

KAAN AKIN

WOMEN AND PRECARIETY IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

Bilkent University 2017

WOMEN AND PRECARIETY IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

A Master's Thesis

By
KAAN AKIN

Department of
Communication and Design
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
August 2017

To Hatice & Gürcan ...

WOMEN AND PRECARIY IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

Of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

By

KAAN AKIN


In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

August 2017

I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.



Assist. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Gürata

Supervisor

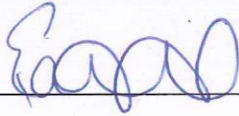
I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.



Assist. Prof. Dr. Colleen Bevin Kennedy-Karpat

Examining Committee Member

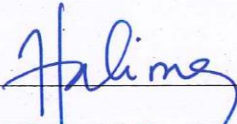
I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.



Assist. Prof. Dr. Emek Çaylı Rahte

Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences



Prof. Dr. Halime Demirkan

Director

ABSTRACT

WOMEN AND PRECARIETY IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

Akın, Kaan

M.A., in Media and Visual Studies

Supervisor: Assist. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Gürata

August, 2017

This thesis mainly focuses on precarity and the terms related with it such as precariat (as a social class), precariousness, and precarization. Within this sociological framework, six films from national cinema of Turkey and three films from outside of specified national cinema have been chosen. These films are Belmin Söylemez's *Present Tense* (2012), Yeşim Ustaoglu's *Somewhere in Between* (2012), Pelin Esmer's *Watchtower* (2012), Deniz Akçay's *Nobody's Home* (2013), Emine Emel Balci's *Until I Lose My Breath* (2015) and Ahu Öztürk's *Dust Cloth* (2015). From transnational cinemas respectively from Sweden, the USA, and Romania; Gabriele Pichler's *Äta Sova Dö (Eat Sleep Die)* (2012), Andrea Arnold's *American Honey* (2016), and Teodora Ana Mihai's *Waiting for August* (2014) have been chosen. The main aim of this study is to examine what connects the women protagonists in these particular films. The study argues that in terms of socio-ontological and labour conditions; women might seem more precarious than men. However, in the representation of precarious working women films by the women filmmakers, the female protagonist try to mitigate their precarity whereas men are on the edge of nihilism; i.e. simply being indifferent to their precarious conditions in the broadest sense.

Keywords: *Interzone*, Precariat, Precarity, Women Filmmakers, Women Protagonists

ÖZET

GÜNCEL SİNEMADA KADIN VE GÜVENCESİZLİK

Akın, Kaan

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar

Danışman: Yar. Doç. Dr. Ahmet Gürata

Ağustos, 2017

Bu tez temel olarak güvencesizlik ve onunla bağlantılı prekarya (sosyal sınıf olarak), kırılabilirlik ve güvencesizleştirme gibi terimlere odaklanmaktadır. Bu sosyolojiye dayalı çerçevede, Türkiye ulusal sinemasından altı film, ulusötesi sinemadan üç tane film seçilmiştir. Bu filmler kronojik sırayla Belmin Söylemez'in *Şimdiki Zaman*'ı (2012), Yeşim Ustaoglu'nun *Araf*'ı (2012), Pelin Esmer'in *Gözetleme Kulesi* (2012), Deniz Akçay'ın *Köksüz*'ü (2013), Emine Emel Balcı'nın *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*'ı (2015) ve Ahu Öztürk'ün *Toz Bezi*'dir (2015). Ulusötesi bağlamda, sırasıyla İsveç, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Romanya olmak üzere üç film seçilmiştir. Bunlar Gabriele Pichler'in *Äta Sova Dö* (Ye Uyu Öl, 2012), Andrea Arnold'ın *American Honey* (2016), and Teodora Ana Mihai'in *Waiting for August* (2014) filmleridir. Çalışmanın ana fikri bu filmlerde gözlemlenen güvencesizliğin birbirleriyle nasıl bağlanabileceğidir. Çalışma hem çalışma hem de sosyo-ontolojik açıdan kadınların erkeklerden daha güvencesiz olduğunu gösterir. Ancak, güvencesizliğin temsil edildiği ve kadın ana karakterlerin olduğu bu filmlerde kadınlar karşılaştıkları güvencesizliklerle başa çıkmaya çalışırken, erkek karakterlerin negatif nihilizme daha yakın olduğu savunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gvencesizlik, *Interzone*, Kadın Film Yapımcıları, Kadın Kahramanlar,
Prekarya

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank Asst. Prof. Ahmet Gürata for his enormous support through my thesis process. Without his infinite support and valuable guidance, this thesis would not be the same as it is. I would also like to thank Asst. Prof. Colleen Bevin Kennedy-Karpat and Asst. Prof. Emek Çaylı Rahte for their constructive comments and criticisms.

My very special thanks go to my buddy Nilüfer Yeşil; without her support, I don't think I would be able to complete this study. Whenever I felt down, she lifted me up.

I would also like to thank Hazal Yalım and Ayşe Mulla for their infinite support through my MA journey. I also thank to my lifetime friends; Ayşe Aydın, Dilara Şentürk, and Pınar Esmâ Polat, who did not stop believing me.

Last but not least, sincere thanks to my family; my parents Hatice Akın, Gürcan Akın, and my older brother Yiğitcan Akın; who mean world to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ÖZET	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
CHAPTER I: PRECARIETY AND WOMEN	1
1.1 Structure, Outline and Aim	7
CHAPTER II: PRECARIOUS LABOUR, PRECARIOUS EXISTENCE AND NEW CINEMA OF PRECARIETY	10
2.1. Precarious Labour and the ‘New’ Class of Precariat	12
2.2. Precarious Existence: Precariousness as a Socio-ontological Term	19
2.3. New Cinema of Precarity	24
2.4. Other Key Concepts: <i>Nihilism</i> , <i>Intersectionality</i> and <i>Interzone</i>	27
CHAPTER III: HOME-SEEKING IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRECARIOUS WOMEN WORKERS FILMS PRODUCED IN TURKEY	31
3.1. Narrative Structure of the Films: An Impasse	31
3.2. The Class of Precariat and Precarious Labour	36
3.3. Decline of Biological Family Bonds, Increase of Friendship/Companionship	40
3.4. Marriage as a Possible Way Out	44
3.5. A Gender-based Comparison of Dealing with Precarious Lives and Labour	47

3.6. Concluding Remarks	51
CHAPTER IV: OVERARCHING PRECARIOUSNESS.....	53
4.1. Introduction	53
4.2. <i>Áta Sova Dö</i> (2012): “I had such big plans for the future.”.....	60
4.3. <i>American Honey</i> (2016): “Are we invisible?”.....	65
4.4. <i>Waiting for August</i> (2014): “I might look tough, but I’m fragile.”	71
4.5. Concluding Remarks	75
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION	77
REFERENCES.....	81

CHAPTER I: PRECARIETY AND WOMEN

As a recurrent theme in contemporary cinema, women are on the run one way or another: Oppression in families, sexual abuse, poor living conditions as well as labour conditions, despair, hope for a new and slightly better life, a feeling of insecurity, love and/or hatred can all be reasons for escape. In some films, heroines manage to escape; in some, they do not get to leave. For the former, the escape works as a fantasy; they tend to keep on fantasising about it until the end. For the latter, on the other hand, new possibilities along with dangers emerge on the way. Some go back home, some do not. Some fail to make their wish come true, some manage to make it real. Either way, there is a motivation for a different way of living than current living conditions of these female protagonists. This motivation has got close links with the terms such as precarity, vulnerability, and optimism/pessimism. This study aims to examine several films which employ precarity and female protagonists in them. This introduction will first try to provide a picture of fantasies of leaving in contemporary cinema and locate precarious women workers in it.

Both in national and transnational cinemas, there are women who dream of running away: These characters have got a desire to leave their home, which is mostly oppressive on various levels especially for the women protagonists. In the broadest sense, these women are not happy with their oppressive living as well as harsh working conditions and they dream of a better life and they try to come up with

solutions. In this sense, there are closer to the worker films, yet with a brand new title: Cinema of precarity. This cinema focuses on the precarity, which is basically a condition of living with insecurity and unforeseeable future. Its camera depicts characters' different daily struggles with on-going problems in workplaces (careerless occupations, unstable state of employment, unforeseeable future in work to name a few) as well as homes (incest, domestic violence, poverty, homelessness to name a few). Some problems depicted on screen go hand in hand with theories from a sociological term precarity since it is also related with harsh working conditions that directly affect living conditions of workers. That's why; one of the aims of this study is to look at the relation between precarity, women workers, and their representation on screen both in national and transnational sense.

To begin within national boundaries, according to Aslı Daldal, the female directors were among one of the factors that gave a new direction to Turkish cinema after 2004: "The traditionally male-dominated field of cinema has been challenged surprisingly by the first feature films of female directors such as Pelin Esmer, Aslı Özge and İlksen Başarır" (2014: 104). Usually with their debut films, several female directors started employing more female protagonists to their films and they started showing their stories from a woman's perspective. Especially, there are films which represent precarious women workers on screen.

These precarious women workers films can be categorised as social-realist films that depict their everyday life and struggles. In some of them, these workers are generally portrayed as the heroines who wish and try to escape from their homes. Films employing this particular theme in Turkey's national cinema are the cases of chapter three: Belmin Söylemez's *Şimdiki Zaman (Present Tense)*, 2012), Yeşim Ustaoglu's *Araf (Somewhere in Between)*, 2012), Pelin Esmer's *Gözetleme Kulesi (Watchtower)*,

2012), Deniz Akçay's *Köksüz* (*Nobody's Home*, 2013), Emine Emel Balcı's *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* (*Until I Lose My Breath*, 2015) and Ahu Öztürk's *Toz Bezi* (*Dust Cloth*, 2015). While Söylemez, Akçay, Balcı and Öztürk make their feature-length fiction debuts with these films, Ustaoglu and Esmer have already had their feature-length debuts respectively in 1994 and 2005.

What these films share in common from the broadest point of view is that the heroines in them are young adults or middle-aged precarious women workers, specifically from lower or middle class, looking for a slightly 'better' future one way or another, and trying to escape from their homes or at least, fantasising about running away. In *Şimdiki Zaman*, Mina (Sanem Öge) works in makeshift jobs and her desire is to escape to the USA for a fresh start after a failed marriage. *Araf*, on the other hand, tells a story of a worker at a service station, Zehra (Neslihan Atagül), whose dream is to escape from monotonous village she lives in. At one point in the film, when she is asked what she would do if she won lottery, she talks about her wish to travel the world. This wish also clearly signals her will to escape, and to aspire another way of living. Zehra's state of mind is summarized with the film's title: Just like being in "limbo", Zehra is somewhere between leaving and staying.

In addition, *Gözetleme Kulesi* focuses on a story of a hostess, Seher (Nilay Erdönmez), in a rural bus company, who has to leave her home. After suffering from sexual abuse and learning that she carries her uncle's baby, Seher drops out of university and tries to disappear without a trace. *Köksüz*, set in a metropolis unlike *Araf* and *Gözetleme Kulesi*, tells a story of an office worker in her early 30s Feride (Ahu Türkpençe) who is stuck in her control-freak mother's home. She tries to find a way out yet only possible option –or rather, a last resort- for her seems to marry a man whom she does not like. These three films share a common ground in the sense

that “like Zehra in *Araf*, in *Gözetleme Kulesi* and *Şimdiki Zaman*; instead of aspiring to marriage, and starting a family, the female characters’ willing to go far away equals their longing for an escape from all the surrounding economic and social conditions” (Yüksel, 2015: 140, translation mine).

Nefesim Kesilene Kadar, moreover, is set in Istanbul along with *Şimdiki Zaman*. It focuses on a story of a textile worker, Serap (Esmem Madra), who dreams of living in a house with her truck driver father. Finally, in *Toz Bezi*, Istanbul is chosen as the set as well. Its story focuses on two Kurdish home workers, who try to support each other. Having been left by her husband, Nesrin (Asiye Dinçsoy) struggles with taking care of her child as well as many other economic and social issues. At one point, she literally disappears from the film’s narrative, leaves her home and her child to her neighbour and colleague Hatun (Nazan Kesal).

Another significant point is that all of the protagonists here are in precarious living and working conditions. In addition, as Guy Standing (2011) asserts, precarity lacks a “work-based” identity as well as being in a “career-less” occupation. Indeed, the notion of precarity can easily be traced in exemplary films. In *Şimdiki Zaman*, Mina becomes a fortune-teller and tries to save money. Yet, since there is not an official document of employment, she seeks for one by asking her older sister as well as her boss to get a visa for the USA. In *Araf*, Zehra does not seem happy with working at the truck stop since she is assigned to do almost any type of work from a kitchen worker to dishwasher as well as a waitress. In *Köksüz*, Feride seems like she has got the best job among other heroines yet she has been working in a company where she works monotonously. *Gözetleme Kulesi* follows the trace with *Araf* in the sense that Seher works in a career-less job and she is insecure about her future.

In terms of working conditions, *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* and *Toz Bezi* probably draw the gloomiest picture. In the former one, Serap is constantly monitored by her boss in a textile mill – or sort of a sweatshop. Even a single mistake is not overlooked, since she can easily be replaced with any other textile worker. In *Toz Bezi*, as a home worker, Nesrin looks for a better job, her employer seems like she is helping Nesrin yet she constantly reminds her that Nesrin is not a secondary school graduate making it quite difficult to find a better occupation (by better here, it is meant that a job with security, with regulated working hours as well as regular income) for her. In a way, Standing's statement summarizes the protagonists' situation well: "... [The members of precariat] all share a sense that their labour is instrumental (to live), opportunistic (taking what comes) and precarious (insecure)" (2011: 14).

In the same vein, Iza Desperak's essay on precarity and gender states: "Precariat is defined not only by precarious work, but also by precarious life" (2013: 114). In a way, in the precarious women workers films, not only their work is almost always precarious but also their lives. Not only the protagonists have to deal with problems in their workplaces, but also they have to take care of the problems at home mentioned earlier. Problems in the workplace and at the home constantly affect one another, therefore creating an atmosphere that is mostly gloomy. Only with solidarity as well as companionship among workers is depicted as not the ultimate solution but as a sign of hope. On the other hand, in the same films, male characters are similarly affected by precarious living and working conditions yet unlike female protagonists, they are indifferent to them. In other words, while the women workers struggle with finding a way out to reduce their precariousness, the male workers do not show any reaction to it. To be detailed later with the help of nihilistic approach, this study's one of the aims is to look at the different reactions to precarity.

Precarity and its gender dimension are not the issues to be talked about merely within national boundaries. There are precarious women workers portrayed outside of the boundaries as well. Probably one of the most famous one is The Dardennes' Palme d'Or winner film *Rosetta* (1999). Described as a "war film" by the directors themselves (quoted in Berlant; 2011: 163), *Rosetta* portrays a woman worker who struggles to find a job in order to reduce her precarious living conditions such as taking care of an alcoholic mother, unable to start a romantic relationship due to poverty, and surviving in slums. Similar to *Rosetta*, The Dardennes's more recent Palme d'Or nominee film *Deux Jours, Une Nuit* (*Two Days, One Night*, 2014) focuses on what it means to lose one's job. Sandra (Marion Cotillard) is a factory worker who tries to stay in her job. To do that, she has to convince her co-workers to give up EUR 1,000 bonus. Though she attempts to commit suicide at one point, she keeps fighting until the end. In these films as well, precarity goes hand in hand with working and a motivation to live a better life (for *Rosetta*, better life is a 'normal' life with a steady job. For Sandra, it is to stay in her job no matter what).

Alice Bardan (2013) talks about precarious work and its representation on screen. In order to give a few examples, Bardan points out the issues such as failure of finding a job among new graduates in the films such as *All Your Life Ahead of You* (Paolo Virzi, 2008, Italy), *Escape from the Call Centre* (Feredico Rizzo, 2009, Italy) and *Days and Clouds* (Silvio Soldini, 2007, Italy/Switzerland). Moreover, she gives several examples about activist movements on precarity in the experimental documentaries such as *Drifting: On the Circuits of Female Precarity* (collective work of "Precarias a la Deriva", 2003, Spain), *Precarious Lives* (Joanne Richardson & Andreea Carnu, 2008, Romania/USA) and *Precarity* (Megan Michalak, 2012, Portugal). Also, she talks about social insecurities in the films such as *Time Out*

(Laurent Cantet, 2003, France), *Valerie* (Birgit Möller, 2012, France), and *Louise Wimmer* (Cyril Mennegun, 2012, France). In addition, as seen in the category of failure of finding a job, *Äta sova dö* (*Eat Sleep Die*, Gabriela Pichler, 2012) is yet another example of precarious life and labour. Raša's (Nermina Lukač) dream of escape does not emerge from a will yet but an obligation since she is forced to quit her occupation in a factory in rural areas of Sweden. In order to survive, Raša does what it takes to find another job.

In short, in these films from contemporary cinema, it is likely to come across a will and a dream for a better life. This better life can be as modest as finding a decent – i.e. with security, a regular income, foreseeable future- occupation in the films. For several reasons, several characters sometimes fail to escape. The exemplary films usually end their narrative with an open end, indicating an idea that their will of escape might not come true. Hence, apart from national cinema's exemplary films, Gabriela Pichler's *Äta sova dö* has been chosen as a case study from this segment in chapter four in order to make a comparison and attempt to create a common ground between national and transnational cinemas.

