performance in Yeşilçam possesses some characteristics of stage acting, since the earliest filmmaker Muhsin Ertuğrul, a theater actor/director, had chosen to work with theater players. Theater players over-acted using exaggerated body movements. Some of these movements were also imitated by the new generation of film actors and actresses. However, with the development of close-up, the focus is shifted to facial expressions. One of the stereotypical facial expressions in Yeşilçam melodrama is blinking of the heroine's eye symbolizing her shyness.

Besides, the stereotypical character portrayal of Yeşilçam melodrama led actors/actresses to play the same roles in every other movie. And their acting, mimicry and gestures differed very little between one movie and another.

3.3.2.4. Camera and Camera Movement

The camera and camera movements involve the act of recording itself. This process has a number of variables which control the framing, perspective relations, and the duration of the image.

We can start an analysis with one of the main variables: the focal length of the camera lens. In Turkish cinema, usually the middle (normal) focal lenses, which do not cause perspective distortion, are used. With a normal lens "horizontal and vertical lines are rendered as straight and perpendicular" (Bordwell and Thompson 1995, 156). Compared to short (the wide-angle) or long (the telephoto) lenses, in normal lens the foreground and background are neither stretched apart nor squashed, but with a normal contrast. In Yeşilçam films especially, the figures in the foreground are in sharp focus. The soft focus is only used to create a romantic atmosphere in some scenes.

There is also a limited use of camera filter, especially in romantic scenes, in Yeşilçam. If such a filter is not available, some special techniques are invented. For example, in *Kambur* (1973), the cameraman Kaya Ererez uses a piece of transparent colored paper instead of a filter, in a dream scene. The paper is half colored, so that the sky seems purple. But when the hero and the heroine move towards the camera, the heroine's head enters this colored area (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Still from *Kambur* (1973)

The camera in Yeşilçam melodrama is usually at eye level. The low and high angle, implying power or weakness, are less frequently used. As for the camera distance, close-ups which helps to reflect characters' feelings and emotions are frequently used. Another common shot is the *plan américain* which frames the human figures from a slightly low angle knees up. This technique, adopted from Hollywood, is frequently used by Turkish directors.

The camera is often immobile in Yeşilçam films. The most common camera movement is pan (horizontal movement). The tilt (vertical movement) and the tracking shot (traveling of camera in any direction along the ground) is less used. Again the fast conditions of movie-making did not allow the use of the dolly for tracking shots.

To sum up, the mise-en-scene of the Yeşilçam melodrama have some distinct features from that of the classical Hollywood style. These are closely related with the visual culture. As mentioned above, the Islamic miniature painting has some distinct features. Two important characteristics of the miniature painting are frontality and emphasis on the foreground (İnal 1995, 32). These two characteristics are apparent in the mise-en-scene in Turkish melodrama.

The characters in Yeşilçam melodrama are usually portrayed in frontal position. This is also an appropriate position for deep staging, which Yeşilçam often uses. On the contrary, the classical Hollywood style is based on shot/reverse shot system. This system is rarely deployed by Yeşilçam, since it requires different camera positioning and lighting for each character. In deep staging the camera movement (usually pan) is motivated by reframing and centering.

A typical example of deep staging involving frontality in Yeşilçam is, the heroine in medium shot looking at a fixed point, usually to the left of the camera. The hero, also in sharp focus, is few steps behind. He is not looking at the heroine, but somewhere behind the camera. They are usually talking to each other without gazing, and behind them lies a space which acts as a backdrop (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Still from *Kalbimin Sahibi* (1969)

One of the consequences of deep staging, instead of shot/reverse shot system, is the difficulty in maintaining a coherent of point of view. The point of view (POV) shot (subjective shot) in film, is a shot that prompts the viewer to take a character's viewpoint. But in frontal framing, the characters are looking towards a point behind the camera. It is obvious that such a shot cannot have a reverse shot, since it is the camera (thus the spectator) to which the looks are directed. In this type of staging the spectator is identified with the POV of the camera. However, there are rare instances when the spectator emphasizes with the POV of a

character in Yeşilçam melodrama. A stereotypical example of this is the blurred gaze of the once blind hero or heroine after an eye operation (*Aşk Mabudesi*, 1969; *Üç Arkadaş*, 1958). These shots problematize the coherence of POV that is organized around the camera. In such cases, as Higson states, there is a “lack of fit between the ‘subjective’ looks of characters within the diegesis, and the ‘omniscient’ look of the camera (and spectator) from outside it” (1996, 150).

