**Halit Refiğ’s Fight For A National Cinema:**

**An Introductory Text and Translation**

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**Introduction[[1]](#endnote-1)**

Halit Refiğ (1934-2009) was a film critic, a film theorist and a film director from Turkey. In 1971, his theoretical writings on film were collected in a single volume and titled *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası* (The Fight for a National Cinema).[[2]](#endnote-2) In this book, Refiğ calls for unique aesthetics in Turkish cinema at a time when the concept of national cinema was an overlooked issue in film studies.[[3]](#endnote-3) The work also complements and adds on to some of the third cinema/post-colonial cinema debates during the same decade. In this book Refiğ elaborates concepts of national, cultural and ethnic identities in cinematic expression. As a filmmaker, Refiğ made both popular and personal Turkish films between 1961-2001. As a film critic and theoretician, he produced a significant body of film criticism and proposed a theory of national cinema. As an intellectual, Refiğ focused on the schizophrenic identity split in the Turkish psyche and criticized Turkey’s westernization by praising the traditional visual and performance arts of the Ottoman era. Refiğ was one of the founders of the Turkish Film Institute at Mimar Sinan University, where he lectured between 1975-2001 and trained generations of future Turkish directors. The teachings were founded on Refiğ’s personal vision of national Turkish cinema.

Refiğ started out writing film critiques for newspapers in 1953. Since then, his views progressively changed from a western-inclined vision of filmmaking to the glorification of the aesthetic particularisms of Turkish culture.[[4]](#endnote-4) One key development that led to his change of heart was Metin Erksan’s *Dry Summer* (*Susuz Yaz*), a film that won the Golden Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival in 1963. The film’s international acclaim led film critics, filmmakers and cinephiles to discuss ideas about the creation of an authentically Turkish film industry that promotes ‘art cinema’. Eventually, this created a schism between the different groups composing the national film sector. The Turkish cinephiles,[[5]](#endnote-5) for instance, established a *Cinémathèque* and created the Istanbul International Film Festival.[[6]](#endnote-6) They also founded their own journal, *Yeni Sinema Dergisi*, and created a film critics association called SIYAD.

In turn, Refiğ and other fellow directors who were against the Cinémathèque group started making films together and gathered weekly at each other’s homes to discuss the future of Turkish cinema. During these private meetings, Refiğ and his comrades reflected on ways to promote quality cinema. Refiğ wrote his ideas on daily newspapers and magazines. Specifically, his definition of Turkish national cinema underwent three distinct definitions: populist/people’s cinema (*Halk Sineması*), social realist cinema, and nationalist cinema (*Ulusal Sinema*).

According to Refiğ, spectators endorsed populist cinema because of its mass appealing narratives.[[7]](#endnote-7) He explained that these type of movies were financed through ticket sales, hence the notion of ‘People’s cinema’. At the origin of populist cinema is thereby the need for Turkish production companies to grow their relatively small capital by pre-selling films to theatre owners. To do so, film companies have to guarantee the popularity of the chosen film amongst the viewers via narratives, actors and décors that satisfy the general public’s expectations.

Refiğ’s second definition, the social-realist film, was influenced by post-World War II Italian cinema. During the Cold War, Refiğ’s filmic diet was mainly composed of films from Europe and USA, as Turkey was becoming a western ally under the NATO missile shield. Italian neo-realism, in particular, had a huge impact on his ideas on social-realist cinema. This is the early 1960s when Refiğ joined a successful generation of filmmakers who critiqued American neo-colonialism and called for an authentic cinema. Refiğ encouraged Turkish social-realist films to focus on the storytelling of everyday and ordinary people. The ideas expressed in his 1971 book define the Turkish social-realist cinema as follows:[[8]](#endnote-8) the films should be realistic, i.e., they should deal with 'real' people and their everyday problems; the films should have an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist stance through critiques of the individual’s alienation and human values’ loss in modern society; the films should have a political background via social occurrences such as a strike, civil disobedience, and migration to the big city; the films should have a new aesthetic, formal experimentation previously lacking in mainstream cinema.[[9]](#endnote-9)