1.1 Structure, Outline and Aim

There are lots of films that can be relatable to the theme dreaming of running away – surely more than the list provided here. In order to narrow the corpus down, it is proposed to set the exemplary films based on three simple criteria. First of all, the film either depicts a fantasy of escape or a better life through labour. It may be any type of labour from invisible labour at home to makeshift occupations. Secondly, there should be a depiction of precarious living and labour conditions mostly in women workers' characters. In other words, there should be a depiction of the 'work

place'. It may be anything from home to offices, to fortune-teller cafés. Finally, in order to focus on women workers' narratives than men's, the films need to be written and directed by a woman filmmaker - that can also make the audience think about woman's perspective on precarity.

Within the light of three categorizations, the exemplary films share the common ground of precarity. That's why, in the second chapter, the study evaluates recent debates on precarious (ness), precarity, precariat and precarization. In addition, the terms' representation on screen is also examined. Starting with Lauren Berlant's definition of precarious cinema, the current literature identifies its characteristics as well as its applicability to the study.

The third chapter aims to discuss the representation of precariousness within national boundaries from the perspective of narrative analysis. With the exemplary films produced between 2012 and 2015 by woman filmmakers, it is questioned whether there is a possible way out, i.e. a way to reduce the precarity of women workers. While they dream of a better life, portrayal of male characters in the same films is closer to escapism and nihilism. That's why, the different types of nihilism is to be discussed in this chapter.

Finally, the fourth chapter literally bridges the female characters' precariousness with the help of a transnational (mostly with the help of films from the countries such as Sweden, Romania and the USA) context. By looking at a portion of the spectrum, this chapter aims to look for a way to connect/overarch precariousness as well as vulnerability. In this sense, the chapter's aim is to examine various types of precarity and to find a common ground for precarious women workers' representation.

Although precarity and terms related with it –precarious (ness), precariat, and precarization- are indeed debated within national boundaries, their representation in cinema seems like a lack in the field of film studies especially in Turkey. One master’s thesis is on the representation of precarity in contemporary cinema of Turkey. In her thesis, Funda Kaya (2013) focuses on the representation of labour in particular fiction films by male filmmakers such as *Children of the Other Side* (Aydın Bulut, 2008), *Dark Cloud* (Theron Patterson, 2009), *Joyful Life* (Yılmaz Erdoğan, 2009), *Black Dogs Barking* (Mehmet Bahadır Er & Maryna Gorbach, 2009), and *Particle* (Erdem Tepegöz, 2012). After examining these films, she draws a conclusion that a feeling/view of unity is often neglected and regarded as non-current (2013: 102). However, what this study aims to show is the idea that in precarious women workers in films, written and directed by women, there is indeed a depiction of solidarity (it is especially apparent in the films such as *Şimdiki Zaman*, *Araf*, *Gözetleme Kulesi*, and *Toz Bezi*). A hypothesis here is that from a female perspective, the solidarity in singularities seems necessary and even obligatory.

Overall, this study argues that both in terms of socio-ontological and labour conditions; women might seem more precarious than men. However, in the representation of precarious working women films by the women filmmakers, the female protagonist try to find a way out one way or another whereas men are on the edge of nihilism, escapism and/or pessimism, i.e. simply being indifferent to their precarious conditions in the broadest sense.

CHAPTER II: PRECARIOUS LABOUR, PRECARIOUS EXISTENCE AND NEW CINEMA OF PRECARITY

In contemporary literature, the terms precarious (ness), precarity, precariat and precarization are discussed in a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, political science, labour economics, performance studies, and law. Before moving on to the literature, small differences between these terms need to be made briefly. Precarious, in the broadest sense, describes a state of vulnerability, instability, insecurity, and unpredictability. It leads an understanding of the term in the sense that precarious individuals' situations in everyday lives are constantly reinvented with a feeling of anxiety. Martin Bak Jørgensen explains that the term precarity implies a condition of being vulnerable, precariat highlights a collective identity that has got a potential to form a social class and precarization hints at a process of one's way to precarity and precariat (2015: 3). Then, precarity works as a sociological term hinting at a condition of living without security that might affect an individual's well-being. Precariousness, on the other hand, refers to a state of uncertainty. Yet, as Judith Butler says, they are not completely different terms: "Precariousness and precarity are intersecting concepts. Lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is in no sense guaranteed" (2009: 25). Moreover, Butler makes a distinction between precarity as "politically induced condition" (2009: 26) and precarious (ness) as "an ontological presuppositions"

(Demirkaya, 2017: 9). In this sense, while precarity is more related with politics; precarious (ness) marks an understanding from an existential point of view. Precariat, on the other hand, is the term Guy Standing proposes to define a new social class with different types of occupational and social insecurities. Finally, the term precarization is defined as a process in which an individual gets more and more precarious (for instance, losing a job causes losing health insurance as the same time). Hence, all of these terms draw parallels with each other but yet branch out different directions as well.

Precarity's importance arises from the idea that it does not seem like a transitory issue but almost a permanent one. In *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*' foreword, Judith Butler asserts that "... precarity is not a passing or episodic condition, but a new form of regulation that distinguishes this historical time" (2015: vii). In a way, the discussion made on this topic does not only identify but also tries to make a sense out of contemporary existential, social, and political conditions of individuals. Precarity, in this sense, gains more importance for looking at living conditions of individuals and their integration in a society.

Precarity, in addition, does not solely consist of one dimension. Lauren Berlant describes "precarity [as] an existential problem, an on-going (structurally) economic problem, [and] a problem of the reproduction of life" ("Precarity Talk", 2012: 166). Respectively, these problems highlight the idea that precarity is an existential issue because "we are all contingent beings" (the point where she is on the same page with Butler), economic because "...capitalism is thrives on instability", and fails at reproduction of life because "there are not enough hours in the day: making a life has become more precarious in fantasy and materially" (2012: 166). In other words, Berlant's idea is interpreted as precarity does not allow individuals to choose their

own way freely. It restricts possibilities, thus the dreams and fantasies as well. In this sense, precarity as an existential, political and social matter is rather intertwined with each other.

Divided into three segments, this chapter aims to follow on-going debates on precariousness as well as precarity. In the first one, starting with Guy Standing's ideas and the conceptualization of the precariat, what precarious work and labour might mean is questioned. Then, starting with Judith Butler's perception of precarity and precarious (ness) as an ontological term is taken into consideration. Moreover, Isabell Lorey's and Lauren Berlant's conceptions on precarity are also included to the discussion. The final segment portrays what has been done on cinema of precarity and precarious (ness) before. Starting from Berlant's ideas on this particular topic, the final segment traces the root of the term. Thus, all of the three segments aim to provide a background for following chapters from socio-ontological, labour and film perspective.

2.1. Precarious Labour and the 'New' Class of Precariat

According to theories on precarity, 'something' has been changing in nature of labour. Due to long and flexible working hours, demanding multitasking occupations, and uncertainty of future in short term jobs, labour gets more and more complex to define. As Ritu Vij states in her essay: "Insecure, contingent, and flexible employment characteristics of predominantly female workers has recently gained currency under the name of 'precarity', making a general turn to vulnerability under conditions of Post-Fordist neoliberalism" (2013: 122). In a way, precarious labour conditions such as insecurity as well as forced resignation to a future workers feel powerless to control are main parts of this new type of class ('in-the-making' as

Standing asserts). After starting with this basic definition of the term, the segment will create an identification of precarious labour and the class of precariat.

In his book *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, Guy Standing identifies some aspects of the precariat and gives detailed information about it in order to conceptualize the term. The word precariat “could be described as a neologism that combines an adjective ‘precarious’ and a related noun ‘proletariat’” (2011: 7). One of the main differences between proletariat and precariat, then, is that this new socio-economic class is employed in short-term unsteady jobs, usually without insurance. In addition, unforeseeable future and exploitation are other important points to highlight.

The class includes almost everyone who does not usually get paid regularly such as interns, freelancers, home workers, call-centre workers, new graduates without a job experience and so on. In addition, Standing highlights another distinctive characteristic of the precariat which is “[lack of] a work-based identity. When employed, they are in career-less jobs, without traditions of social memory, a feeling they belong to an occupational community steeped in stable practices, codes of ethics and norms of behaviour, reciprocity and fraternity” (2011: 12). What’s important here is the idea that without a work-based identity, a possible sense of belonging to a labour community might also be problematic.

The precarity does not only focus on work-based identity in occupations such as “housework, nursing, child-raising, education” but also the ones lacking that identity such as “call centres and sex work” (Lorey, 2015: 94). As Maribel Casas-Cortes shares the same point of view and asks: “What do a call-centre worker, a researcher, and a migrant nanny have in common?” (2014: 214). The question is one of the main

ones in the following chapter: What do fortune tellers (*Şimdiki Zaman*), workers at a service station (*Araf*), a hostess in a local bus company (*Gözetleme Kulesi*), an office worker (*Kökstüz*), workers in a textile mill (*Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*), home workers (*Toz Bezi*) have in common? This seeks an answer in the next chapter seeks. The class, in a way, seeks to find a common ground for any type of possibly exploitable occupations.

Moreover, Guy Standing has written another book on the precariat in order to emphasize their social position in society. Calling the class ‘denizens’, a term used for the ones out of being in a status of ‘citizen’, Standing argues that more and more people have been losing their citizen status lately. In his own words, he explains: “In the globalization era, while the rhetoric of rights gained force and popularity, the reality has been the conversion of more people into denizens, denied certain rights or prevented from obtaining or retaining them. This does not affect only migrants” (2014: 8). In this sense, as the opposite of a ‘citizen’, who basically have got basic human rights such as living, being free and secure within specified borders, ‘denizens’ lack all of these citizen rights as they are considered as ‘alien’. This idea has already started hinting at an understanding that precarity is a bigger issue than solely labour.

On the other hand, Standing’s suggestion of a ‘new’ class has faced several critiques. For instance, Richard Seymour (2012) argues that there are different ‘levels of precarity’ in different occupational groups “from the bin men to the civil servants, from contract cleaners to health professionals” and rightly points out that “[p]recarity is not experienced to the same extent and in the same way”. In the same vein, Jan Breman (2013) uses a similar argument by saying: “there is not one but a variety of regimes of informal/precarious labour, not all vicious to the same extent”. Finally,

Peter Frase (2013) argues that “[precariat] attempts to draw together too many different heterogeneous strata of the population, and because it too strongly excludes segments of what Standing defines (too narrowly) as the working class, which still enjoy relatively stable and protected employment situations”. However, Maribel Casas-Cortes draws attention to the concept’s “act[ing] as a tool to develop unfixed understandings of the world and fluid ways of inhabiting it, stressing the potentiality of connecting singularities...” (2014: 222 - 223). In other words, the author does not see any problem with seeing the term as an umbrella concept in order to construct a common ground among various occupations. Standing’s attempt may not conceptualize ‘a new class-in-the-making’ fully yet it successfully demonstrates the contemporary conditions of precarity and precarious labour. Its potential to collectivist act will be discussed broadly from an ontological perspective in the following segment.

In national boundaries as well, precarity, precariousness as well as precarization are not unknown but still they have not been able to create a solid literature yet. For instance, in Denizcan Kutlu’s essay on precarization patterns in Turkey’s workforce, he highlights the idea that “it would not be wrong to talk about the labour in Turkey has become more precarious over time. It is understood that regulations to be brought in the future do not qualify secured labour anymore” (2012: 111, translation mine).

This statement clearly provides an understanding that labour in national boundaries is not secured and seemingly it will not be fixed with regulation in labour markets.

Hence, this leads us to draw parallels between current debates on precarious labour.

In his article on TEKEL resistance that took place in Ankara in 2009, Tanıl Bora talks about class movements and what is ‘new’ in the neoliberal age. According to him, “In our times, proletariat is *precariat*: Insecure, working in arbitrary conditions,

convicted to chronic temporary occupations, being in limbo between having a job or unemployment (or its tread to be unemployed)... A mass crowd assumed to be ‘unnecessary’, ‘loafer’, ‘dangerous’” (2010; translation mine). While talking about a working class resistance, Bora’s identification of the ‘new’ class parallels to Standing’s. Both agree on the idea that proletariat gets less and less secure and precarization process works for this class. Bora suggests looking back on older resistances and movements for this new type of precarious labour (2010).

A study by DISK-AR (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey) director Serkan Öngel bases its data on TUIK’s (Turkish Statistical Institute) survey and draws these conclusions:

Undeclared work has increased among women, declined among men... women have got no hope of work... a woman with a higher education is unemployed doubly... and employment in quality jobs such as lawmaker, senior executives and directors is rare among women; it is only %10. (2012: 166-67; translation mine)

In this sense, these statistics show that labour conditions among women are more precarious than men, at least within specified national boundaries. While outside of the borders, Judy Fudge & Rosemary Owens point out on-going issues of women in terms of labour such as income inequality as well as withstanding “...a greater risk of poverty than men...” (2006: 13). In addition, Fudge & Owens assert: “[In case of a] separation or divorce, women continue to be at risk of falling into poverty, notwithstanding their labour market participation” (2006: 15). These ideas basically confirm an understanding that working women face more precariousness than men do in terms of chances of employment, participation in labour, and future career.

However, the representation of precarious women workers in the exemplary films does not completely employ this picture: Even when living with more precariousness

than male characters, the female protagonists try to come up with a solution to their precarity and/or precariousness. Male characters, on the other hand, either are not aware of their precariousness or avoid accepting their vulnerability. Ewa Mazierska talks about a representation of work on screen and draws a conclusion that “...women have more clarity about the game of alienation and exploitation; men delude themselves about their work and their role in the world of work” (2013: 12). Hence, the question whether there is a difference between reactions to precarity and precariousness (in both senses of labour and living) is a significant one in order to make a comparison between male and female conception of precarity.

Moreover, Polat Alpman has done an ethnographic study that connects precarization in Turkey with Kurdish labour. He discusses the term precarization briefly and points out that he disagrees with the ‘new-class-in-the-making’, yet the term still can be used as an umbrella term “which includes strategies and mechanisms of the process of insecurity” (2016: 69, translation mine). Moreover, Alpman relates this idea with Kurdish ethnicity and states: “Especially precarization as a whole has caused an effective exploitation of Kurdish labour to happen” (2016: 69). Then, while talking about the relation between social identity and precarization, he asserts: “with the normalization of informal labour and precarization, employing Kurdish labour gets articulated with the identity as a determining role” (2016: 349). In this sense, Alpman seems on the same page with Lorey’s idea of normalization of precariousness (which will be discussed as a socio ontological concept) in everyday life and Maribel Casa-Cortes’ usage of precarity as an umbrella term.

In the same vein with Alpman, Ferda Koç’s essay seeks identification to Kurdish workers’ labour issues. In his essay, he argues that Kurdish workers are in precarious conditions in terms of “‘unresisting’, ‘vulnerable’ and ‘governable’ nature” (2012:

148, translation mine). That's precisely why, in a condition of precarious movement and/or resistance, "they are principal components of precarization process" (2012: 148). That being said, these ideas by Alpman and Koç can easily be articulated with one of the exemplary films in the next chapter, *Toz Bezi*. While trying to live in better conditions, home workers' ethnic identity also creates another precarious condition. Intertwined with harsh labour conditions, their precarity is doubled just because of their race. Female workers' precarity is not one sided but rather tangled with other social conditions. This idea gets articulated with the term *intersectionality* which is used as one of the key concepts in this study.

Finally, in a recent study on migration and precarity within the context of Turkey, Nazlı Şenses dwells on the relation between both internal/international migration and precariousness. According to her, there is already an on-going precariousness in citizens who migrated from rural to urban areas, yet it is also apparent in irregular immigrants especially from Syria (2017). Low wages, de-qualification, lack of education for children as well as discrimination are among the highlighted issues among Syrian immigrants, according to Şenses (2017: 109). She also explains:

Precarity is not a novel condition in Turkey and it has not been experienced first by irregular migrants...there is a very large informal economy in Turkey that includes not only international migrants but also a large number of unregistered local (non-migrant) workers. (2017: 112 – 114)

What she finds challenging at the end of her study is "to construct a common ground that would include both a local and a migrant informal precariat" (114). In this sense, drawing parallels with other scholars such as Richard Seymour, Maribel Casas-Cortes; she seeks for a movement that can connect precarity in various segments of a society. This idea of shared precariousness is detailed in the next segment from the point of an existential issue.

2.2. Precarious Existence: Precariousness as a Socio-ontological Term

As already hinted several times above, the discussion on precariat, precarity and precarious (ness) goes way beyond mere labour issues. As mentioned before, precarity has got not only a labour dimension but also a socio-ontological approach because as Isabell Lorey says: “It is not only work that is precarious and dispersed, but life itself” (2015: 9). This approach allows thinking on the relation between individuals and their social connections with other beings in a society. To begin with Judith Butler’s ideas in her book *Precarious Life*, precariousness emerges when a human-being is born:

“...we are, from the start, given order to the other, one in which we are, from the start, even prior to individuation itself and, by the virtue of bodily requirements, given order to some set of primary others: this conception means that we are vulnerable to those we are too young to know and to judge and, hence, vulnerable to violence; but also vulnerable to another range of touch, a range of that includes the eradication of our being at the one end, and the physical support for our lives at the other.” (2004: 31)

As Butler asserts, from the very beginning of our lives, human-beings are all vulnerable by nature –due to the basic needs- because they are born into some sets of social web and it is not possible to get rid of this vulnerability completely (2004: 31). This perspective of precarity is not used to equal all human-beings but to highlight different yet existing-for-all vulnerability of life. This segment, in short, looks at several socio-ontological approaches to precarity in order to identify the existential problem of precarity and precariousness.