The POV of the camera is the external point of view. This is an enunciative type of look. This resembles the narrative structure of the fairy tales which Yeşilçam melodrama is based upon. In this sense, the narrative of Yeşilçam could be considered as simple or pure narrative (diegesis), as opposed to imitative narratives (mimesis).

Another characteristic of the Yeşilçam mise-en-scene is the tableau frame. The frontal characters are portrayed in front of a spectacular background like in typical Turkish landscape portraits. A very common example of this is the love scenes shot in different parts of İstanbul. In these scenes, the background behind the characters is also significant¹⁵.

¹⁵ Those visual codes are not only specific for Yeşilçam melodrama. Some of them (frontality and tableau frame) are also noted for Hindi cinema (Vasudevan, 1995). Besides, the early cinema has similar characteristics. In order to distinguish institutional mode of representation (IMR) from that of the primitive mode, Noel Burch defines similar features for early films. Main features of the primitive mode of representation (PMR) are “autarky of the tableau (even after the introduction of the syntagma of succession), horizontal and frontal camera placement, maintenance of long shot and ‘centrifugality’” (Burch 1990, 224). PMR also involves plagiarism and piracy (Ibid, 224).

3.3.3. Editing

Editing involves the combination of one shot with the next. This combination can be made in different ways. The most simple of these combinations is the cut, an instantaneous change from shot to shot. This is the most common technique used in Yeşilçam films for its simplicity.

Another junction, fade-in or fade-out to black is not used often in Yeşilçam. This junction implies a change of scene or time in Yeşilçam, as in the case of early cinema. Other combinations such as dissolve, wipe, and push-off are used rarely.

While cutting from one shot to some visual effects are used as transition. The most common of them are fast panning, zooming-in towards a character or object, or character's move towards the camera before cutting into the successive shot. In some cases, visual effects may signify bad news. In *Kadın Asla Unutmaz* (1968), the hero (Ediz Hun), an officer, dies in a plane crash. First we see him in a train departing for military maneuvers. The shot freezes and fades into black. We see some visual effects, followed by the splashing of red paint on a wall. Then we see the news of the plane crash in a newspaper and the heroine (Hülya Koçyiğit) crying.

Editing, in classical Hollywood style, involves some basic rules for achieving spatial and temporal continuity. The first rules of continuity editing is the deployment of establishing shot: a long shot which enables the spectators to orient themselves to the space of the scene. In Yeşilçam melodrama the common establishing shot starts with pan from an empty space to the character or the object of interest.

The second rule of continuity editing is the 180 degree rule, which involves establishment of an imaginary line along the action of the scene, between actors in conversation or the direction of a chase. Consecutive shots should not be taken from opposite sides of the line. Yeşilçam films usually follow this rule, since the POV is not often involved.

Finally, the 30 degree rule proposes that successive shots of the same area should have at least a 30 degree change in camera angle. When this last rule is broken, we would face a jump-cut. This type of jump-cuts is frequent in Yeşilçam melodrama, however they do not make the film narrative incomprehensible.

3.3.4. Sound

Soundtrack is an important element of the film as well as the visual image. It helps the construction of narrative in many ways.

One of the first features of the sound film is to give an impression of reality. This impression is achieved through techniques such as sound perspective or the use of peripheral sound. The impression of reality in Yeşilçam melodrama is problematic since the films are dubbed. Dubbed films can achieve an impression of reality as well as synchronically recorded films, if certain techniques are employed. However, in the dubbing process of Yeşilçam the sound perspective is often neglected, therefore there is no illusion of depth in these films. This situation creates a different order in the image:

“Sound always comes from elsewhere. When the Yeşilçam body begins to speak, its voice articulates a space of different (or higher) order in the image. I argue that this space is of transcendental nature suggesting a unity of the bodies whereas the characters attached to these bodies are taken up as separate, even contrary entities,” (Erdoğan 1997).

There is also no use of pre-recorded peripheral sound in dubbing. For example in a crowded music hall scene we hear the voice of the singer, but not of the spectators. The impression of reality is broken further by the stereotypical voices of the characters. The films were dubbed by theater players. These actors/actresses were educated in the *tuluat* tradition. They had a great influence on the stereotypical character portrayal in Yeşilçam (Ayça 1996, 133). Also, in some cases one actor can voice a number of characters in a single film (Belgin 1997, 48).