The Turkish social realist cinema movement came to a halt following the 1965 general elections, which brought a right wing party AP (*Adalet Partisi*/Justice Party) into power. The filmmakers were channeled to direct more commercially oriented features with occasional forays into social films. However, Refiğ was now able to mature further his reflections on national cinema. In this third phase, Refiğ fused many past and contemporary influences together. These influences included the birth of a new national architecture by Sedad Hakki Eldem in the 1930s, the emergence of a new National music style by Ahmet Adnan Saygun in the 1940s, a new dialectic-materialist literature by novelist Kemal Tahir in the 1950s, the two-dimensional storytelling in *Karagoz* (shadow theater) and *Ortaoyunu* (Turkish medieval vaudeville).[[10]](#endnote-10) Refiğ’s final definition of Turkish national cinema broadly corresponds to a critique of the west and a return to Ottoman cultural roots. As a matter of fact, Refiğ’s conceptualization of Turkish cinema went hand in hand with a critique of Turkish modernization. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his close circle of friends put an end to the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire and proclaimed a brand new Republic of Turkey. For the next 27 years, the Kemalist elite made a series of reforms that shifted Turkish culture from its Islamic roots to a new secular European life style. Subsequently, cultural modernization stimulated new, westernized ideas on art, which threatened the local, traditional Turkish art forms. In 1923, a new Republic of Turkey with a nation-state ideology was created and the policy makers privileged the promotion of western arts to achieve a rupture with the old imperial past. Ballet, classical music and theater became favorite forms, while the film industry disinterested the authorities.[[11]](#endnote-11) Cinema remained an expensive elite art in the hands of a single man, Muhsin Ertuğrul, who dominated Turkish film production between the 1920s and 1940s. As Ertuğrul was a man of theater, he produced film adaptations of western European plays and casted actors from his own company, the Ertuğrul theater. Until 1949, the number of films produced per year remained very low: in the 1914-1947 period, Turkish cinema only produced sixty-seven films, a very low figure considering the population size.[[12]](#endnote-12)

While four of Refiğ’s lengthy interviews have been published in book format, comprehensive accounts on his film criticism have not been written.[[13]](#endnote-13) As Refiğ’s films and writings have not yet been translated, his contribution to national cinema debates is largely ignored in the general Anglophone discourses on film history and in the relatively recent English literature concerned with world cinema.[[14]](#endnote-14) To understand the context of Refiğ’s film theory one has to look at many cultural and legal components: the series of films emerging from Turkey between the 1950s-1970s, called Yeşilçam (*Green Pine*), the State-regulated film censorship, the nationalist directors’ reaction to censorship and, of course, Halit Refiğ’s expertise and intellectual status in Turkish film culture.

**Yeşilçam System**

The Turkish studio system was named Yeşilçam between the 1950s-1980s. Yeşilçam literally meant *Green Pine*. It is the name of the street where offices of film producers were located. On a political level, Yeşilçam essentially meant two things: an economic mode of production and a collective imaginary of popular taste. Yeşilçam system was based on star actors, non-union labor, fast and cheap production (frequently) based on plot formulas that imitated American film genres. The financial investment originated from an advance on receipts system, which depended on Anatolian theatre owners. Indeed, the so-called ‘Bond System’ was named after the bonds signed by the producers, who borrowed money from the theatre owners by pre-selling the screening rights of the films. In return, the theatre owners could dictate what kind of films had to be made, which star should be part of which project. The lack of finance, disorganized labor, producers with no capital and over-demanding stars led to the collapse of the Yeşilçam system. During its heydays Yeşilçam served hundreds of theatres both in big cities like Istanbul and in small towns in central Anatolia. Yeşilçam is also responsible for creating a popular film language, its local interpretation of recycled American film genres and new sub/hybrid-genres, an infrastructure and craftsmanship, which were later revived with the introduction of private television channels and the resurgence of young filmmakers in the mid-1990s.[[15]](#endnote-15) This is the system that Refiğ experienced as a filmmaker and commented on as a film theorist.