In her essay entitled “Precarious Life, Grievable Life”, Butler dwells on the idea of precarity as a way of defining ‘living’: “To say that a life is precarious requires not only that a life be apprehended as a life, but also that precariousness be an aspect of what is apprehended in what is living” (2009: 13). What’s more, she suggests that

“...there ought to be a more inclusive and egalitarian way of recognizing precariousness, and that this should take form as concrete social policy regarding such issues as shelter, work, food, medical care, and legal status” (2009: 13).

However, she does not imply that precariousness is reduced to only social way of being, but also exists as a common ground for human-beings. Therefore, she asserts: “...there ought to be recognition of precariousness as a shared condition of human life” (13). In other words, precariousness can be meaningful with the idea that every human being should be provided basic human needs in order minimize the consequences of a ‘precarious life’. On the other hand, since human being is basically born into vulnerability, it might be acknowledged as a common ground of human-beings’ existence.

In addition, Isabell Lorey talks about the precarity from an existential point of view as well. She discusses the possibility of invulnerability as well as precarity’s indefinable slippery ‘nature’. Following the same roots with Butler, Lorey talks about the impossibility of the invulnerable body. She explains this idea as: “Although they need protection, living bodies can never be completely protected, specifically because they are permanently exposed to social and political conditions, under which life remains precarious” (2015: 20), then concludes with a statement that “...nothing guarantees invulnerability” (20). In a way, she also highlights the idea that precariousness is an existential condition that human-beings cannot escape: it can be reduced to minimum yet it is always present.

Moreover, Lorey does not aim to conceptualize the term precariousness itself since it comes alive only when there is an interaction between other beings, surrounding an individual. That’s precisely why; the term itself does not offer a certain solid definition. Lorey asserts: “Precariousness forms no foundation, cannot be generally

defined, and does not exist per se. It remains undefined, specifically because it always exists in relation to others and it thus constantly linked to social and political possibilities of action” (2015: 100). In this sense, by not defining the term in a certain way, Lorey avoids making generalizations about precariousness. The term can only exist with the help of living organisms, whose lives are dependent on one another. It is important to ask whether individuals free themselves out of sort of ‘oppressing’ and vulnerable social dependency.

On the other hand, a risk of inherent to the notion of ‘shared vulnerability/precarity’ is discussed in Alyson Cole’s essay on levels of vulnerability. For instance, Cole argues that “...the project of resignifying vulnerability by emphasising its universality and amplifying its generative capacity...might unwittingly dilute perceptions of inequality and muddle important distinctions among particular vulnerabilities...” (2016: 262). In this sense, what Cole suggests is the idea that we must be careful how we use the term while trying to make it use as a common ground for human-existence. Yet, what Butler suggests against this understanding is “a global obligation imposed upon us to find political and economic forms that minimize precarity and establish economic political equality” (2012: 150), instead of a simple acknowledgement of shared precarity. For the context in the following chapters, this type of suggestion can be read in a way that the representation of precarious women workers do not simply look for recognition but also a type of reduction of their precarity. Hence, while interpreting films, what is important to look for is to identify the shared vulnerability within human-beings –if any-, but also an investigation of how to deal with precariousness.

Another significant point in Isabell Lorey’s ideas is that precarity is used as a governmental tool for controlling individuals in a society. What Lorey stands for is

the idea that precarity imposes a living that normalizes being governable with the help of lack of secured future. Lorey explains this idea as: “Precarious living and working conditions are currently being normalized at a structural level and have thus become a fundamental governmental instrument for governing” (2015: 63). In other words, after post-Fordist era in working places, precarity is being used as a tool to govern individuals. This takes place when individuals feel pressure and insecurity about their future. In order to develop this statement further, she explains:

“Individuals are supposed to actively modulate themselves and arrange their lives on the basis of repeatedly lowered minimum of safeguarding, thus making themselves governable” (2015: 70). This “governmental precarization”, as she names it, “thus means not only destabilization through employment, but also destabilization of the conduct of life and thus of bodies and subjectivation” (13). Moreover, commodification has come to a point that the body itself has become a commodity. Lorey puts it as: “Modern self-relations are based structurally, beyond just an economic appeal, on a relation to one’s own body as means of production” (29). In a way, she goes beyond the precarious labour, employs a socio-ontological approach and points out that precarization is in a process which normalizes being controllable (66). Therefore, she creates a connection between controlling/governing individuals and precarity, which can be considered as a political approach to the term.

In the same vein, Donna McCormack & Suvi Salmenniemi employs Michel Foucault’s ideas on bio politics as a starting point and asks “How do technologies of the self and technologies of domination encourage us to migrate, be flexible, labour endlessly, and how do temporalities of illness, collectivities and everyday life imagine (or temporarily activate) other potentialities?” (2016: 5). Both this article and Lorey’s ideas look for an answer to how precarity affects individuals’ lives. In

other words, both ideas depict what happens when an individual self-govern themselves within a set of rules. Again, this question stands as a political interpretation of precarity since it questions how to govern individuals through labour in modern times.

In *Cruel Optimism*, in addition to Lorey, Lauren Berlant does not necessarily use the term precarity yet she makes statements about what happens when “a fantasy of good life” does not work anymore (2011: 1), which is basically related with precarity. According to Berlant, “The fantasies that are fraying include, particularly, upward mobility, job security, political and social equality, and lively, durable intimacy” (2011: 3). In a sense, Berlant is interested in decaying desires and what happens to them when they start to become dysfunctional in time. Cruel optimism takes place when individuals’ wishes/fantasies stands in front of them as an obstacle (2011: 1). In a way, Berlant depicts the idea that fantasies/desires can be precarious as well. What Berlant draws attention here is an important question that what happens when individuals are not driven by the effect of social mobility, secure occupations, regular paid jobs as well as foreseeable future. Human beings might be precarious not only in terms of labour and living conditions but also in an intellectual sense as well.

All of these ideas by Judith Butler, Isabell Lorey and Lauren Berlant present an understanding that precarity and precariousness comprise not only an economic but also an existential problem from several points of view. To begin with, as a creature dependent on others, human beings may minimize vulnerability yet still, it cannot be avoided fully. Secondly, by its slippery –i.e. indefinable - intertwined nature, precarity only exists in a web of social relations. Finally, the precariousness of thought/fantasy can lead to cruel optimism. What is significant here is the idea that regardless of vulnerability, precarity can possibly be a tool in order to be used as a

‘new’ overarching ontological term. In the following chapters, all of these ideas lead the study to a question that to what extent these ideas are apparent and how they work in exemplary films. While it is usually observed the acknowledgement of this vulnerability in female characters on screen, male characters’ facing off with it seems less possible.

2.3. New Cinema of Precarity

Although representation of workers dates all the way back to silent films –for instance, today The Lumières’ quite famous “Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory” (1895)-, there is a fairly new type of work and labour representation on screen. What’s new for Alice Bardan in the European cinema boundaries is the idea that films on precarity “have shifted their focus to unveil the precarious conditions of white, average, middle class, or even upper class Europeans” (2013: 73). In other words, cinema of precarity has turned its camera to what is traditionally accepted as safe, stable, and certain. When extended, this idea follows a gender-focused path and implies heteronormativity, patriarchy and male domination can also be questioned. This identification fits into the exemplary films within national boundaries in the sense that the precarious women workers films focus on the precarity of female *and* male characters. Moreover, what they offer for a possible interpretation is the idea that though living and working in slightly less precarious conditions, male characters simply do not try to handle with precarity and precariousness. Hence, Bardan’s question summarizes this point as: “One of the most important questions addressed by the cinema of precarity concerns the idea of how to make the theory of precarity relevant to the lives of people affected by it” (2013: 80).

Since Alice Bardan's and Ritu Vij's articles on new cinema of precarity follow the traces of Lauren Berlant's ideas, it would not be wrong to say that Berlant has tried to conceptualize the term. That's why, looking at Berlant's ideas before moving on to Bardan's and Vij's discussion of European and Japan cinema through the lens of precarity respectively gives an understanding of this cinema first. Berlant's idea on cinema of precarity is also the base of this study's interpretation of precarity in exemplary films. First of all, Berlant offers an interpretation of precarious cinema as:

Precarious cinema destabilizes the neat postwar shift from bourgeois private idiom into a national public idiom in that the story it tells about what is exemplary in the privatization of public life and the fragility of all the institutions and spaces for the reproduction of life –intimate, public, private, national, economic, transnational, environmental- emphasizes the present as a transitional zone where normative forms of reciprocity are wearing out, both in the world and aesthetically –barring the reproduction of inherited fantasies of what it means to want to add up to something- that the story of the good life. (2011: 201)

Here, what Berlant suggests is the idea that precarious cinema has got a potential to 'blur' the possibility of having a 'good life fantasy' in the 'present zone'. Precarious cinema shows what 'frays' and possibly at the same time 'flourishes'. Because in addition to this conceptualization and identification, Berlant thinks that the precarious cinema seeks new unities among individuals not with an identical history but with a shared oppression in this 'new' order (202). This cinema is identified most distinguishingly in terms of its potential to search for possibilities among precarious (vulnerable), precarity as well as in the class of precariat. In the following chapters, the female protagonists seek an escape from precarity one way or another. Though being employed in various occupations in the films, they share an insistence on a slightly better life. Hence, what is sought in the particular films either from national or transnational boundaries is sort of a sign of hope for a good life –possibly in an (unforeseeable) future-, "[a record of] the loneliness of collective singularity," and

“... [a search] to break through the isolation and individualization of post-Fordist living and working conditions” (2011: 201; Lorey, 2015: 92).

Ritu Vij's and Alice Bardan's articles follow the same root with Berlant yet they focus on national cinemas of Japan and Europe. To begin with, in her paper, Ritu Vij talks about contemporary precarious living and labour conditions in Japan and its representations in contemporary Japan cinema. By specifically focusing on one documentary and one fiction both by male directors, *Japan: A Story of Love and Hate* (Sean McAllister, 2008) and *Tokto Sonata* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2008), Vij tries to find an answer to relation between cinematic representation and masculinity in these films (2013: 123). As a conclusion, she offers a reading of two films and she argues that “the film contributes not only to unmaking hegemonic masculinity but to the subversion of hierarchized gender identities that constitute thereby a feminist opening” (134). In other words, by depicting their male characters' precariousness, both films subvert, challenge and/or at least questions heteronormativity, patriarchy as well as masculinity.

Alice Bardan, on the other hand, follows the same path with Vij with a slightly different usage of the precarious cinema. Instead of employing a gender perspective, she offers a nationalistic interpretation of the term in the European cinema context. Precarity films, according to Bardan, “...may facilitate new modes of identification and even fantasies of salvation from economic impasse or catastrophe” (2013: 71). In other words, she is on the same page with Berlant's idea of ‘precarious cinema’ in the sense that the films could offer a way out for people affected by precarity. In the essay, Bardan gives several examples from contemporary European cinema that represent “the precarious generation”, “precarity and activist work” and “insecurities related to loss of social status” (2013: 76-85). In these three categories, she comes

with several outcomes in the sense that these films do not insist on a “...national identity and generally avoid presenting immigrants as struggling outsiders to the sacred national space. Although mostly pessimistic, they can also end on an optimistic note...” (86). Therefore, Bardan offers a reading of the films from a nationalistic approach.

2.4. Other Key Concepts: *Nihilism*, *Intersectionality* and *Interzone*

Previous segments have all focused on precarity’s relation with labour and life in general. Yet, as mentioned before, precarity goes hand in hand with other social notions such as race, migration, and solidarity. What’s more, in the condition of precarity, the male characters in the following chapters experience some type of a negative nihilism. That’s why, three terms *nihilism*, *intersectionality*, and *interzone* are introduced in this segment briefly for clarification in the following chapters.

To begin with, in his book, Bülent Diken identifies nihilism in origin as “an inability to accept pain, conflict, and antagonism” (2009: 2). Then, he introduces four types of nihilism that are escapism, radical, passive and perfect nihilism. Briefly, the first one escapism gets articulated with nihilism in the sense that at first, it is a denial of this material world (as in three monotheistic religions which offer rewards afterlife for their believers) in order to find another existence without suffering and struggles (2009: 2 -3). Passive nihilism, that is derived from this religious escapism refers to “a world without values” (23). Passive nihilism emerges from the feeling that nothing can be done for a better future, that’s why there is no point in trying. The result of this type of nihilism is disorientation, as Diken points out (29). Radical nihilism is, rather, “a situation of having values without a world” (29), meaning that an individual’s ‘high’ values do not match with world’s traditionally accepted values.

What follows this is despair, which “emerges as an insight that the ideal world cannot be realised within this world” (Heidegger quoted in Diken, 2009: 29). Finally, Diken identifies perfect nihilism as “a nihilism that, paradoxically turns back against itself, destroys and overcomes itself, to create immanent values, a new way of life” (2009: 6). In other words, accepting the impossibility of a ‘perfect’ world yet still trying to fight for a new existence highlights the importance of “perfect nihilism”, which can also be considered as “anti-nihilism”. During the discussion of nihilism on screen, it is seen that the female protagonists in the specified films are closer to “perfect nihilism” in the sense that they struggle for a new way of existence, in which consists of a denial of on-going way of life (that’s precisely why, their fantasies of leaving is almost always alive). On the other hand, when it comes to the male characters in the same films, they generally take a negative way of nihilism in the sense that they are simply indifferent to their precarity. In short, this concept will be used in order to understand different approaches to precarity in the following chapters.

The second term that is related with precarity within the context of the exemplary films is *intersectionality*, which is first introduced by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989. The term is most clearly defined in Oxford dictionary as: “The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage” (“Intersectionality”, n.d.). In other words, in order to understand a culture of minority better, the term offers a way that connects different types of discriminations (they can be various: from homophobia, transphobia to xenophobia, misogyny, and so on). When thought together with precarity and the exemplary films, it is yet another term to be used in the study for a better understanding of

complexity of the term itself. The films do not only depict one type of disadvantage or discrimination. The female protagonists' struggles in their workplaces get articulated with other issues such as gender discrimination, racism, domestic violence, and so on. In short, the term *intersectionality* shows the possibility of connecting these different types of discriminations and/or disadvantages within the context of precarity.

In addition, in his study, Randall Halle proposes a term in order to look at 'border-crossing' (both literal and metaphorical sense) films' depiction of spaces called *interzones*. The term simply refers to "geographical and cultural space that develops through border-crossing" (2014: 23). Moreover, according to Halle, "The interzone is not a perfect union; it is really not a union at all. It is a tentative communication that can double space and shift time, bind distant places, and give separated individuals a sense of possible community" (2014: 13). In this sense, Halle's conceptualization of trans-nationality, borders and boundary-crossing with the term *interzone* fits this study's aim to create a sense of community among precarious women workers in the fourth chapter. Yet because this community is based on depictions seen in Western cinemas, it is quite difficult to argue that this chapter connects all types of precarity. Instead, by looking at shared precariousness/representations, it is attempted to portray an *interzone*, which reaches beyond boundaries and seeks for a possible communication.

Overall, this chapter has taken a glimpse at the on-going debates on precarity, precarious (ness), the class of precariat, and precarization. First of all, proletariat and precariat in the broadest sense is vulnerability, insecurity as well as an unforeseeable future in both living and labour conditions. However, Guy Standing's idea of the class-in-the-making does not seem well received by other scholars working on this

topic mostly because of the imbalance on level of precariousness among occupations. Still, the term can work as an umbrella concept in order to bring singularities close together. Then, following Judith Butler's, Isabell Lorey's and Lauren Berlant's ideas mainly, the next segment has portrayed precariousness and precarization as socio-ontological terms. Their ideas underline a main point of human-beings' need to accept different types of vulnerabilities and to acknowledge them. Finally, starting with Berlant's ideas on "precarious cinema", the characteristic of this type of representation has been identified. 'Precarious cinema' connects all the particular representations of 'lost generations', 'social insecurities and job loss' as well as 'activism'. In light of these discussions, following chapters discuss the ideas related with precarity, precarious (ness) –and sometimes vulnerability- as well as their representation on screen.

Thus, next chapter starts with a discussion of the escape's (im) possibility in these difficult and challenging conditions, then moves on to the themes related with it. Then, it moves on to providing a gender perspective to the precariat class, the family's role in the escape, discussing the possibility of an escape with marriage, finishing with a comparison of female and male reactions to precarious lives. With the help of this comparison, it is argued that while the female protagonists struggle with their precariousness, the male characters take a more resigned or pessimistic approach, which is close to negative nihilism.