In Yeşilçam melodrama, there is often use of voice-over, in order to accelerate the story-telling. The events were so condensed that sometimes additional information was acquired.

Finally, another predominant form of sound is music. It is used to dramatize the narrative and also a form of punctuation. The music "is both functional and thematic because used to formulate certain moods -sorrow, violence, dread, suspense, happiness" (Elsaesser 1987, 50).

The songs in Yeşilçam melodrama has a narrative function. The lyrics are related with the events, and they sometimes accelerate the story-telling like the voice-over. On the other hand, the non-diegetic music in Yeşilçam melodrama was usually plagiarized from a number of well-known Hollywood or European movies. Some of them became stereotypical and reminded the viewers of particular situations.

4. REPRESENTATION OF SPACE IN TURKISH MELODRAMA

As discussed in the second chapter, the term filmic space involves both formal and metaphoric aspects. In the above part on the mise-en-scene in Turkish melodrama some of these formal aspects are evaluated. In this chapter, I will mainly focus on different meanings that the representation of the space offer.

In order to analyze the different orders in this representation, I have used a number of categories that are used by different authors for evaluating space in movies. Some new categories can be added to those, but I believe the ones that are considered here are crucial for the study of Turkish melodrama.

4.1. Gendered Space

Classical melodrama is often staged in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the bourgeois home and/or the small town setting. This space is also “predetermined and pervaded by ‘meaning’ and interpretable signs” (Elsaesser 1987, 62). As opposed to the genre of melodrama, the Westerns are set outside, the space of adventure. The characteristic of

these two genres prove that “the depiction of generic space is, in this sense, overdetermined by the connotations implicit in the masculine/feminine binary opposition” (Mulvey 1992, 55). According to this depiction, home is the space of the feminine and outside is the space of masculine.

Mulvey suggests that this opposition between inside and outside “is not derived from the connotations implicit in the male/female binary opposition.” The reason is “a disturbance, iconographically represented in images of the female body, symptomatic of the anxieties and desires that are projected onto the feminine within the patriarchal psyche.” (57). In this sense, the female body is masking a deceptive and dangerous interior space. This masked threat has become evident in the *femme fatale* figure.

The Yeşilçam melodrama had overcome this threat of the space in a rather interesting way. The events are set mainly in two masculine spaces: The *pavyon*¹⁶ or the *gazino*¹⁷ where the heroine works, and the outside where the love scenes between the hero and heroine are shot. In

¹⁶ A small club where singers and belly dancers performed. The spectators are only men. They invite ‘hostesses’ to their tables to chat, and pay a certain extra amount of money for their drinks.

¹⁷ This is a larger club where singers perform. This is a more elite place compared to pavyon. And spectators are both men and women. In some cases, they organize special early hour sessions for women only.

this sense, Yeşilçam melodrama presents a much safer place for voyeuristic pleasure. Its narrative is strongly masculine.

The heroine of the Yeşilçam melodrama, after a series of misunderstandings or blockage of knowledge, is disgraced. The only place for a disgraced woman is the *pavyon* where she can sing and earn her living. In this place she is considered as a loose woman. The hero who attempts to have a relation with her risks the condemnation society. But the spectators would know that she is trying to live decently and usually earn money for a relative (sacrifice). Sometimes, she would be paying the price of a mistake in the past. In *Yarın Başka Bir Gündür* (1969) when Gül Fatma (Hülya Koçyiğit) was invited back to her husband's home by her father-in-law, she refuses, because she had once been dishonored. Though the father-in-law knows that this was just because of misinformation. The price of being dishonored is to become an object for the male gaze.

As opposed to the *pavyon*, the *gazino* is a less disrespectable place for the heroine. But in both places there are women (singers and dancers) as the object of gaze. In *Kadın Asla Unutmaz*(1968) Nevin (Hülya Koçyiğit) sings in a *gazino* in order to earn enough money to get her son back from the family who adopted him. In *Adını Anmayacağım* (1971) and *Yarın Ağlayacağım* (1971) both starring Hülya Koçyiğit, the heroine makes a

decent living in a *gazino*. But the place is not so safe. In the former film the violinist in the band, and in the latter a rich businessman threaten the heroine.

In some other instances, the hero can also work in a *pavyon* or *gazino*. He is usually portrayed as the violinist accompanying a woman singer. But this time there is no doubt that he is making a decent living. This is man's world, and there is no danger for a man there, but it is threatening for others. In *Kambur* (1973), when Azize (Fatma Girik) goes inside a *pavyon* to pick up her lover (Kadir İnanır), a blind violinist, she faces sexual harassment by the spectators. Her lover tries to fight with the men and they both leave immediately.

In these scenes the POV of the camera usually replaces the gaze of the predominantly male viewers there. The spectators in the movie theater are also encouraged to empathize with this masculine gaze. The gaze offered to the spectator is problematic. The *pavyon*, apparently a sexual and indecent space is presented as a place of spectacle, something to be looked-at. In such cases the viewers can only identify with these scenes when they are outside, above the events. In *Vesikalı Yarım* (1968), İzzet Günay visits a *pavyon* for the first time. He then becomes addicted to the place, when he falls in love with the singer. But his attempt to rescue her fails, due to the social distinctions between them. The viewer's position is

very similar to that of Günay: he cannot avoid visiting *pavyon* although it is not acceptable to do so. This presentation is also more problematic for the female viewer. The only way for the female viewer to identify is to cross the gender lines.

The representation of these places has also an important narrative function, They are the stage for the *melos* of the drama. The songs are often performed in this atmosphere.

Women are the object of male gaze not only in the *pavyon* and *gazino*, but everywhere outside home. When she leaves the safety of home she can face the male threat in even a small restaurant as in the case of *Kalbimin Sahibi* (1969) (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Still from *Kalbimin Sahibi* (1969)

Another form of gendered space in Turkish melodrama is the outdoor scene, which connotes masculinity. The distinctive use of outdoor space, especially nature, is allegorical. This will be analyzed in the following sections.

4.2. Allegorical Space

The allegory involves presenting an idea by masking it. According to Fredric Jameson, the general characteristic of allegory is “the laterality with which the levels, like the hollow nutshells of the shell game, must be conveyed” (1992b, 67). The representation of space in film can also be considered in terms of allegory.

The sexual codes of melodrama are “male impotence and female frigidity” (Elsaesser 1987, 67). Similarly, there is almost no representation of sexual relationship in Turkish melodrama. The few attempted sexual encounters are the ones that are taking place outside -sometimes in hayrick in the village (*Ayşem*, 1968; *Kadın Asla Unutmaz*, 1968) -a space which connotes masculinity, not in the home.

A typical love scene in Turkish melodrama is portrayed in natural surroundings (i.e. under a tree on a hill overlooking the Bosphorus). The lovers are framed in frontal position or in profile. Nature is the background

for the event. Scriptwriter Oran describes a typical setting on Bosphorus as follows: "We would usually wait for a boat, and then zoom out from the boat to the characters" (Oran 1996b).

In these scenes we do not see the lovers kissing or making love. They gaze into each other's eye and play games such as chasing after each other. The sexual encounter is replaced with gameplay in nature: "When sex is at stake the lovers forget everything and begin to play games" (Erdoğan 1997). Nature allegorically signifies sexuality in Turkish melodrama¹⁸.

The allegorical use of nature is not limited to the backgrounding. Nature sometimes directly displaces sexual intercourse; through parallel editing. A typical example is the love scene at the hayrick in *Kadın Asla Unutmaz* (1968). We see the hero and heroine (Hülya Koçyiğit, Ediz Hun) kissing (Figure 7.1). Then the camera cuts to the rain outside (Figure 7.2). Back again to the lovers. A close up of the heroine's face. The hero is lying on her. Then again cut to the rain, waves at seaside, and finally the dusk. We are back at the rick, they have finished making love and are lying on the ground.

¹⁸ I owe these ideas to the comments of my supervisor Nezihe Erdoğan.