CHAPTER III: HOME-SEEKING IN THE CONTEMPORARY PRECARIOUS WOMEN WORKERS FILMS PRODUCED IN TURKEY

3.1. Narrative Structure of the Films: An Impasse

In this chapter, the films to be looked at particularly are Söylemez's *Şimdiki Zaman* (*Present Tense*, 2012), Ustaoglu's *Araf* (*Somewhere in Between*, 2012), Esmer's *Gözetleme Kulesi* (*Watchtower*, 2012), Akçay's *Köksüz* (*Nobody's Home*, 2013), Balci's *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* (*Until I Lose My Breath*, 2015) and Öztürk's *Toz Bezi* (*Dust Cloth*, 2015). The main question here is that how precariousness as well as dream of escape is represented.

In order to try to create a pattern among the filmography, it is proposed to look at the exemplary films' narrative structures. Even though films are not reduced to mere plot, the particular theme of fantasy of leaving goes around almost always narrative structure. Tzvetan Todorov's structure analysis may lead the way in order to create a structural pattern among the films. Todorov identifies three main terms for classical narratives in his essay "Structural Analysis of Narrative" (1969): "Equilibrium", which refers to a character's stable position in a narrative, is the beginning of a story. "Disequilibrium" is what breaks the balance, which leads the character's beginning of a journey in the narratives. Finally, with "new equilibrium", the character solves

the problem and rebalances the “disequilibrium”. Apart from these three main tools, “acknowledgement” (of disequilibrium) and “solving” are sometimes added to the narrative analysis. This segment particularly focuses on “disequilibrium” as well as (im) possibility of creating a “new equilibrium” instead of focusing on all three parts of Todorov’s idea of narrative structure due to several reasons. In precarious women workers films, their narrative structure does not necessarily provide a clear pattern. In this sense, by looking at their “disequilibrium” as well as their open-ending, it is argued that the films do not depict an ‘actual’ escape. Instead, it shows the struggle/desire for it.

First of all, in all of the abovementioned films, their storylines do not provide an ‘actual’ –i.e. liberating in the broadest sense- escape from home. Mina in *Şimdiki Zaman* fails to go to the USA and is stuck at the home which will be demolished shortly. With an open-end, the audience does not get to know her story after the failure: She is left with all of her on-going troubles. *Gözetleme Kulesi*, on the other hand, partially shows the escape from the home. Yet, its heroine Seher does not have anywhere to go, until a worker on a watchtower Nihat (Olgun Şimşek) gives shelter to her. *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* also portrays an unfulfilled ending. Serap’s escape gets tangled in the end where she takes all the money she has saved with her and gets out of her working place. However, her desire for a home/family is not fulfilled. It seems like a new start for the heroine yet the audience does not get to witness it again. Finally, *Toz Bezi* does not give a single hint about what happens to Nesrin after her escape. In this sense, these four films share the common ground that the heroines do not generally fulfil their desire to escape.

Secondly, two of the films end their narratives with marriage. In *Araf*, the heroine Zehra’s “disequilibrium” begins when she falls in love with a trucker Mahur (Özcan

Deniz) and starts dreaming about leaving the village. Although her fantasy of leaving is apparent from the beginning (due to her being unhappy in the village, her desire to travel the world and so on), her desire peaks when she falls in love with Mahur. However, Mahur leaves the village without her. Zehra goes back to her previous lover and gets married with him inside of a prison –since he is in prison. Similarly, *Köksüz* chooses to end the film with a marriage scene. Feride marries Gülağa (Sekvan Serinkaya) unwillingly (in a particular scene where she brushes her teeth in tears after kissing him highlights this strongly). Also, instead of a mood of celebration, the marriage scene ends with a shot between Feride and her mother, looking at each other in a way that they are both unhappy with the marriage. The scene creates an uncanny in the sense that the marriage is not represented as a mood of celebration but a mood of uncertainty of future. It is argued in the marriage segment below that neither marriage necessarily liberates the protagonists. Overall, what is seen in these films is basically the idea/fantasy of escape, therefore a situation that there is no-way out. This idea follows with a question of possibility of escape, leading an argument that the escape is almost impossible.

Another approach to the films' narrations can be their open endings. The exemplary films do not have an orthodox three-act structure mainly because of their endings. Unlike a classical three act structure narrative, the films mostly lack the resolution part. This idea gets questions the films' open endings as well as its possible significance. Richard Neupert's *The End: Narration and Closure in the Cinema* can lead a way of discussion to open-endings in cinema. Neupert focuses on several types of open-endings. In terms of applicability, his term "the open story film" draws parallels with the exemplary films of this chapter. He defines the term as: "Open Story films involve a narrative discourse that is just as finished as in Closed Text

films, but their stories are left partially unresolved and thus significantly incomplete” (1995: 73). In addition, Neupert concludes his work with the idea that endings may lead a way to identify ideological issues (Brylla, 2004).

In addition, Eran Preis claims that “... an open ending doesn’t confirm or reassure existing ideology; it questions ideology and demystifies it” (1990: 18). Moreover, Preis adds: “The open ending suggests dissatisfaction with an existing ideology and the seeming lack of alternatives” (20). In other words, open endings has got a potential to expose an ideology’s decayed sides. Since the endings refer to a lack of possibilities, they work as exposures of this dead-end. Open endings can be read from a perspective that they expose decaying ideologies and at least question them. When it comes to the open endings in the precarious women workers films, they offer a reading of the films that they all show a possible dissatisfaction as well as lack of alternatives. Marriages, running away or simply ‘disappearing’ –from the narrative- are not presented as ultimate solutions in the films but rather they are used as exposures and slightly better life conditions to their audience.

Moreover, Lauren Berlant offers the concept of “situation tragedy”, which is related with the open endings. Berlant defines “situation tragedy” as: “...the subject’s world is fragile beyond repair, one gesture away from losing all access to sustaining its fantasies: the situation threatens utter, abject unrevealing” (2011: 66). In other words, the situation tragedy refers to a scenario that is as fragile as house of cards: One single ‘blow’ may ruin what’s already not in pristine condition. In the exemplary films, again, one of the possible reasons of their open endings is an idea that the films are so close to worse situations than before that they are left open. In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that exemplary films follow this path in the sense that their open ending could equally be a start of something ‘disastrous’ or ‘hopeful’.

Several examples from the exemplary films highlight open endings' ideologies. For instance, Mina in *Şimdiki Zaman*, due to financial difficulties as well as lack of a 'decent' occupation –i.e. with insurance and regular payment-, fails to go to the USA. Instead, the film ends with a scene where she reads her coffee cup and the scene is cut to several coffee cups sinking under water. The open ending suggests that Mina can be stuck in her house yet any possible fate might happen any time. It emphasizes an ambiguity between good and ill fate. Feride Çiçekoğlu interprets this scene as: “Is the final scene a depiction of dreams', fantasies' and expectations' drowning in water, or is the water an interpretation of mother's womb that can be a place to hide from all the troubles of the city?” (2015: 116, translation mine). In addition, as Jay Weissberg points out in a review that “...Söylemez is especially good at depicting the uncertainty and dissatisfaction of thwarted lives... Clearly, [Mina is] pushing away anything that leads to a concrete future, frozen by her inability to take control of her destiny...” (2012: 17). In other words, along with depicting dissatisfaction, the director also draws a protagonist that is stuck and simply cannot move on. The ambiguous ending paves a way to the idea that leaving –especially abroad- seems like a utopia for Mina rather than something achievable.

In *Toz Bezi*, in addition, there is not a significant emphasis on a dream of escape. On the contrary, Nesrin does not want to leave her house, she just wants her husband to come back. She patiently waits for her husband for a while, she tries to overcome difficulties she has got (lack of money, taking care of her daughter all by herself, her precarious occupation as home worker), yet at one point, she complains about her husband's absence as: “If you were to leave me, why did you bring me this hell in the first place?” This sentence hints at Nesrin's state of mind in the sense that she starts thinking about escape like her husband. Then, with her disappearance from the

narrative, it is not known what happens to her afterwards. Her story is left open and this can be interpreted in several ways; either she is now liberated from all the struggles she has to overcome or her escape marks the beginning of more struggles. Since the writer-director Ahu Öztürk does not give any clues about it, both possibilities are equally applicable. In this sense, the escape is presented as something ‘abstract’, i.e. something out of the screen and the audience does not get to witness.

Moreover, as mentioned before, the marriages in particular films (*Köksüz* and *Araf*) can also be read from the perspective of ending the film without ‘more disastrous situations’. Their ending, as well as all the other endings, suggest an impasse. The marriage segment will discuss this idea in detail below. These ‘situation tragedies’ that are almost fragile beyond repair, in this sense, are intertwined with the ideas on precarious labour, impasse of running away, marriages, and family/friend bonds. In short, Lauren Berlant’s identification of ‘situation tragedy’ is one of the ways of interpretation along with her definition of ‘precarious cinema’ in the sense that both terms hint at an impasse, a vulnerable situation as well as a possible exposition.

3.2. The Class of Precariat and Precarious Labour

It has already been stated in the first chapter that the precarious women workers films can be labelled as social-realist productions. In this sense, all of the exemplary precarious women workers films touch upon a social issue one way or another (including incest, domestic violence, racism, harsh working conditions and so on), mostly from a heroine’s perspective. They employ various themes along with labour issues, which particularly create an intersection. When the films and their heroines are look at from the perspective of the precariat, they branch out into a new direction.

This segment traces the term precariat along with the films and their gender perspective.

To begin with, ideas discussed in chapter two on the term precariat and precariousness may lead the way. For instance, Isabell Lorey makes an emphasis on the idea that the body itself has become a commodity. She highlights the relation between body and labour-power; the body is to be sold to labour just like ‘property’ (2015: 27). Individuals have to put their ‘best’ and ‘everything’ on the market in order to survive yet still “[w]age labour brought neither security nor independence” (Lorey, 2015: 5). This idea connects the relation between commodity, body and labour. Moreover, she continues to develop this idea by saying:

In this respect as well, the modern ‘free’ individual is forced to participate in reproducing him or herself through powerful self-relations, making a good sale of their labour-power in order to be able to live, and live increasingly better, in order to reduce precariousness. (2015: 28)

In other words, Lorey makes a triangle between individual, their labour power and commodity: In order to live in slightly less precariousness, workers need to know how to sell their labour. This type of working does not make an individual ‘free’, according to Lorey. Lorey’s statement seems applicable to the precarious women worker films. In nearly all of the films, it is seen that the heroines look for a ‘better’ future one way or another. Their conflict is always made between staying and leaving. Moreover, their bodies –their labour power along with her bodies- are precarious in the sense that in order to live, the heroines do not get to choose among labour options. In nearly all of the exemplary films, the female protagonists do obligatory occupations due to additional precarious social conditions such as having a different ethnic identity (*Toz Bezi*), being a graduate without a job (*Şimdiki Zaman*), a victim of incest (*Gözetleme Kulesi*), and having been raised in orphanage

(*Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*). Their struggle gets articulated with different types of oppressions and/or discriminations. This idea is related with intersectionality because there are multiple layers of precarity. Their precariousness, therefore, does not only consist of the selling of labour power. This leads to an idea that the female protagonists' precariousness does not only emerge from working conditions but also their social conditions: Their precarity is usually doubled with 'another tragedy' in the narrative.

In addition to previous point, Guy Standing talks about another characteristic of precarious labour which is "the lack of community support in times of need, lack of assured enterprise or state benefits, and lack of private benefits to supplement money earnings" (2011: 11). What Standing underlines here is similar to Isabell Lorey's understanding of individualization: Through it, workers are left alone in order to create more 'governable' individuals. In the exemplary films, a support from other female workers (as seen in films such as *Şimdiki Zaman*, *Araf*, *Toz Bezi*; signifying a female bonding) is highlighted. Yet at the same time, lack of support is also observed in films such as *Köksüz* as well as *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*. A possible way for the protagonists in order to decrease their precariousness a little bit is to look for an institution, may it be family or marriage. *Gözetleme Kulesi* differs from all of the films in the sense that the support comes from a male character. The film underlines the idea of solidarity regardless of gender. Yet again, this whole idea of support gets articulated with the dissatisfaction of the traditional ways of mitigating precarity such as marriage.

Since all of the protagonists are female in the exemplary films, the gender dimension to the term precariat seems inevitable. Terms fantasising about running away, precariousness and liberation are all intertwined with each other. In these films,

whether the heroines are liberated with the help of working comes into question. At first glance, working in a public sphere can seem liberating for women workers.

However, as Standing argues:

Since the public sphere was seen as liberating, it followed that putting more women into jobs, any jobs, would be liberating. So the female labour force participation rate became a measure of liberation. That is fine for middle-class, highly educated women who can anticipate salaried career-oriented employment. But for most women, labouring repetitively on an assembly line, or sewing feverishly in an ill-lit backstreet garment factory, or sitting at a check-out counter for long shifts, jobs are scarcely liberating. (2011: 61)

As he clearly states, women's liberation does not equal their labour power solely.

What's more, their working conditions and hours may lead them to an existence of 'slavery' instead of liberty. In nearly all of the films, the female protagonists are depicted at their working places. In *Şimdiki Zaman*, it is a café in Beyoğlu. In *Araf*, Zehra's workplace is the truck stop, in the middle of nowhere. Similarly, Seher's working places are a bus as well as its rural bus station in *Gözetleme Kulesi*. An office (*Köksüz*), houses (*Toz Bezi*), and a textile mill (*Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*) are also used as settings to portray the workplaces. What these workplaces share in common is that they do not allow a career in the sense that they lack the potential for advancement. They are all a part of precarious labour conditions. What's more, they do not provide a steady income to the characters: They are usually paid according to the work they do, which can vary according to Standing (2011). While economic liberation may seem important to the heroines, the workplaces not only fail to provide it but also create a claustrophobic atmosphere for the audience –especially in *Araf*, *Köksüz* and *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*- in the sense that their working places are almost always monitored by bosses who are also dependent to another higher authority.

Another point that is relatable to precarious working conditions is the idea of alienation, especially from other workers. This idea leads an individualization process where the worker is left alone –or, s/he feels so, echoing Isabell Lorey’s ideas on governable individual. Though alienation in working place is not something brand new (as its conceptualization dates back to Karl Marx), Ewa Mazierska points out that “...under neoliberalism, [alienation] is deeper and pervading” (2013: 11). In this sense, against this, a sense of unity can be significant in order to mark a path to reduce precariousness. This idea is echoed in Lauren Berlant’s work as:

One does not *necessarily* require families or nations to secure this feeling; any reciprocal form will do – friendship, collegiality, a project, the state, a union, whatever has the capacity to deliver an affective, transpersonal sense of unconflictedness, belonging, and worth. (2011: 171)

As it will be seen below, in some of the films, friendship is highlighted heavily.

Moreover, solidarity among women is presented as a sign of hope against increasing precarity.

3.3. Decline of Biological Family Bonds, Increase of Friendship/Companionship

In all of the abovementioned films, biological family causes some problems one way or another. In some of them –such as *Köksüz*, *Gözetleme Kulesi* and *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar-*, a specific source of oppression is the nuclear family. In the other examples (*Araf*, *Toz Bezi* and *Şimdiki Zaman*), the family also plays a role in the protagonists’ escape. In this representation of the family, it is seen that the family no longer automatically considered as something sacred. As Cüneyt Çakırlar and Özlem Güçlü state in their essay entitled “Gender, Family and Home(Land) in Contemporary Turkish Cinema”, the recurrent themes of “homelessness, home-seeking, and/or homecomings” suggest that “...home is not the haven that it used to be in the earlier Turkish cinema, but a dwelling of trauma, violence and horror”

(2012: 167). Although they apply this statement to different examples than those considered here, the idea can be traced in precarious women workers films as well in the sense that they also dwell on those particular themes and depict a certain change in representing family and home.

Lauren Berlant also defines family as an institution rusting in time: “The tattered family, the lone institution of reciprocity remaining here for fantasy to attach itself to” (2011: 168). What Berlant points out is the idea that family now is seen as an antique, shattered institution that lacks the polished good life fantasies that were once attached to it. But the family also calls out for a kind of restoration or reimagining. It is argued here that in the films, there is a representation of ‘the tattered family’ because the institution does not play an important role as an escape option in films or offer a solution for on-going struggles.

Not only the core family (as in *Köksüz* and *Gözetleme Kulesi*) but also distant family (as in *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*) can be a significant reason for escape. To begin with, in *Köksüz*, there is a constant dominance of the mother on her working daughter Feride: The Mother keeps calling her while she is at work, she has to work at home as well doing chores and she does nothing but to obey her mother. In a fatherless house, the mother acts like an authority figure in a way. However, since the mother is not economically independent, she relies on Feride and her income. The mother tries to act like an authority figure of the house yet her dependency to Feride prevents it. In addition, in *Gözetleme Kulesi*, mother and father figures are depicted as types instead of characters: after learning about their daughter’s unwanted pregnancy and her escape, they disappear from the narration. The authority figure at home, The Father (Rıza Akın) simply shows no reaction to the escape.

A common ground of *Gözetleme Kulesi* and *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar* is that the same actor plays The Father character without a particular character name in both films.

The former depicts the same actor as an authority figure that triggers the escape, while the second does the opposite; Serap's only dream is to have a home of her own in order to share with her father. However, what triggers Serap's escape are her older sister as well as another male figure, who is her brother-in-law. He asks for Serap's weekly wage, he does not let her feel comfortable and verbally abuses her by saying: "You eat and sleep here but you're of no use". Serap sometimes spend her nights at her friend's home as well as her work place yet she is aware that she has nowhere to go –somewhere she could call 'home' -, as her friend/colleague emphasizes. That's why her dream is to rent a house with her father to reduce her precarity. Not only the nuclear family, but also the distant one can have a role in the motivation for escape.

The families' indirect effect on the protagonists' escape can be seen in the second group. To begin with, in *Araf*, the father and mother figure are part of 'typical'/traditional representation: The mother stays at home, doing chores and taking care of her daughter, while the father works outside of the home. However, the parents are not the main reason for Zehra's escape. As mentioned above, it is more related with her falling in love with a stranger. Moreover, in *Şimdiki Zaman*, Mina does not seem to have a mother/father figure yet she has got an older sister who does not help her at all. Her escape, in a way, is related with her ended marriage as well as a new beginning instead of a family issue. Finally, in *Toz Bezi*, Nesrin already lives apart from her parents. Her reason for escape is mainly related with her unbearable struggles with financial issues as well as her husband's disappearance. Her family, from that point, consists of Nesrin and her daughter. However, Nesrin

abandons it and leaves it behind. In this sense, the nuclear family stays in the background in these films.

Another significant point here is that instead of biological family bonds, there are friends/companions. This idea of solidarity is emphasized in *Toz Bezi* mostly.

Sharing similar fates in terms of occupation, neighbourhood, race and so on, Nesrin and Hatun are depicted as two characters that take care of one another: they try to come up with solutions to their economic problems. Similarly, in *Araf*, Derya (Nihal Yalçın) is Zehra's co-worker. Whenever Zehra feels depressed at work place and/or at home, she goes to her house. *Şimdiki Zaman* has got a similar character as well.

Fazi (Şenay Aydın) employs Mina and in time, they try to overcome struggles together. Both share their 'good life fantasies' with each other; here, we witness Fazi's dream of owning her café in Istanbul. For this dream, she keeps on working. Towards the end, moreover, Fazi tells Mina that "You've chosen the best option. Leave this city. Save yourself". This sentence clearly underlines her support to Mina.

Not only female bonding but also male one is the case, especially in *Gözetleme Kulesi*. After giving birth to her baby, Zehra leaves it behind and escapes. Nihat, a worker at a watchtower inside woods, takes care of both Zehra and her baby.

However, both in *Köksüz* and *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*, we do not get to see such bonding. That's probably why, Feride chooses to marry a man she does not love and Serap tries to mend her father's fences. Therefore, the idea here is that non-familial bonds are emphasized more than biological ones in most of the films. In short, a question here worth mentioning: Can the emphasis on companionship be read from a perspective that 'the family institution' can now be 'done' with friends rather than biological bonds?

3.4. Marriage as a Possible Way Out

Marriage as a happy end is a traditional that audiences are accustomed to see on screen. What's more in cinema of Turkey, it is usually offered to women in order to 'reduce' their precariousness both in social and economic sense. For instance, in *Mustang*, two out of five sisters get married at a fairly early age in order to escape an oppressing home. However, before the third marriage, the sister who is about to get married decides to run away with the help of youngest sister. This sort of highlights the idea that marriage might not always be seen as an acceptable escape option to reduce precariousness, so running away has at least got a possibility. In addition, recently produced films by female filmmakers such as *Tereddüt (Clair Obscur, Yeşim Ustaoglu, 2016)* and *Ana Yurdu (Motherland, Senem Tüzen, 2015)* focus on what happens after a failed marriage from a female perspective. It is also added that *Toz Bezi* and *Şimdiki Zaman* are films that show the aftermath of failed marriages. Since these films do not necessarily portray an optimistic point of view, the marriage might not be an ultimate solution for a better life. This segment, therefore, merely focuses on a discussion of *Araf* and *Köksüz*'s marriage scenes at the end.

In *Araf* and *Köksüz*, their wish to escape seems dependent on marriage at the very end. When Zehra's dreams do not come true, she goes back where she starts. In Feride's case, moreover, she makes a decision between continuing to live with her abusive mother and an unwanted marriage. Although she sees the marriage as a last resort for escape, she does not seem sure about it. In short, escaping seems like a fantasy instead of reality in these cases. In both films, the marriage is offered to the heroines as an escape option. However, since the both films end with the marriage scenes, the audience does not get to know whether it is an 'actual solution' or not. Their open endings suggest that the films do not confirm the on-going traditional

institution of marriage. By adding some nuances, they are sort of in the direction of criticising this institution. The idea here is that by ending their narratives with an open end along with a marriage (and not showing what happens afterwards at all), both films hint at their reluctance of validating marriage institution as well as lack of an alternative. Moreover, both films can be related with the term ‘situation tragedy’ in the sense that the heroines’ worlds are now irremediable: The marriages mark a new start of more vulnerable events. In this sense, the situation tragedy may suit their ending.

To begin with, *Araf*’s heroine, Zehra could easily be categorised under a typical representation of ‘fallen women’ if the narrative followed a classical structure. Because the narrative is developed in classic three act structure at the beginning: Although Zehra is in a relationship with her co-worker –Olgun- from the truck stop (“equilibrium”), she falls in love with the trucker Mahur (“disequilibrium”). She cheats on Olgun, she carries Mahur’s baby yet Mahur is nowhere to be found. After an abortion in a toilet in a hospital, she confesses everything to Olgun. Due to his devastation and anger, Olgun commits several crimes and is taken into prison immediately after. The marriage scene has got an important role here: Olgun writes a letter to a famous reality TV show in which couples get married. In front of cameras, Zehra and Olgun get married inside of the prison. From a point of view, Zehra is literally “tamed”: She is inside the marriage institution after all the dreams of escaping yet now she is trapped. This can be a traditional way of reading the ending. Moreover, if we follow Eylem Atakav’s ideas –which are articulated with Simone de Beauvoir’s - in *Women and Turkish Cinema*, it can be said that marriage seems like an ‘appealing’ solution offered to ‘fallen women’:

This conditioning of women to recognize marriage as *the* solution to all their problems [in Yeşilçam films] is echoed in de Beauvoir's words: 'marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. It is still true that most women are married, or have been, or plan to be, or suffer from not being'. (2013: 90)

On the other hand, two points in this scene depart from this ideology. First of all, the marriage is turned into spectacle with all television cameras around: The scene in a way works like a theatre play. In this sense, the director literally sets the scene as an artificial one. This idea is pointed out by Eren Yüksel as "[The marriage] offers awareness as well as a critical point of view on women's dead end inside of a patriarchal power structure" (2015: 145) and then she says "turning the marriage into a TV spectacle, the film creates alienation" (145). This alienation can be interpreted in two ways: First, it refers to uncommon setting for a marriage (a prison) which is far from being typical wedding atmosphere. Second, it can also refer to the character's alienation since for them; the marriage is not similar to the ones presented on mainstream media. It is not based on romantic love relationship but a marriage that is almost forced to Zehra. When Eran Preis' essay on ideology of open endings is revisited, it emphasizes the idea that the narratives can be against of an ideology by simply revealing an apparatus of it. Preis states: "Art reveals the true nature of ideology not by purely criticizing or mocking it, but by experiencing it. This combination, I would like to suggest, motivates the writer to conclude the screenplay with an open ending" (1990: 19). In other words, showing a marriage scene does not necessarily affirm the institution, but rather it at least questions the institution. As seen in *Araf*, the film only shows the 'experience' of marriage and questions whether it can be seen as an escape option –more broadly, a solution.

Similarly, in *Köksüz*, Feride's solution does not seem to be found in marriage. What differentiates this marriage scene from others is its gloomy atmosphere. During the

wedding on street, the mother does not seem happy at all. For instance, one review emphasizes “Nurcan’s frozen face, a mask of fear, frustration, anger and even spite, watching her daughter being married and abandoning her” (Fainaru, 2013). In other words, the scene does not allow its audience to think that Feride is now liberated from all of her struggles. On the contrary, its open ending suggests that this might indicate a beginning of new problems related to her mother. Another review argues that the film insists on traditional gender roles and criticizes “Feride deciding she needs to marry a nice but not exactly stunning older colleague ... in order to stabilize the mess that her life's become since her father's death” (van Hoeij, 2013). This idea might seem acceptable to a certain extent. However, since the writer-director Akçay does not give a single hint about a possible happy end coming with marriage, the film questions the institution instead of maintaining the idea that marriage is *the* solution for the happy end. The ending, therefore, does not celebrate and/or accept marriage institution. Hence, similar to *Araf, Köksüz* also questions whether the marriage can be seen as the ultimate solution.

3.5. A Gender-based Comparison of Dealing with Precarious Lives and Labour

Before moving on to a discussion of depiction of male characters’ nihilism, Eren Yüksel’s essay on a reading of masculinity in almost exact same films should be visited. Apart from *Araf, Gözetleme Kulesi, Şimdiki Zaman*, and *Köksüz*; Yüksel also gives two examples from two women filmmakers whose films are *Geriye Kalan* (Çiğdem Vitrinel, 2012) and *Atlı Karınca* (İlksen Başarır, 2012). She argues that these women filmmakers show diverse male characters that challenge the hegemonic patriarchy (2015: 135). What will be done in this segment is to add what Yüksel has already argued and say that the women filmmakers also create a common ground for this representation, which is read from the perspective of nihilism.

Hitherto, it has been focused on female protagonists' struggling with precarious labour and life conditions. It has already been argued that the protagonists try to find solutions for slightly better living conditions. On the other hand, male characters in the exemplary films do not seem to 'fight' their precarity at all. The question here would be that what the male characters do in order to minimize their precariousness (if they do anything). In order to answer this question, a gender-based comparison might be needed. In this sense, following Bülent Diken's ideas on nihilism and Todd May's ideas on vulnerability, this segment tries to make a comparison between female and male characters' dealing with precarious living and labour conditions. It is argued that while female protagonists try to find their way for a better life, the male characters mostly struggle with negative nihilism.

Abovementioned types of nihilisms which Bülent Diken clarifies are needed at this point. As "passive" and "radical" nihilism are more related with negativity (in the sense that nothing good can emerge in this world), anti-nihilism (which is also called "perfect nihilism") tries to find a way out after acknowledging the bad in the world. When nihilism is related with vulnerability, Todd May's book entitled *A Fragile Life: Accepting Our Vulnerability* is related to the other discussion done on precarity and vulnerability. May (2017) argues that there is no point in trying to achieve 'invulnerability'. According to him, the best is to acknowledge life's vulnerability and shape life accordingly. This idea relates to "perfect nihilism" as "[it] demands accepting the existing world as a fate, a 'fatalism', which synthesizes Spinoza's amor fati (love of fate) with creative re-evaluation of all values" (Diken, 2009: 32).

Accepting vulnerability and anti-nihilism run parallel in terms of accepting fate yet still re/devaluing existing values in order to a way out. Thus, while talking about

nihilistic approaches in the films, one may read the interpretations equally from the perspective of ‘nihilism’ or ‘vulnerability’.

In the films studied here, male characters are usually depicted as ‘passive nihilists’ whereas the female protagonists are closer to ‘radical’ and ‘perfect’ nihilism. In *Şimdiki Zaman*, Mina’s employer Tayfun (Ozan Bilen) is portrayed as a character without any future plans and dreams. Managing his father’s café, Tayfun does not do anything but simply ‘exist’. Besides, although he is not happy with his situation, he does not even try to find a way out, unlike Mina. For Mina, “leaving is difficult, there are lots of obstacles yet she still does not give up her hope” (Çiçekoğlu, 2015: 115). Hence, compared to Mina’s ambition to earn money in order to live abroad, Tayfun’s seems like living in a world without any values, thus leading us to an understanding of the passive nihilism. On the other hand, Mina’s values and ambitions (trying to start a new life, escaping from all sufferings, and so on) do not come to pass yet her continuous struggle positions her somewhere between ‘radical’ and ‘perfect’ nihilism; she might be in ‘despair’ yet she still tries to create a new way of existence.

In *Araf*, director-writer Ustaoglu creates a similar situation. Unlike Zehra, Mahur - the trucker- does not live in a world with values: He leaves without a trace, he does not keep his promises to Zehra, he is not aware of her struggles because of him. Zehra simply cannot reach him after he disappears. Moreover, similar to Tayfun, he does not seem like having a future plan/dream. He sort of ‘accepts his fate’ as a trucker –living in a truck, being on the road all the time, and so on-; he does not do anything apart from ‘driving’. Zehra, willing to escape with him, does not fulfil her wish. In despair, this forces her to marry another man. In this sense, Mahur’s passivity draws parallels with ‘passive’ nihilism whereas Zehra’s wishes change

from perfect nihilism (a new life with the escape, new values) to radical one (despair, accepting her fate, back to the start). Thus, in this situation as well, *Araf* follows a similar pattern with *Şimdiki Zaman* in terms of employing similar types of nihilisms in the female protagonists (anti-nihilism) and the male characters (mainly passive).

In *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*, a similar pattern is followed from a father-daughter perspective. Similar to Mahur, Serap's father is a trucker and does not stay with Serap for a long time when he is in town. He keeps making excuses about why he ought to keep working instead of settling down. Although Serap's only wish throughout the film is to rent a house with her father, he clearly is not willing to do so. In a sense, with an escapist attitude, The Father's world is similar to Mahur's: One escapes from his love affair while the former escapes from his responsibilities as a father. Their fantasy of a home, in this sense, seems 'tattered'. Hence sharing similarities with 'passive nihilism', Serap's will to build a home seems more like an anti-nihilistic approach in the sense that she struggles with her problems while maintaining her fantasies of the 'good life'. Drawing parallels in terms of nihilistic approaches, both films employ male characters that are closer to negative nihilism.

Toz Bezi also shares some common ground in terms of its approach to nihilism. To begin with, Nesrin's husband is not included in the narrative at all. This strongly hints at the idea that he is indifferent to values (as a father and husband) that surrounds him. More importantly, Nesrin's neighbour Hatun and her husband Şero (Mehmet Özgür) are differently portrayed in terms of nihilism. For instance, Hatun has got future plans, dreams for moving from slums to live in better areas of the city. She saves money for it; this highlights the idea that her 'fantasies of a good life' still exist. On the other hand, Şero manages a *kıraathane* (traditional coffee house) yet he is unable to pay his debts. He is dysfunctional as a father and husband figure mainly

because of his finances. The male characters live in ‘a world without values’, the female characters’ values do not match with a world (they cannot be realized in the world as it is). It hence leads an idea that masculinity is also under pressure due to precariousness yet its way of dealing with it seems quite pessimistic.

Only *Gözetleme Kulesi* reverses configuration making its male characters passive and its female characters as anti-nihilist. While Seher is more close to ‘radical’ nihilism in the sense that she is in despair and willing to leave her unwanted baby behind, Nihat takes care of the baby. However, the audience does not get to see whether he is still willing to take care of the child and her mother after Seher talks about her sexual abuse. The film ends without answering this question sort of obstructing the interpretation that Nihat is closer to ‘anti-nihilism’ in the sense that he is willing to start ‘a new life’ after a long ago family tragedy. Patriarchy affects both sides here; while Seher has to hide her pregnancy, Nihat seems to have ‘lost’ his authority figure as a father and husband (that’s why he chooses to leave everything behind and starts living at a watchtower). Hence, despite slightly changing types of nihilisms between the male and the female, the film does not offer an interpretation of the male character’s will to ‘anti-nihilism’.

3.6. Concluding Remarks

Overall, this chapter has dwelled on several points. To begin with, by looking at their narrative structures, an argument can be that in the precarious women workers films, a particular orthodox three act structure is not seen mainly because they usually lack resolution part. This idea suggests that “new equilibrium” is not created in the exemplary films. That’s why; they mostly end their narratives with an open ending, indicating that they tend to avoid confirming/maintaining traditional ideology – that

probably makes the women return to the home. Moreover, they point out the lack of alternatives. Then, another segment has shown the families' role in the escape. Instead of biological family bond, there is an emphasis on friend/companionship in the sense that since the family institution is tattered, friendship plays more important role in the films. The protagonists mostly get support from their colleagues (as seen in *Şimdiki Zaman*, *Araf* and *Toz Bezi*) or a stranger (as seen in *Gözetleme Kulesi*). In addition, the heroines are not liberated by labour mostly because it does not provide necessarily better living conditions. On the contrary, the narratives they are in depict them in a precarious situation mostly due to their work. In a way; they live to work, work to live. This idea gets articulated with the question why the audience does not get to see an 'actual' liberating escape. Because of this, their wish/desire to escape is witnessed more. However, most of them do not give up on their wishes and dreams. In the marriage segment, moreover, we argued that marriage is not offered as an ultimate solution at the end of the films. Rather, they work as questioning tools for audiences to think about the institution. All of these ideas allow thinking about the heroines' struggle for a better life one way or another. Finally, with a gender-based comparison, the passivity of male characters when dealing with precarious living and labour conditions is seen. Thus, all of these precarious women workers films produced in the contemporary era question working conditions, women's liberation, precariousness, as well as their unfinished –i.e. open-ended narratives as their depiction of impossibility of an ultimate solution.

CHAPTER IV: OVERARCHING PRECARIOUSNESS

4.1. Introduction

Another category that is strongly connected to fantasies of leaving and precarious women workers needs to be introduced. In this chapter, female protagonists in precarious occupations with one difference are represented: They are on the run, or on the edge of run. What brings all of them together can be the idea that they do not accept on-going precarious situations at home. Starting within national borders then moving on to out of boundaries, this segment identifies some of these runaway films. Then, exemplary films in this chapter will be placed within a framework of transnational cinema.