Figure 7.1. Still from *Kadın Asla Unutmaz* (1968)

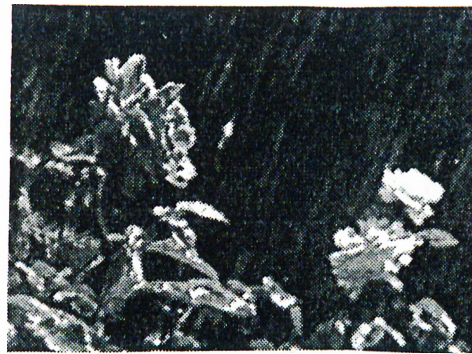


Figure 7.2. Still from *Kadın Asla Unutmaz* (1968)

Nature is also a symbol of purity in Turkish melodrama. Oran states that what gives purity to melodramas was natural scenes (1996b). The opposition between the city and country in melodrama also implies such a purity. The big city (İstanbul) is full of dangers and threat, especially for the heroine. She can survive these threats when she returns back to nature, especially the countryside. In *Tatlı Dillim* (1972), *Ateşli Çingene* (1969), *Ayşem* (1968) the characters return to the village after facing difficulties in the city.

Ironically this period of the Turkish movie industry, where sex is only implicit in nature, was succeeded by the sex movies period (1974-1980). The love scenes that were veiled in melodramas were then represented in the most obscene way.

4.3. Iconographic Space

Vasudevan, analyzing Indian melodrama, uses iconicity not in the precise semiotic sense, in order to identify a relation of resemblance. In this latter sense, icon involves a meaningful condensation of the image. In Geeta Kapur's words the iconic is "an image into which symbolic meanings converge and in which moreover they achieve stasis" (qtd. in Vasudevan 1995, 313).

The space in film can be used as an iconographic element to imply different meanings. This requires a kind of symbolization. The iconographic use of space in Yeşilçam melodrama often has distinct characteristics. Firstly, the iconographic space is used to condense the meaning. Instead of narrating a long story, some particular events or conditions are represented with a single iconographic scene. For example, the whole process of migration to big cities and the uncanny feeling facing the immigrants is explained in few seconds with the sight of the well-known Haydarpaşa train station. The Galata Bridge on Golden Horn is another iconographic space for the newcomers in İstanbul.

Secondly the iconographic space is used to establish the reality of a place. The well-known sites of İstanbul (mentioned in the following part) are an example of this kind of use.

The iconographic space is also used to represent the system of differences apparent in Yeşilçam melodrama, namely urban/rural, wealthy/poor, conservative/progressive. For example, the antagonism between the rich hero and poor heroine, or vice versa, is represented by the portrayal of the home of the rich one. This space is a stereotypical two-storey house. It has a piano and rich objects in it. The distinction between the downstairs and the upstairs is implied with the ladder. On the other hand, the home of the poor one is portrayed less frequently. It is clean and tidy, with little furniture in it. Usually there is a table in the middle of the room.

Another iconographic space that signifies a system of differences is the road. This draws the spectators' attention to the antagonism between the country and the city. In *Ateşli Çingene* (1969), when the gypsy girl Gelincik (Türkan Şoray) decides to find her lover in İstanbul, she is portrayed in a carriage on the way to the station. In this kind of typical road scenes there is always music or song.

Finally, iconographic space can be used as a turning point in the narrative structure. The graveyard is such an iconographic space. The hero/heroine trying to overcome the difficulties in order to reunite with his/her lover may lose one of his/her parents. This can be considered as the highest point of dramatic tension. In *Ateşli Çingene* (1969), Gelincik lost

her mother, in *Kambur* (1973) Azize's father dies. But after this loss, they are reunited with their lovers. In the graveyard the hero or the heroine framed alone, praying. Other examples of this kind of iconographic space are the court room, the prison, and the hospital.

4.4. Space as Spectacle

Another category for evaluating space in Turkish melodrama is the space as spectacle. Space as spectacle involve the shots that are a kind of "visually pleasurable lure to the spectator's eye" (Higson 1996, 134). In this sense, some of the above mentioned iconographic clichés of Yeşilçam melodrama can also be read as spectacle.

İstanbul, where the movie industry is based, is employed as an open air location for most of the melodramas. It is clear that the iconic places in the city are used to present a kind of voyeuristic pleasure to those living in other parts of Turkey. Among the most frequently filmed parts of İstanbul are the Bosphorus, the Golden Horn, Kanlıca, and the lake in Belgrad Forest. Meeting places for lovers are easily recognizable even by viewers who are not familiar with İstanbul. Of course it is not only the natural sites of İstanbul that have been presented as spectacular in Yeşilçam melodrama. Other well-known places of Turkey, especially

seaside resorts, are also used. For example, the famous hill (Şeytan Sofrası) in Ayvalık is the place where lovers meet in *Kambur* (1973).