To begin with, there are two singular cases within the specified national cinema. The first one is a debut film which is an Oscar nominee in the category of Best Foreign Language Film, *Mustang* (Deniz Gamze Örgüven, 2015). Focusing on a story of five sisters who were adopted by their uncle and grandmother after their parents' death, the film depicts a home where there is oppression, physical violence, and sexual abuse. Partially a cultural adaptation of Sofia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), the story tries to liberate its heroines with marriage, suicide, and finally running away from village to a metropolis. Moreover, another example is by a male director, who adapted a novel onto screen. *2 Genç Kız* (*Two Girls*, Kutluğ Ataman, 2005) focuses on a homoerotic love story between two late adolescents, whose lives change shortly

after they meet. Although they plan to run away to Australia, one of them manages while the other is brought back to her oppressive home. *Mustang* and *2 Genç Kız* stand as singular productions without creating a specific pattern among films produced in Turkey.

In addition, as an auteur, Reha Erdem and his filmography differ from other auteurs in Turkey. With his unique narrative style between reality and fairy tale, Erdem's films challenge the harsh reality of everyday life by creating an alternative universe that is full of dangers yet at the same time almost always hopeful. Erdem's female protagonists (mostly children and/or adolescents) are somewhere between reality and fairy tale. What makes them special is that the adolescent heroines resist the troubles they encounter in their everyday life one way or another.

Reha Erdem employs some repetitive themes and motifs in his filmography. One of them is that his heroines are almost always on the run: in *A Ay (Oh! Moon, 1989)* Yekta (Yeşim Tozan) is stuck in between her aunt's ruinous mansion and the other aunt's fairly new house on the island; at one point, she decides to escape yet she is brought back home immediately after. *Beş Vakit's (Times and Winds, 2006)* teenage heroes and heroine are villagers, unlike Yekta. Along with her two friends Ömer and Yakup, Yıldız (Elit İşcan) finds peace in nature whenever they are oppressed at home. Hayat (Elit İşcan), the heroine of *Hayat Var (My Only Sunshine, 2008)*, is a rebellious girl who escapes home with a street child at the end of the film. *Jîn (2012)* tells the story of a guerrilla, Jîn (Deniz Hasgüler), who escapes from her base camp. *Şarkı Söyleyen Kadınlar (Singing Women, 2013)* focuses on three women whose lives intertwine with one another's. Meryem (Deniz Hasgüler) is one of them and she escapes from a marriage, seeks refuge on an island. Finally, in Erdem's most recent film, *Koca Dünya (Big Big World, 2016)*, Zuhal (Ecem Uzun) leaves her foster

parent's home with her mysterious older brother Ali (Berke Karaer). Moreover, there are dysfunctional parents in Erdem's films: Either these heroines do not have a father/mother or both (such as in Yekta's, Meryem's or Zuhâl's case) or their parents are dysfunctional (such as Hayat's and Jîn's case). However, instead of parents, the heroines have mostly got a helper beside them, just like fairy tales. For instance, in *Koca Dünya*, Zuhâl leaves home with the help of her older brother Ali; similarly, Hayat escapes home by boat with the help of a street child. In Jîn's escape, her companions are animals such as bear, deer, and horses. Here, it can also be seen the importance of companionship rather than biological family bonds.

Home, in a way, is a character in Erdem's films, and one of the interpretations of the home is that it represents a place of almost every possible ill fate especially for adolescent female protagonists. In his films, Erdem reverses a cliché "there's no place like home" by letting his heroines explore what's outside of the home. As an alternative place to home, most of the heroines in films escape to nature. Seen as the "antithesis" of city and modernisation, nature also plays a key role in Erdem's films. Erdem sees the potential resistance in nature and rural space. In order to set his heroines free, he places them into something non-urban. In a magazine article entitled "Aşk ve İsyân" (Love and Rebellion), he clearly states: "Rural stands against megapolis as a home, a shelter, crumbs of rebellion..." (2009: 189, translation mine). He also states that his heroines long for an alternative home/shelter, which is now non-existent (190). That's probably why Erdem's heroines attempt to find peace in nature, which can be read as a space that embraces the heroines. In short, Erdem's heroines lead a way to 'imagining the otherwise' in films produced in Turkey by running away and trying to create 'a space of their own', which is mostly in nature.

As another auteur, Wes Anderson also employs this theme particularly in *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012). As a part of the “recurrent theme of isolation and the need to reconnect to community [in his films]” (Knight, 2014: 66), Anderson’s story focuses on love between two outcast children, Suzy (Kara Hayward) and Sam (Jared Gilman). Although Suzy escapes from home more than once, she sort of makes an agreement with her parents not to escape again at the end. This can be read from a perspective of a classical narrative of “courtship, marriage, friendship, family reunion, and... a return to a reconstituted civilized order” (Beiner quoted in Tyree, 2013: 23). In addition, as Tyree argues that Anderson’s opinion on “home as a place that feels unsafe yet inescapable – to stay is fatal, to return is perilous, to flee for good is ultimately impossible” (2013: 26). Both auteurs employ the theme of running away (from society, parents, oppression, and so on), yet only Erdem’s characters (especially last couple of them in his filmography) manage to run away for good. At least, they do not turn back home. In this sense, a reconnection and/or a return does seem possible in Anderson’s escapist fantasies whereas Erdem’s idea of reconnection seems more ‘rebellious’ since it is more about a connection with nature rather than a community.

In addition, Sophie Mayer identifies some films in British feminist cinema which include women and girls running away “from abuse and poverty of opportunity, from domesticity and despair” (2016: 79). Starting with Sally Potter’s *Yes* (2004), she gives several examples from “lost girls as figures for marginal communities” (83) such as *A Way of Life* (Amma Asante, 2004), *The Unloved* (Samantha Morton, 2009), *Fish Tank* (Andrea Arnold, 2009), and *I am Nasrine* (Tina Gharavi, 2012). Highlighting the heroines’ “unpindownability”, Mayer argues that both female filmmakers and their characters challenge the traditional, unmoving, integrated

system by “keeping it on the move” (79). They, therefore, challenge and bend the boundaries that are set in front of them.

Following Sophie Mayer’s examples, the segment looks at Eastern European cinemas from Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, and Ukraine respectively. In case studies drawn from these national cinemas, Mayer identifies possibly a new figure who is “the adolescent girl on the edge of flight” (2016: 79), *Viktoria* (Maya Vitkova, 2014) and *Waiting for August* (Teodora Ana Mihai, 2014) are the two examples Mayer mentions in this category. In addition to these examples, Yorgos Lanthimos’s dystopian *Kynodontas* (2009), which has got a female character on the edge of flight, can be mentioned. Along with her two siblings, Older Daughter (Aggeliki Papoulia) is strictly told not to leave the home until their canine tooth falls out. After breaking her canine tooth with a dumbbell, she hides in her father’s car in order to escape. With an ambiguous end, the audience does not get to know whether she actually manages to escape. Finally, Myroslav Slaboshpytskyi’s *Plemya* (2014) tells the story of a tribe in which female students in a boarding school try to find another way of living. By doing sex work and saving money, they dream of escaping from the country.

From two different countries, two final examples can be given. From South Korea, another auteur Chan-wook Park’s latest film *Ah-ga-ssi* (The Handmaiden, 2016) focuses on a homoerotic love story between a handmaiden and her employee, a Japanese heiress. The story involves a flight with the handmaiden from the heiress’s oppressive home. Finally, as a coproduction of the USA and UK, Andrea Arnold’s *American Honey* (2016), the heroine, Star (Sasha Lane), tries to make her living by selling magazines. After escaping from home and joining a crew at the very beginning, she does not turn back home. Then, from her perspective, the audience

witnesses her survival. Arnold's protagonists are outcast females, either runaways or dreaming of that life.

In short, in these examples between 2006 until 2016, there are stories in which the female protagonists run away for several reasons. Of course, there are many more examples from all over the world yet these are sort of the highlights particularly from the Western national cinemas. Mostly directed by auteurs, the films usually offer escaping as a means for young protagonists to push social boundaries. Two of the films, *Waiting for August* and *American Honey* have been chosen as case studies for this chapter on transnational cinemas since both films' significant focus on precarious living and labour conditions make their depiction of precarity worth examining.

The films examined in the previous chapter do not merely belong to Turkey's national cinema in terms of their production. Some are Turkey's and Germany's coproductions (such as *Toz Bezi* and *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*) and some others are coproductions of Turkey, Germany and France (such as *Araf* and *Gözetleme Kulesi*). In this sense, these films have already crossed the borders of national cinemas. In terms of making a connection between the specified national cinema and transnational cinemas, an idea is highlighted in Thomas Elsaesser's work as: "Rather than rounding up different national cinemas or adding more and more qualifiers, one could start with a concept such as hybridity that immediately makes apparent the essentially mixed or relational nature of the concept Cinema Europe" (2005: 76). In other words, for discussions on the term national cinemas, Elsaesser proposes a mixture in order to avoid an essentialist reading of national cinemas. In the same vein, according to Marijke De Valck's idea that "the globalized world and postmodernity are characterized as networks in which local elements are linked to

global structures and heterogeneity and plurality are the preferred ideological projects” (quoted in Mantziari, 2014: 4) Hence, following these logics, this chapter will bring precarious cinema’s female protagonists together regardless of boundaries.

Issues related with precarious living and labour are not restricted solely to national boundaries. As already mentioned in the introduction, there are lots of films which connect a direct relation with precarity. For instance, Ken Loach’s Palme d’Or winner *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) has drawn attention to the failures of welfare state for lower class people in the UK. The same precariousness discussed before applies to the film’s characters. Such stories connecting struggles with precarity hint at the idea that failure does not emerge from one single nation but it has got similar issues with different struggles. Koach’s film, in addition, strongly highlights the idea that there is only one way to end precarity and it is simply death. This idea also shows there is no way out of the precarious situation. Moreover, Ewa Mazierksa is in favour of a ‘global reading’ of working class films: “...problems related to work are global, and that solutions can no longer be found on a nation-state level” (2013: 22). By identifying problems of precarious women workers, it is possible to situate those problems in a bigger frame; a frame that may build a collectivism out of singular narratives.

Similar to the abovementioned films coproduced with Germany and France, there are also co-productions in this chapter’s exemplary films. *American Honey* is coproduced by UK and the USA. Similarly, *Waiting for August* is a coproduction of Belgium and Romania. Their stories, which will be discussed in detail, indeed depict the everyday life of their heroines in culture specific settings. Yet at the same time, their employing social issues such as poverty, invisible labour, precarity and vulnerability can be considered as boundary-crossing (in the sense that they point out

an issue bigger than one particular narrative) and overarching at the same time (in the sense that they might get articulated with ‘bigger’ communities than their singularities).

Then, an important question emerges: what exactly connects the singularities in these particular examples? The hypothesis for this question is an understanding that along with the examples from the national cinema, following examples show either the fantasy of leaving (as in *Waiting for August*) or an actual leaving (as in *American Honey* and *Äta sova dö*). Then, as another connecting point, there is a struggle for a better life among these films’ female protagonists. A final connection is made in the sense that these female representations by writer-director women depict unique female characters in particular films. In this sense, by looking at these singular examples from different countries, there might be something that connects the singularities.

Hence, with the help of a border-crossing reading, the following segments will compare these films’ approaches to precariousness, trying to find a way out –in order to reduce the heroines’ precarity-, and different approaches to precarious living conditions. In this chapter, similar to the previous one, it is argued that while women try to find a way out, men seem indifferent to their precarious situation.

4.2. *Äta Sova Dö* (2012): “I had such big plans for the future.”

With her debut feature length film, the screenwriter-director Gabriela Pichler has drawn attention to poorer and smaller areas of Sweden with an unusual representation of the country. The film focuses on a story of a worker, Raša (Nermina Lukač), in a vegetable packaging factory. As best summarized by Daniel Lindvall, the film “capture[s] the increasing precariousness of life in Sweden plagued

by rapidly growing poverty, inequality as well as economic and ethnic segregation” (2013: 458). In addition, as the title hints at, *Eat Sleep Die* refers to a circle of working on an assembly line. Pichler visualizes this process in three short cuts at the very beginning of the film: in the first scene we see Raša and her Father (Milan Dragišić) eating dinner. The scene cuts to their sleeping in front of TV. Then, the scene, following up eating and sleeping, cuts to Raša’s working place, where she rushes and works restlessly. Until Raša is laid off, the audience witnesses this daily routine.

Her precariousness gets much more intense when she learns the factory will start laying off its workers. She feels more pressure and starts making simple mistakes which she normally does not. Moreover, since she takes care of her father, who suffers from severe backaches, with the threat of her health insurance being cut, both Raša and father start facing more difficulties than they used to. Her father leaves her in order to work in Norway in makeshift jobs, whereas Raša starts looking for a job in her hometown. However, when asked about what she is good at in general, she cannot come up with an answer other than doing her previous occupation flawlessly. This answer instantly reminds a characteristic of secure occupation (which precarious ones lack) defined by Guy Standing which is “[s]kill reproduction security – Opportunity to gain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training and so on, as well as opportunity to make use of competencies” (2011: 10). In this sense, what Standing suggests here is the idea that people of precariat suffers from a lack of chance given to them in order to use and transfer their skills. In the film, Raša might be good at what she previously does, yet she is unable to gain more productive skills while working at a factory. This idea is echoed in Lindvall’s article as:

[Raša's] work is a strong part of her identity. She takes pride in her efficiency and her co-workers form the nucleus of her social life. When the factory cuts down on the workforce and Raša, together with several of her friends, loses her job, it is psychologically as well as financially disastrous. (2013: 465)

In other words, how social identity and labour work together can be seen: Losing one's job does not only end up in an economic distress but also social one. This idea is also highlighted in the film. Leader of the therapy group Raša has to attend after unemployment says: "When you don't have a job, you can get bad self-confidence". This line, in a way, summarises how precarity lead workers to precarious lives. In addition to this precariousness, there is a depiction of undercover rivalry between workers in order to stay in the factory. Although Raša is an immigrant herself, this precarity creates a xenophobic moment in Raša's state of mind; such as when she says Iraqi workers should leave the factory first. Lindvall explains this situation as: "The conflict between the community-building potential of class solidarity, on the one hand, and the divisive impact of unemployment/precarious employment, on the other, is a thread running throughout the film" (2013: 465). Here, Isabell Lorey's ideas on individualization and governmentality of workers should be taken into consideration. Due to more competition, rivalry between workers paves the way to discrimination. However, Raša's enduring all she goes through is partially due to her community surrounding her. In this sense, film's "demonstrating how shared experiences can overcome ethnic and cultural division" (Lindvall, 2013: 465) is emphasized as a way out, whereas Raša's initial reactions as 'instinctive', i.e. a feeling of losing her job makes her anxious since she does not know who to blame. In this sense, Pichler hints at an understanding that feeling anxious about losing one's job gets way beyond the limits of a factory setting.

In addition, the role of breadwinner is clearly shifted from The Father to Raša. In the film, Raša takes care of her father not only in his daily routines (and his illness) but

also economically. The Father, as the homemaker, is busier with cooking, doing chores, and so on. Judy Fudge & Rosemary Owens note this shift in gender roles in housework and being breadwinner: “In this new gender order, women are no longer entirely financially dependent on a male breadwinner, but nor have they become totally financially independent” (2006: 15). In other words, there is a blurring of ‘compulsory’ male breadwinner representation not only in this particular example but also in nearly all of the examples in this study. To give concrete examples, in *Nefesim Kesilene Kadar*, Serap is able to save money to rent a house with her father – as seen in a scene where she gives him deposit money. Similarly, in *Toz Bezi*, Hatun – Nesrin’s neighbour- saves money in order to buy a house in a better neighbourhood (whereas Şero is busy with paying his debts). In the other examples as well, this type of representation that depicts the female characters as the breadwinner, and the male characters as the ones who are mostly indifferent to being a ‘breadwinner’ has already been seen. Although this particular representation is not fairly new and it can be the case in many more films other than exemplary films, at least these questions worth mentioning: Can this representation in breadwinner shift challenge or at least blur the traditionally constructed and ingrained gender assumptions? What does this change tell us about gender roles in the precariat?

Moreover, in order to attempt to create an *interzone*, several parallels between Raša and Nesrin – in *Toz Bezi* can be drawn. To begin with, both characters’ desire for a good life does not actually include an escape from home. On the contrary, their wish to have a ‘traditional’ family is apparent in both films – Raša actually wants to live with her father and Nesrin with her husband. Yet still, Raša leaves her home and community in order to be an intern (which reminds Guy Standing’s inclusion of the interns into the class precariat) in a bigger city. Similarly, Nesrin leaves her home,

her daughter, and her companion Hatun-. In order to keep their fantasies of their good life alive, they both leave unwillingly and compulsorily. Secondly, in order to reduce their precarious labour conditions, both look for a secure jobs yet their education do not allow them to find a 'decent' job. Sharing the precarity because of their lack of educational qualifications might be regarded as a common ground that connects two narratives. This idea, moreover, is related with an understanding that identical issues come to light when examining precarious living conditions. Finally, there is this depiction of race issue in both films. At one point, Nesrin tries to cover up her Kurdish identity in order to work in more houses as the homemaker. Faking her ethnicity when asked shows how precariousness can be intertwined with this issue. Similarly, while Raša is looking for a job after being laid off, she learns that her co-workers have been called for an interview for a new job, yet she is not. After learning this, she goes to the interview office with her co-worker; curious about why she has not been called out. Then, she says whether it is because of her Arabic sounding surname (Abdulhoviç, actually a Slav-Muslim surname). In this sense, in both films, there is this articulation of race issues with labour and precariousness. The idea of intersectionality works here: Both films underline the idea that their protagonists go through difficult times due to their occupations yet their being migrants increase their struggles. Then here, the question would be: can precarity be another common ground for addressing discrimination due to ethnicity?

In addition, there is this feeling/sign of hope at the end of both films. While in *Toz Bezi*, Hatun takes care of Nesrin's daughter, even stopping her work in order to 'enjoy a moment for themselves'. At least for a day, the film depicts Hatun's liberation from labour. This might not be considered as an ending full of hope yet at the same time, it does not portray a pessimistic one either. Similarly, Raša is upset at

the end because she now has to leave her town – her community. However, since the film is “too rebellious to be depressing...” (2013: 468) as Lindvall puts it; it signals an optimistic feeling for an ending. “Hoppa om ni älskar Raša!” (Jump if you love Raša!) is the final sentence heard in the film, a sentence shouted out by Raša’s community. Instead of a feeling of isolation, both films suggest a sense of belonging at the end. In this, they share the common ground of working against alienation. In short, *Äta sova dö* portrays a strong heroine, whose dream is not dead and probably will not decay: She can still flourish. Similarly, Hatun’s dreams at the end are not dead: She has got the hope for a better life. This idea underlines a bigger idea for precarious women workers in the sense that it depicts an understanding of unity.

4.3. *American Honey* (2016): “Are we invisible?”

According to Stella Hockenull, Andrea Arnold has been considered as “a key figure in British cinema...” (2017: 112). Arnold’s “oeuvre focuses on female isolation and adversity...” (112); and this is a focus that is always from a woman’s perspective. Indeed, from her Oscar winner short film *Wasp* (2003), until her fourth and most recent film *American Honey*; Arnold seems interested in female characters from lower class and their everyday lives. As recurrent themes, in addition to isolation and hardships; Arnold also dwells on some other issues such as what it means to belong to a ‘community’, an attempt to find a ‘home’ (both can be interpreted in literal and metaphorical sense), and how to deal with poverty and its depressing conditions. For instance, similar to *American Honey*, *Fish Tank* (2009) underscores “how hard it is to escape from impoverished social circumstances” (Hirsch, 2014: 472). In this sense, Arnold’s films have to do with vulnerability, precariousness as well as trying to find ‘another way of existence’.

In *American Honey*, Arnold portrays a heroine, Star (Sasha Lane), whose narrative draws parallels to Mia's in *Fish Tank*; characters from 'lower' class of the society, indifferent or abusive mothers changed with taking care of their younger siblings and absent fathers. While both protagonists literally trying to survive, Star escapes from home very early in the narration, unlike Mia's escape. Mia's escape, first of all, questions escape's role in reducing precarity. To begin with, as Pam Hirsch has discussed, Mia's dream of becoming a dancer can be read as a way of escape from social situation, yet she draws a conclusion that "[*Fish Tank*] achieves only a limited escape from oppressive personal and social circumstances in the interludes where dance allows her some brief interludes of pleasure or *jouissance*, but it does not offer a more permanent route out of oppression" (2014: 482). The film allows her heroine a space of her own with dancing yet it still does not necessarily set her free.

At the end of the film, Mia leaves home with a traveller – a resemblance with *Hayat Var*'s protagonist's escape with a street child. The final shot of the film is a heart shaped balloon flying over the building where Mia used to live. The final scene can also be interpreted in different ways. Lucy Bolton favours an optimistic reading: "It is Mia's time to break away from the people and structures that seek to limit her. There is hope in the fact that Mia is able to forge a friendship with Billy, a boy her own age" (2016: 82). On the other hand, Pam Hirsch does not see that much hope in Mia's escape from home; although she is able to "escape from the confined space of her council house and heads off with her new boyfriend... there is no clear sense that this will offer a significant improvement of her life chances" (2014: 482). This equally acceptable readings show Arnold's portrayal of characters; she is able to draw a picture that is equally optimistic and pessimistic at the same time.

These ideas and discussions do not show any difference while discussing Star's situation: Is there any place of 'breathe'/hope in *American Honey*? Is Star capable of depicting an 'actual' escape even though she seems 'more free' than Mia? To state the obvious, escaping from "a sexually abusive stepfather and a life that seems lacking in any opportunity" (Lee, 2017); Star's will seems to be liberated from an oppressing home. Mia's situation can be underlined due to its depiction of domestic sexual abuse as well as Seher's – in *Gözetleme Kulesi*. In addition, in terms of 'abusive' and/or indifferent mothers, Mia's, Star's, Feride's –in *Köksüz-* and Seher's situations all together can be taken into consideration. Although the level of abuse is certainly different, the mother figures in these films are depicted as either indifferent to the hardships of the heroines and/or the mothers increase the heroines' precarious living. In *American Honey*, for instance, Star has to take care of her two younger siblings, who are basically ignored by their mother.

Moreover, Mia's 'exit' is dance, whereas Star sells magazines with her crew, highly precarious labour due to its lack of security, regular income, career, and so on. In other words, the more magazines she sells, the more she feels like "fucking America" –as she shouts out when she earns her money from the very first sale. Here, Star probably references the country's Statue of Liberty –she does a similar posture while saying this line. On the other hand, since Star is initially obliged to give the money she earns to her boss, Krystal (Riley Keough), her 'liberation' is indeed limited in her occupation. As Arnold herself states that "Here [the selling crew] are selling things on a minibus. It's kind of a little version of capitalism" (quoted in Coyle: 2016), the writer-director hints at the idea that there is no escape from capitalism yet still one can make her zones of 'breath' – as Star does during her journey. Andrea Arnold highlights Star's liberation several times, she depicts a character whose 'fantasies for

a good life' are fragile; they can come true because the more magazine she sells the richer she gets yet at the same time the dreams are susceptible to major and minor cracks.

Star's journey as a whole is yet another topic to be discussed. As mentioned before, after Star leaves home, she does not go back (even if she does, it is not shown in the narrative). One analogy to Star's journey is made by Pamela Hutchinson: "Star is a new Dorothy, with the sales team her broken friends seeking completion. Krystal's shimmering outfits and casual cruelty make her the wicked witch. Jake is both a companion and the cyclone, whisking Star into a new world" (2016). When compared to the famous character Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), one major difference remains: Star's narrative does not bring her back home; rather it leaves it in the middle of a lake –a possible interpretation of an open ending, similar to the exemplary films from the previous chapter. While Dorothy learns the value of a home (even if they do not always value her), *American Honey* highlights an existence (or, an obligation) without a home.

Yet still, Star's 'homelessness' and/or home-seeking (a will to belong to a community) can be read as 'liberating' despite its hardships in that it demonstrates a will to live a 'better life'. As Dwayne Avery talks about his theory of "unhomely cinema", he states the idea that lack of home can be interpreted as something pushing and discovering what is outside of 'home'/'boundary'. In this respect, he asserts: "Exile, migration, dispersal, fragmentation – these may all be the symptomatic signs of our so-called postmodern societies, but homes can be fashioned one the move. Homes can be made in spite of the world's inhospitality" (2014: 133). In this sense, he suggests an understanding of home not only physical static building but also something that can human-beings recreate with different meanings attached to it

rather than safe, canny, peaceful, and bordered. Indeed, if we go back to film, two specific points underlines this idea. First of all, when asked about her dreams, Star's initial response is "No one's ever asked me that before," and then she talks about living in a trailer with lots of children. This idea heavily highlights her dreams to be on the move. Then, at the end of the film, her lover Jake (Shia LaBeouf) hands her a turtle. Star sets it free by placing it into the lake, and then she dives into the lake as well. Here, the turtle can be a signifier of the possibility that homes can be indeed on the move, suggesting that Star actually pushes the boundaries of the understanding of home.

In addition, Aslı Özgen Tuncer (2017) also compares *American Honey* to Agnès Varda's *Sans Toit ni Loi (Vagabond, 1985)* arguing that Star achieves what Mona cannot in Varda's film: She is able to make through all the difficulties she encounters. For instance, as Tuncer gives three scenes that show Star's independence—especially from her complicated relationship with Jake. The first is where Jake tries to 'rescue' Star from a group of middle-aged men while there is no need. As Tuncer states, the scene depicts the absurdity of 'male saviour' figure. The second scene, in addition, the boss Krystal (Riley Keough) makes the female magazine sellers dress in low cut dresses. When the female crew asked by workers (who are potential magazine buyers) whether they are prostitutes or not, the crew scolds them. This scene, according to Tuncer, "works as a brilliant manifest underlining normalization of women's wearing skirts, dressing and dancing as they want, and being present in any place they like any time" (2017, translation mine).

The final scene Aslı Özgen Tuncer draws attention to is Star's sexual intercourse with an oil field worker to earn money. Yet again, the scene does not allow 'a tragedy' to happen because nothing happens without Star's consent. In addition, this

plot point normalizes sex work. Although Jake's reaction to Star's sex work is a little bit over the top (as he violently breaks several objects in the house, yells at Star, and forces her to speak about the sex work), the writer-director does not allow any traditional drama to happen; in this way, Andrea Arnold acknowledges sex work as a part of labour. While Star as a character acknowledges this fact as well, the male protagonist and the crew do not seem to accept this as a fact. This is significant in the sense that "'whorephobia' remains pervasive in the social psyche, showing its ugliness even in sex-positive communities. The positive emphasis on sex work confuses "straights" into thinking that sex work is about sex, not work" (Chateauvert, 2013). When traces of this particular idea is followed, Arnold does not judge any type of labour that Star does in the film from selling magazines to sex work. Rather, the film acknowledges, diversifies, and questions what is labelled as 'work' and/or 'labour' as well as what is neglected in this specific spectrum.

Apart Tuncer's analysis, there are several other scenes that underline how Star's fantasies of a good life –as Berlant puts it- has not decayed, whereas Jake's approach to living 'a good life' seems less likely to flourish. As mentioned before, Star has indeed got a dream – living in a caravan (the trailer dream) and having children. Her aim to earn the money with prostitution is justified with her explanation that she has done it so that Jake and her could buy a caravan. On the other hand, if flashbacked a little bit, there is a scene where Star asks Jake about his dreams, his initial response echoes Star's: "Nobody's ever asked me that". Then, while everyone sleeps, Jake shows his bag full of gold and jewellery to Star. When Star disagrees and says "Well, that's not the dream", Jake responds quickly: "...but that buys the dream". Apart from that, in the same scene, we learn that Jake's dream is similar to Star's: "Just some piece of land in the woods somewhere" to live 'small'. However, while Star

starts doing something about achieving their now joined dream come true, Jake does not approve of her methods – although he sleeps with Krystal, steals, lies, and so on. Recalling the types of nihilism, while Star’s approach is closer to anti-nihilism (rejecting all of her current values, building new ones as well as a new life), Jake seems closer to pessimism and passive nihilism, with a disoriented state of mind as a consequence. Hence, instead of a certain statement, it can be asked: whose dream seems more committed to making that dream a reality? In short, in this film, there is a unique and three dimensional representation of a woman: Star is in search for a community –a place where she feels like she is ‘at home’, might not be totally liberated yet still she basically challenges (or at least, makes the audience think about) characteristics of a home.

4.4. *Waiting for August* (2014): “I might look tough, but I’m fragile.”

As in Turkey’s national cinema, since 2001 Romanian women directors have started to be recognized in international film festivals (Pop, 2014: 192). In addition, representation of female characters and womanhood has been changing: “More and more women were described as being in search of their independence, liberated from the control of their families, of society and men” (192).

Throughout Europe, there has been a change in documentary form. According to Ib Bondebjerg, there is an increasing tendency to address more global issues than local ones (2013: 281). Moreover, Bongeberg asserts:

What connects the new global tendency in European documentaries with the classical approach is the focus on the people occupying the lowest positions in the social hierarchy. But what also stands out is the way in which new global documentary gives the global proletariat a voice. (2013: 282)

In this sense, new documentaries look for a representation that addresses global issues related with labour. Doru Pop also observes that documentaries produced in Romania have given women filmmakers space for freedom and creativity: “The documentary seemed less oppressive and more pervasive to women working in the field of cinema production” (2014: 192). Within this frame, *Waiting for August* is one example of the new wave that challenges and diversifies representations of womanhood. Moreover, a 2013 article by Kit Gillet points out that “...there are now more than 80,000 families in Romania in which both parents are working abroad while their child or children stay at home, with 35,000 more families in which one parent is overseas”. One year after this statistic was published, the writer-director Teodora Mihai debuts her feature film about parental absence and focuses her camera on a family that diverges remarkably from a traditional representation of a nuclear family.

Categorized as docudrama, the film focuses on a story of seven siblings who have to take care of each other since their mother works abroad as a housekeeper in Italy. They live in social housing in Bacau, a small town in Romani. Fifteen year old Georgiana, who is not the oldest yet the leader of the siblings, ends up taking care of everything about her siblings during the mother’s absence until August: “...[S]he’s been appointed the substitute mother for this brood, getting people out of bed in the morning, cooking, cleaning and looking after her much smaller siblings, while also trying to stay on top of her own homework” (van Hoeij, 2014). In this sense, she is depicted as the authority figure in the home. Moreover, with her dreams of admission of a better high school, the audience is informed that Georgina’s dream of a good life is still alive and she passionate about it even in harsh conditions.

Precariousness works in various ways in the film. The Mother's labour as a migrant worker in Italy is a part of precarious work since it is short-termed, unsecured as well as career-less. The mother does not appear on screen until the very end of the film. The information the audience gets from her via either phone calls or Skype calls she does with Georgiana and her siblings. Moreover, the Mother is incapable of sending much money to Georgiana since she does not earn enough. Besides, she has to work in makeshift occupations abroad; the moment she comes back in August, she starts making phone calls to secure another job as a housekeeper. Lack of security, regular income, and pressure to find work abroad might all be relevant to her precarious labour and life.

Moreover, another type of precariousness emerges from Georgiana's situation; what she has to do inside the home is basically unpaid and invisible care work for her siblings. According to an United Nations report, the term described as: "[U]npaid care work includes domestic work (meal preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection) and direct care of persons (including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as able-bodied adults) carried out in homes and communities" ("Extreme poverty and human rights", 2013). According to this statement, the notion of unpaid care work in various types has already been the case in nearly all of the exemplary films including *Araf*, *Köksüz*, *Gözetleme Kulesi*, *Toz Bezi* or *American Honey* and *Áta Sova Dö*. In *Waiting for August*, Georgiana engages in all the forms of unpaid care work mentioned in the UN report, which draws attention to this issue as a barrier to women's connection with an actual labour as well as women's greater participation in this type of work compared to men (2013). In this sense, not only the Mother, but also Georgiana can be considered as a member of precariat.

However, as mentioned before, Georgiana's dream of a better life does not decay. Writer-director Mihai does not let her heroine fade into hopelessness. Even when her little siblings do not let her study in peace, she still tries to focus on her studies. On the other hand, although she has got an older brother, he seems indifferent to the family's precarious living conditions. As Sheri Linden reviews: "Her older brother plays video games while she cleans, cooks, maintains the budget, gets the younger kids to school, serves as taskmaster and disciplinarian, and attends classes herself, preparing for the test that will determine her high school options" (2014). In other words, a little bit of change in 'traditional gender roles' is the case in here: While Georgiana acts as the authority, her older brother does not 'act' any kind of authority figure – similar to a father, maybe.

When the performances of Georgiana and her brother are compared, it seems subverted in the sense of authority at home. Georgiana does not force him to act like an authority and the eldest brother does not try to act like one. In the same house, they are like two characters that are indifferent to each other. Moreover, within the framework of nihilism, Georgina draws parallels with other heroines both mentioned here and in the previous chapter: her idea of a new life, reproduction of new 'values' has not been tattered. On the other hand, her brother's performance suggests otherwise: He, along with other brothers, does almost nothing apart from living in the condo. He plays video games on computers and that's simply it, while Georgiana struggles with the on-going troubles at home. That's why, she sometimes mentions not having children in the future and being fed up with the house's responsibilities. In order to live a better life outside of the house, she prepares for exams regardless of difficulties in the house. Her depiction of being on the edge of leaving, as Sophie Mayer puts it, gets articulated with her insistence on passing her exams with a good

grade. In a particular scene, where she learns that her exam results are not as good as she expected, she looks devastated. She calculates her points again on her phone again and again. With this scene, the audience gets to know her ambition to live another life outside of her home. It can be argued, therefore, that Georgiana's eldest sibling is close to passive nihilism: He has not got a world that has values or he is simply indifferent to circumstances surrounding him. Georgiana's representation, along with her brother's, reminds the previous heroines' representation as well as male ones in terms of various types of nihilisms.