These spectacular spaces are often used as a backdrop while framing lovers. An example of this is the frequently used “shot of lovers on the hill,” with the characters turning away from the view. The background is deployed as if a stage decor. This is so evident that even the blind hero (Cüneyt Arkın) can visit the lake in Belgrad Forest (a stereotypical place) with his lover (Hülya Koçyiğit) in *Adını Anmayacağım* (1971). The lovers are not interested in the view, since they are in frontal position, but it is a spectacular space for the viewers.

In this sense, space as spectacle is used both as an establishing shot and background for play in nature. An example is the mostly utilized pan from the boat to the lovers (*Kalbimin Sahibi*, 1969; *Kambur*, 1973). When the hero or heroine has lost his/her lover s/he walks around the places where once they met. In *Kalbimin Sahibi* (1969) Zeki Müren walks in the hills of Kanlıca where he met Meryemce (Sema Özcan) after she has returned to her village.

As an establishing shot, spectacular space can present a general view of the city, especially when the location changes. The space as spectacle can also be used as a transition between shots. In *Arka Sokaklar* (1963),

the Golden Horn, where the events take place, is framed from a hill and used as transition between acts (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Still from *Arka Sokaklar* (1963)

In this sense, these shots also have a narrative function. However, there is always a tension between the narrative and the spectacle. In the normal narrative structure the spectator feels as if something is missing from each image. However, with the spectacle “the spectator is confronted with an image which is so fascinating that it seems complete, with nothing missing. Consequently, the desire to move on, to see the next image, is much less urgent,” (Ellis qtd. in Higson 1996, 135).

But, this fascination with the space as spectacle does not last long. Soon the spectators of melodrama are faced with the burdens of life. The love scene in nature is quickly followed by the separation of the lovers. Higson calls such a process the “curtailment of pleasure.” It is “a refusal to allow the individual to remain in ‘natural state’ of wish fulfillment” (1996, 145).

Melodramas of the 1960s and 70s are still offering visual pleasures to their new spectators in private television channels. In this latter sense, the space is most probably seen as a realistic detail/historical place. Those beautiful scenes of İstanbul, especially the Bosphorus, have been lost with the urbanization process. The space as spectacle in Yeşilçam melodrama signifies a lost paradise for its new viewers.

4.5. Psychological space

In classical Hollywood style, the psychological use of space is very frequent. The claustrophobic atmosphere of the bourgeois home also represents the characters' feelings. Or, emotional situations are "underplayed to present an ironic discontinuity of feeling or a qualitative difference in intensity, usually visualized in terms of spatial distance and separation" (Elsaesser 1987, 66).

But the term psychological space is not only limited with metaphors of space. It also involves creating an atmosphere through the construction of mise-en-scene. This requires certain techniques such as using different camera angle, lens or lighting.

The psychological space, in the sense of creating a specific mise-en-scene, is very rare in Turkish melodrama. One of the few examples is the

framing of the hunchback heroine (Fatma Girik) who is walking in the narrow streets, in *Kambur* (1973). She is lonely and upset. The children of the village make fun of her. She tries to escape. The hunchback is portrayed from a low camera angle and the camera is following her (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Still from *Kambur* (1973)

In *Kalbimin Sahibi* (1969) Meryemce (Sema Özcan) decides to leave the house and return to her village, when she realizes the differences in status between herself and her lover, who is a famous singer (Zeki Müren). As she leaves the house, she is framed from the top of a building (extreme long shot), in order to symbolize her loneliness.

The use of the colored camera lens and soft focus in love scenes in Yeşilçam melodrama could be considered another method for constructing a psychologized space.

4.6. Fantasy space

The fantasy space usually involves a dream scene in Yeşilçam melodrama. The most common used fantasy is the wedding dream of the heroine. This female fantasy is often shot in soft focus, and sometimes colored lenses are used in order to give a dreamlike atmosphere.

For example, the heroine of *Kambur* (1973) dreams of getting married a handsome boy. In the wedding dream they are walking down a stairway from the sky. The boy in the dream (Kadir İnanır), whom the heroine later meets, is dressed as a sultan (Figure 10). In *Yüreğimde Yare Var* (1974), Nurten (Türkan Şoray) who has been invited to the wedding ceremony dreams of wedding her lover. She is portrayed in the place of the bride in the wedding ceremony.