In short, Mihai portrays a female protagonist who is an authority inside the home. Moreover, in order to reduce her precariousness, she keeps studying her exams. That hints at the idea that she still has got a dream to make it come true. On the other hand, her brother is depicted as someone indifferent to his precarious living conditions. In this sense, Georgiana shares common ground with other precarious women workers in terms of her will to move on and do something about her precarity.

4.5. Concluding Remarks

Overall, this chapter has looked at different examples from different parts of the world in order to create an *interzone* among representation of women workers. Although their level of precarity differs from one other, their problems point to precarious labour one way or another. In order to find a common ground, we can look at the three sentences by the heroines in the exemplary films respectively: "I had such big plans for the future", "are we invisible" and "I might look tough, but I'm fragile". All of them points out a type of vulnerability that is visible in all of the films. Whether one's will to find another job (Raša) or one's survival through labour

(Star) or one's being on the edge of leaving (Georgiana) may all be related with their struggle as well as will for a better future, regardless of how blurry and tough it might seem. Hence, what's shared here is actually not the 'idea' but a 'feeling' of hope that all of the exemplary films try to portray. In all of the exemplary films, including the ones within the boundaries, women filmmakers do not represent their female characters as hopeless despite being in 'hopeless' situations. In addition, by trying to add the exemplary films from the previous chapter, we have tried to overarch precariousness from a transnational context. Although the films represent more of a 'Western' cinema, they might offer a more universal reading since their points on contemporary issues on labour are larger than a mere local, national-state-level ones.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

From the beginning, this study has tried to have a look at representation of precarious (ness) in cinema both within and outside of national boundaries. The study has answered these specific questions: What is represented in terms of precarity in the exemplary films? Also, what is neglected in the exemplary films? What can be done more to explore the field in depth is another aspect of this final chapter.

To begin with, a depiction of fantasies of leaving in precarious women worker films was the starting point of the study. From a vast spectrum, six films have been chosen from the national cinema and three more from the various transnational cinemas mainly produced in the West. On the surface, what has connected these exemplary films is a representation of precarious labour, especially female protagonists that try to survive in precarity.

For this common ground, first the specific terms such as ‘precarity’, ‘precarious (ness)’, ‘precarization’, and ‘precarious cinema’ have been defined. Basically, these terms refer to labour and living conditions that are vulnerable, unforeseeable, lacking a career as well as an identity in a workplace. That collectively shared condition of being in limbo almost all the time has been conceptualized by Guy Standing, with the name of precariat. However, Standing’s conceptualization has been criticized for being too inclusionary. That’s why, we have chosen to use the word precariat with an understanding that it might not be working as a social class, yet it can be used in

order to connect singularities – i.e. to be used as an umbrella term. The term in this sense designates a collective without being a class. In addition to labour, precarious (ness) has been debated from a perspective of socio-ontology. Mainly following the ideas of Judith Butler, Isabell Lorey, and Lauren Berlant, the chapter has dwelled an idea that precariousness cannot disappear completely yet it can be reduced and/or minimized. In addition to this, Berlant has conceptualized the term that deals with precarious cinema. In light of her explanation, identification has been made.

According to Berlant, precarious cinema's camera focuses on the characters whose dreams of good life are on the edge of decaying in the sense that the characters struggle a lot to keep their dreams alive. Yet at the same time, this cinema focuses on for a possible way out.

This identification has been the base for this study. In chapter three, how precarious women workers try to come up with a solution for a better life as protagonists in films has been questioned. For this purpose, the exemplary films' open endings have been examined. The shared situation here is the protagonists' oppression at home, their companionships, their will to escape and how their precariousness is represented. With a gender-based comparison, the study has argued that while the women protagonists struggle for a way out, the male characters in those films are mostly indifferent to their precarious working and living conditions. This representation can be read from a perspective that challenges or at least questions hegemonic masculinity and any types of feminine and masculine roles in a traditionally constructed society.

Chapter four first locates the exemplary films into a context of running away. Then, it discusses issues related with precarious labour and life, which are not limited to national boundaries since they point out much larger issues that cannot be fixed in

nation state levels. With this aim in mind, the films which depict everyday life struggles of women workers have been selected. In mainly three films, the same questions have been examined as the previous chapter: How are the protagonists represented? In the selected films, there is a significant change in breadwinner figure. Traditionally assigned to males, this figure has shifted from father to daughter (in *Áta Sova Dö*), from boyfriend to girlfriend (in *American Honey*), and finally from husband to wife (in *Waiting for August*, the Mother is a single parent who takes care of her seven children). In the last one, in addition, the house is run not by the eldest male sibling but by the eldest female sibling, Georgiana, which can be considered as an indication of roles that changing in terms of head in a household. This chapter has highlighted the idea that in films directed and written by women filmmakers, there is a representation that can challenge and question on-going hegemony of masculinity.

As a whole, in this study, there is an emphasis on figuring a way out of precarity. However, in most of the films, there is not an ultimate solution to get away from the precarious living and working conditions. Mainly the female protagonists are looking for a way out yet their situation can be summarized as they move from one configuration of precarity to another (especially the marriages at the end of films confirm this understanding). On the other hand, a will for a better life is still there in all of the female protagonists: They want to be on the move, travel the world, go to the USA, escape from the house they do not like, live in better neighbourhoods, save money for the future, succeed in exams so that they continue their education, have a house of their own, and so on. In short, they keep fighting unlike the male characters that are mainly in passive position. Loach's *I, Daniel Blake* might have suggested that death is the only way out of precarity yet the women filmmakers in this study prove otherwise by giving tiny bits of hope to their audience. Hence, although the

study's exemplary films are mostly pessimistic and employing depressing subjects varied from incest to domestic violence. Yet, the films do not end their story without a sign of hope.

Overall, these are the main points and arguments this study has tried to show. However, while doing this, there might be some points that are neglected. For instance, this study has focused on narratives as well as the protagonists in those women narratives, instead of a study of space and/or cinematography of precarity. In this sense, it is more of a study in narratology. The representation of workplaces and their contribution to cinematography deserves a separate study. Moreover, in chapter four, there can be much more films to be examined from the perspective of precarity. Another study can follow the traces of those films from different countries and different national cinemas as well - for instance, from the East. After all, can precarity unite us?

REFERENCES

- Alpman, P. (2016). *Esmer Yakalılar: Kent-Sınıf-Kimlik ve Kürt Emeği*. İstanbul: İletişim.
- Atakav, E. (2013). *Women and Turkish cinema: gender politics, cultural identity and representation*. New York: Routledge.
- Avery, D. (2014). *Unhomely cinema: Home and place in global cinema*. New York: Anthem.
- Bardan, A. (2013) The new European cinema of precarity: A transnational perspective. In E. Mazierska (Ed.), *Work in Cinema*, (pp. 69 – 90). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Bondebjerg, I. (2013). Documentaries, work, and global challenges. In E. Mazierska (Ed.), *Work in Cinema*, (pp. 265 – 282). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bolton, Lucy. (2016). A Phenomenology of girlhood: Being Mia in *Fish Tank* (Andrea Arnold, 2009). In *International Cinema and the Girl: Local Issues, Transnational Contexts*, (pp. 75 – 84). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bora, T. (2010). Tekel direnişinde ara son – sınıf mücadelesi: ‘Hep’ olan ve ‘yeni’ olan (Class struggle: ‘ever’ present and ‘new’ present). *Birikim*. 251-252 (March-April). 9 - 12.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. New York: Verso.
- Butler, J. (2009). Introduction: Precarious life, grievable life. In *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* New York: Verso.

- Butler, J. (2012). Precarious life, vulnerability, and the ethics of cohabitation, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 26(2), 134 - 151. Retrieved from <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/486301>
- Butler, J. (2015). Foreword. In *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. New York: Verso Futures.
- Breman, J. (2013) A bogus concept, *New Left Review* 84(Nov-Dec). 130-138.
- Brylla, C. (2004). How are film endings shaped by their socio-historical context? (Part I). *Image & Narrative*, 4 (2). Retrieved from <http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/issue08/catalynbrylla.htm>
- Casas-Cortes, M. (2014). A genealogy of precarity: A toolbox for rearticulating fragmented social realities in and out of workplace, *Rethinking Marxism*, 26(2), 206 - 226. doi: 10.1080/08935696.2014.888849
- Chateauvert, M. (2013). *Ethical sluts and “dirty whores”*: Straight talk about sex work. Retrieved from http://www.salon.com/2013/12/29/ethical_sluts_and_dirty_whores_straight_talk_about_sex_work/
- Cole, A. (2016). All of us are vulnerable, but some are more vulnerable than others: the political ambiguity of vulnerability studies, an ambivalent critique, *Critical Horizons*, 17(2), 260 – 277. doi: 10.1080/14409917.2016.1153896
- Coyle, J. (2016). In ‘American Honey,’ finding family in a hopeless place. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/d34476a2b2344d4c9c8fefe921f81488>
- Çakırlar, C. & Güçlü, Ö. (2012). Gender, family and home(land) in contemporary Turkish cinema. In *Resistance in Contemporary Middle Eastern Cultures: Literature, Cinema and Music*, (pp. 167-183). London: Routledge.
- Çiçekoğlu, F. (2015). Erkekler şehri (City of men). In *Şehrin İtirazı* (Protest of the City), (pp. 105 - 122). İstanbul: Metis.

- Daldal, A. (2014). The concept of “national cinema” and the “new Turkish cinema”. In M. Oğuz, D. Bayrakdar, & M. Akser (Eds.), *New Cinema, New Media: Reinventing Turkish Cinema*. (pp. 92 - 111). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.
- Demirkaya, E. (2017). Prekarlık ve prekarite tartışmalarına kısa bir giriş (A short introduction to discussions of precariousness and precarity). *Cogito: Yaralanabilirlik (Vulnerability)*, 87(Summer), 6-23.
- Desperak, I. (2013). [Un]grateful slave: Gender dimension of the “dangerous class” of precariat. *R/evolutions*, 1 (1), 112 - 123.
- Diken, B. (2010). *Nihilism*. New York, NY : Routledge.
- Elsaesser, T. ImpersoNations: National cinema, historical imaginaries. In *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, (pp. 57 – 81). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Erdem, R. (2009). Epilogue: Aşk ve isyan (Love and rebellion). In F. Yücel (Ed.), *Reha Erdem Sineması: Aşk ve İsyan (Cinema of Reha Erdem: Love and Rebellion)*, (pp. 186 - 191). İstanbul: Çitlembik Sinema.
- Extreme poverty and human rights*. (2013). Retrieved from http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2F68%2F293&Submit=Search&Lang=E
- Fainaru, D. (2013). [Review of the motion picture *Köksüz*, 2013]. *Screen Daily*. Retrieved from <http://www.screendaily.com/nobodys-home/5054351.article>
- Frase, P. (2013). The precariat: A class or a condition? *New Labor Forum* (10). 1 - 4.
- Fudge, J. & Owens, R. (2006). Precarious work, women, and the new economy: The Challenge to legal norms. In *Precarious Work, Women, and the New Economy*, (pp. 3 – 27). Norfolk: Hart.

- Gillet, K. (2013). Thousands of Romanian children stay at home while parents work abroad. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/30/romanian-children-home-parents-work-abroad-eu>
- Halle, R. (2014). The idea of bridges and the image of roads: Culture and space. In *The Europeanization of Cinema: Interzones and Imaginative Communities*, (pp. 1 – 28). Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Hirsch, P. (2014). Written on the body, *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(3), 470-484. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2012.737345
- van Hoeij, B. (2013). [Review of the motion picture *Köksüz*, 2013]. *Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/nobodys-home-koksuz-venice-review-619738>
- van Hoeij, B. (2014). [Film review for the motion picture *Waiting for August*]. Retrieved from <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/waiting-august-film-review-736409>
- Hutchinson, P. (2016). American Honey. *Sight and Sound*, (11), 66.
- Hockenull, S. (2017). Women directors and poetic realism. In *British Women Film Directors in the New Millennium*, (pp. 112 – 121). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Intersectionality [Def. 2]. (n.d.). In *Oxford English Dictionary*, retrieved from <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/429843>.
- Jorgensen, M. (2015). Precariat – what it is and isn't- towards and understanding of what it does, *Critical Sociology*, 42(7-8), 1-16. doi: 10.1177/0896920515608925
- Kaya, F. (2013). *Representation of precarious labor and city outskirts in the late cinema of Turkey* (Unpublished master thesis). Bahçeşehir University, Istanbul.

- Knight, C. R. (2014). "Who's to say?" : The role of pets in Wes Anderson's Films. In P.C. Kunze (ed.), *The Films of Wes Anderson*, (pp. 65 - 75). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Koç, F. (2012). İşçileşme sürecinin Kürt segmenti veya Kürt işçilik sorunu (Kurdish labour issue). In Ö. Göztepe (Ed.), *Güvencesizleştirme: Süreç, Yanılgı, Olanak* (Precarization: Process, Misconception, Possibility), (pp. 147 – 158). Ankara: NotaBene.
- Kutlu, D. (2012). Türkiye işgücü piyasasında güncel gelişmeler ve güvencesizleştirme örüntüleri (Precarization patterns in Turkey's current labour markets). In Ö. Göztepe (Ed.), *Güvencesizleştirme: Süreç, Yanılgı, Olanak*, (pp. 61 - 116). Ankara: NotaBene.
- Lee, A. (2017). Girl on the road: Female sexuality as power in *American Honey*. Retrieved from <http://cornellsun.com/2017/03/21/guest-room-girl-on-the-road-female-sexuality-as-power-in-american-honey/>
- Linden, S. (2014). 'Waiting for August' is a telling doc about today's Romania. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-waiting-for-august-review-20141003-story.html>
- Lindvall, D. (2013). Class, ethnicity, and immigration in Sweden: Two films, two strategies, *WorkingUSA*, 16: 457–470. doi: 10.1111/wusa.12074
- Lorey, I. (2015). Derieg, A. (Trans.) *State of insecurity: Government of the precarious*. New York: Verso Futures.
- Mantzari, D. (2014). *Women directors in 'global' art cinema: negotiating feminism and representation* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of East Anglia, Norwich.
- May, T. (2017). *A fragile life: Accepting our vulnerability*. Chicago: The University of Chicago.

- Mayer, S. (2016). I have no country: British cinema as a runaway girl. In *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema*, (pp. 79-96). London : I.B. Tauris.
- Mazierska, E. (2013). Work, struggle, and cinema. In E. Mazierska (Ed.), *Work in Cinema*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- McCormack, D. & Salmeniemäki, S. (2016). The biopolitics of precarity and the self, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19(1), 3 – 15. doi: 10.1177/1367549415585559
- Neupert, R. (1995). *The end: Narration and closure in the cinema*. Detroit: Wayne State University.
- Öngel, S. (2012). Çalışma hayatında kadına engel çok (Many obstacles to women in business life). In Ö. Göztepe (Ed.), *Güvencesizleştirme: Süreç, Yanılgı, Olanak*, (pp. 166 – 168). Ankara: NotaBene.
- Pop, D. (2014). Representing women: Towards a new cinema. In *Romanian New Wave Cinema: An Introduction*, (pp. 181 – 205). North Carolina: McFarland.
- Preis, E. (1990). Not such a happy ending: The ideology of the open ending. *Journal of Film and Video*, 42(3), 18-23. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20687905>
- Puar, J. & Berlant, L. & Butler, J. & Cvejić, B. & Lorey, I. & Vujanović, A. (2012). Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejić, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanović. *TDR: The Drama Review* 56(4), 163-177. The MIT Press. Retrieved from <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/491900>
- Standing, G. (2011). *The precariat: The new dangerous class*. Bodmin, Cornwall: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Standing, G. (2014) Denizens and the precariat. In *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens*, (pp. 1 – 32). Norfolk: Bloomsbury Academic.

- Seymour, R. (2012). We are all precarious: On the concept of the “precariat” and its misuses. *New Left Project*, 10 (February). Retrieved from http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/we_are_all_precarious_on_the_concept_of_the_precariat_and_its_misuses
- Şenses, N. (2017). Rethinking Migration in the Context of Precarity: The Case of Turkey. In C.U. Schierup, M.B. Jorgensen (Eds.), *Politics of Precarity: Migrant Conditions, Struggles and Experiences*, (pp. 99 – 117). Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill.
- Todorov, T., & Weinstein, A. (1969). Structural Analysis of Narrative. *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 3(1), 70-76. doi: 10.2307/1345003
- Tuncer, A. Ö. (2017). *American Honey ve Yersiz Yurtsuz: Hareket Hâlinde (American Honey and Sans Toit ni Loi: On the move)*. Retrieved from <http://www.altyazi.net/yazilar/american-honey-yersiz-yurtsuz-hareket-halinde/>
- Tyree, J. M. (2013). Unsafe houses: Moonrise Kingdom and Wes Anderson’s conflicted comedies of escape, *Film Quarterly*, 66 (4), 23 - 27. doi: 10.1525/FQ.2013.66.4.23
- Weissberg, J. (2012). [Review of the motion picture *Present Tense*]. *Daily Variety*, (49). 17.
- Vij, R. (2013). Affective fields of precarity: Gendered anatomies in contemporary Japan, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 38(2), 122-138. doi: 10.1177/0304375413488031
- Yüksel, E. (2015). Kadın Yönetmenlerin filmlerinde erkeklik temsilleri ve şiddet. *Doğu Batı*, 75 (August, September, October), 135 – 151.