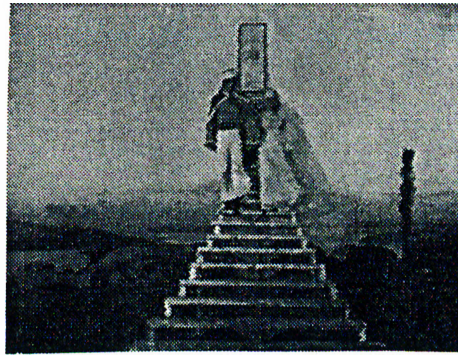


Figure 10. Still from *Kambur* (1973)

The boundaries of these categories of space often intersect as seen above. Therefore, they should not be considered as distinct realms that explain the whole system of representation of space in film. What is important is rather the specific characteristics that are revealed.

5. CONCLUSION

“Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
I am mightily abus’d. I should e’en die with pity
To see another thus. I know not what to say.”

William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act IV, Scene VII

King Lear, old and sick, towards the end of the play loses all his sense of spatiality. He could hardly recognize the space he is in. Today, the notion of spatiality is in question. We often ask the same question with King Lear: “Where am I?”

Contemporary theories of space and time have been trying to answer this question through focusing on the transition from modernity to postmodernity. An important area of concern for these theories is the domain of narrative. The filmic narrative is a part of this domain, though neglected until recently.

The objective of this study was to map a part of the world of Turkish melodrama. As a genre, melodramas are generally viewed as products of mass culture that create passive audiences. The visual pleasures they are offering were criticized from different aspects. However, they are considered as cultural products that reflect certain social, historical, and institutional conditions of a society.

An analysis of Turkish melodrama provides an important insight into Turkish society. In this thesis I tried to demonstrate how the narrative structure of Turkish melodrama, within a different historical, cultural, and institutional context, differ from classical Hollywood melodrama.

In this context, the task of the study was to reconsider some of the basic terms regarding space in cinema. For this reason in the second part of the study different approaches towards filmic space are reevaluated. In this part I have shown that the term space is very variously interpreted.

The formalist approaches to filmic space consider the notion of space in technical terms as part of mise-en-scene. On the other hand, a number of other writers consider space in a broader sense, involving metaphoric meanings.

I contend that both approaches are useful in analyzing the space in film. Therefore, in the third part of the study the narrative structure of the Turkish melodrama, including the mise-en-scene, is examined in detail. This examination proves that the narrative structure of Turkish melodrama possesses some of the distinct characteristics of the narrative and visual tradition. For example, common features of miniature painting, such as frontality and emphasis on the foreground, is also a part of the mise-en-scene in *Yeşilçam*. As Michel de Certeau states, "the totalizing eye

imagined by the painters of earlier times lives on in our achievements” (1990, 92). Moreover, the plot of these movies involve a synthesis of the classic plot of the genre with the elements of Turkish popular culture.

Finally, in the fourth chapter I have shown that the space represented in melodrama condensed with meaning. The space of Turkish melodrama is the masculine space (outdoors and the *pavyon/gazino*), as opposed to feminine space (indoors) of the classical Hollywood melodrama. This gendered space offers visual pleasures to both male and female viewers. The representation of space can also be evaluated in terms of allegory. In this sense, the space represented may signify different meanings.

Within these reconsiderations it becomes clear that the space of the Turkish melodrama can be viewed differently by the spectators. However, what these melodramas offer to their viewers has yet to be fully examined. The answer to this question is more crucial than ever in the times when over-sentimental melodramas have become simply comic to the modern eye.

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Ateşli Çingene [Hot Gypsy] (1969) Dir. Metin Erksan. With Türkan Şoray, Ediz Hun.

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Kambur [The Hunchback] (1973) Dir. Atif Yılmaz. With Fatma Girik, Kadir İnanır.

Tatlı Dillim [Sweetie] (1972) Dir. Ertem Eğilmez. With Filiz Akın, Tarık Akan.

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Vesikalı Yarım [My Love] (1968) Dir. Lütfü Akad. With Türkan Şoray, İzzet Günay.

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Yarın Başka Bir Gündür [Tomorrow is Another Day] (1969) Dir. Nejat Saydam. With Hülya Koçyiğit, Murat Soydan.

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With Türkan Şoray, Salih Güney.

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