**Turkish State's Involvement in Film**

After 1950, new filmmakers trained in French, American and German film schools started coming from abroad and entered the Turkish film business. In 1952, sixty-one films were produced in a single year. The state had some positive influences on cinema at this period: in 1942, CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), the ruling Republican People's Party, initiated a decision to prohibit Egyptian melodramas. This legislation resulted in the Turkish takeover of the national film market. In 1948, a decree on municipal taxation reduced the tax fares on domestic products and increased the tax on foreign films.[[16]](#endnote-16) Additionally, the economic drive initiated by the newly elected Democrat Party governments in the 1950s led to an increased production and consumption of domestic Turkish films. The investment in infrastructures as well as the rural migration to the big cities marked the rebirth of Turkish cinema as a means of mass entertainment.

The relationship between the State and the film industry is crucial in understanding how Turkish cinema worked in the 1960s.[[17]](#endnote-17) Successive right wing governments managed to supervise Turkish cinema via two mechanisms: a legal framework that favored censoring film content and economic incentives that controlled films’ output.

Articles in the criminal code monitored film censorship, along with a censorship board. For years, screenplays were controlled in the pre-production stage and films were screened before exhibition, banned and cut without much explanation.[[18]](#endnote-18) Refiğ wanted to make films that suited to popular taste but that would not be banned by the state censorship either. He called for a cease of interference by the State and worked towards a national cinema that would privilege the efforts and creativity of the Turkish people and the filmmakers.

**Directors' Response: Turkish National Cinema Movement**

Between the years 1952-1961, some Turkish filmmakers formed a practice of domestic filmmaking with local themes[[19]](#endnote-19) that were to serve as a basis for the national cinema movement later on.[[20]](#endnote-20) Movie attendance increased significantly and an attempt to create a national cinema was at hand. In 1949 a generation of young directors began to produce films that used local themes, everyday language and shot on location instead of studios. Dealing with social matters seemed financially dangerous to the young directors and their not-so-zealous producers. The success of Memduh Un’s *Three Friends* (*Üç Arkadaş*, 1958) re-emphasized the importance of prioritising the everyday life of ordinary people as the main subject matter of popular filmmaking.

Later this group of young filmmakers (Lütfi Akad, Memduh Ün, Atif Yılmaz, Metin Erksan and Halit Refiğ) deliberately relied on traditional performing arts such as *Karagöz* (Turkish Shadow Theater) and Ottoman miniatures. They pointed out that Turkish cinema was not a cinema of capital, like the Hollywood system, nor it was a state-sponsored cinema, like west European cinemas.[[21]](#endnote-21) These directors claimed that Turkish cinema was in fact an intensive labor and depended solely on the Turkish audience for its survival. Furthermore, they suggested that Turkish films with Hollywoodish style did not appeal to Turkish people and that, for this reason, the Turkish directors should resist such type of filmmaking. For these directors, Turkish cinema had to produce for the people. But the method of resistance to Hollywood system should not be imitating Hollywood films or producing an alienated high-class art cinema.[[22]](#endnote-22) The new cinema had to rely on traditional Turkish arts and narrative forms. This group and its opponents, the *Cinémathèque* group,[[23]](#endnote-23) who supported the superiority of western cinema, had several, heated and even aggressive debates regarding the nature of Turkey’s national cinema.

While Refiğ’s filmmaking oscillated between art films and popular films, he made three films that he considered as successful examples of national cinema: *Four Women in the Harem* (*Haremde Dört Kadın*, 1965), *I Lost My Heart to a Turk* (*Bir Türke Gonül Verdim*, 1969) and *The Tired Warrior* (*Yorgun Savaşçı*, 1979). In *Four Women in the Harem*, Refiğ uses women as symbolic, ideological markers of modernization and shows their transformation as a revelation of cultural identity. The common ground between Refiğ’s films lies in the subtle mixture of Turkish, Islamic, Anatolian past with western modern society’s technology. To quote Refiğ, his idea of national cinema is based on:

…the desire of (Turkish) people to show that our economic and political system, the relationships between men and women, the modernization and westernization projects, the idea of art go back to our Ottoman roots: it is based on *karagöz* (Turkish puppet theater), *ortaoyunu* (Turkish vaudeville), Ottoman palace music, miniatures. I made (*Four Women in the Harem*) as a search for such style… [[24]](#endnote-24)

*I Lost My Heart to a Turk* is about a German woman, Eva, who comes to find the father of her illegitimate son and goes on to become a Turkish saint, an ideal image that personifies all elements of Turkish culture including the language (Turkish), religion (Islam), technology (western), ancient civilizations (Byzantium, Ottoman) and finally nature. *The Tired Warrior* (*Yorgun Savaşçı*) is a TRT sponsored adaptation of Kemal Tahir’s eponymous novel, published in 1965.

Refiğ and other critic/director friends agreed to call their efforts the *National Cinema Movement* when they were able to develop, transform and theorize their themes between 1965-69. These film professionals started to touch upon social issues in Turkish society at the time, such as unequal distribution of wealth, the social and psychological effects of rapid modernization, rural to urban migration, the dream of the big city and women’s position in society. Because all these issues relate to society’s problems at large, the directors associated these films to social realist films. Members of the *National Cinema Movement* were excluded from national film festivals where *Cinémathèque* members were appointed as jury and where critics condemned films made in accordance with this movement’s political and aesthetic concerns[[25]](#endnote-25). In 1980, the movement ended with the burning of the negatives of Refiğ's final work, *The Tired Warrior*.[[26]](#endnote-26) As a matter of fact, the 1980 military coup banned all political parties and activities for four years and closed down associations of any kind (including the *Cinémathèque* association) and directors from the *National Cinema Movement* either quit filmmaking or turned towards more personal or commercial projects. The younger generations of filmmakers favored a new form of transnational cinema, whereas the well-educated directors, who also depended on foreign finance, made arthouse films concerned about alienation and modernist aesthetics. By 1989 Turkish cinema had lost its audience to television, and awaited 1995 to be revived again.[[27]](#endnote-27)

**Halit Refiğ: A Theorist Filmmaker**

Halit Refiğ developed his ideas on national cinema in the context described above. He was lucky to be working in a prolific and dynamic era for filmmakers but he also had to endure a politically turbulent period. Refiğ’s success resides in his ability to intellectualise Turkish cinema.

Refiğ was born in an industrial family in the cosmopolitan coastal city of Izmir and raised in the imperial city of Istanbul. He had a bilingual education and attended Istanbul’s American Robert College, the oldest US institution of higher education abroad. He went to Korea, Vietnam and Singapore in 1955-56 where he shot documentaries with a Super 8 camera. He started writing film critiques in 1958 and made his first feature film in 1961. Refiğ soon experienced the dilemmas of being a Turkish intellectual: being Turkish meant living in a culturally complex land, where thousands years of cultures continuously merged and mixed together in the context of rising and falling civilizations. Refiğ soon understood that being an intellectual meant repressing the multi-cultural Ottoman past and turning a blind eye to the time when Turkic tribes were fighting the Chinese in the steppes of central Asia. It also meant allying with the reforming military-bureaucratic elite and forcing people to deny the history between 1299-1922. Finally, it meant despising religion and advocating the nationalisation and purification of traditional Turkish languages and customs. Refiğ refused to take such a political stance. His writings on national cinema therefore read more like a return of the repressed. As Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy observed:

Refiğ’s counter-position put great emphasis on what made Turkish society different from western societies - it was said that Turkish society had a different social structure and also a different ‘soul’. The *Ulusal Sinema* movement aimed to draw on cultural elements from Ottoman period, and also on the style and motifs of popular Anatolian culture, such as miniature paintings and folk tales, with the aim of elaborating an idiosyncratic and particularistic popular cinema in Turkey. The imperative, according to Refiğ, was for Turkish film-makers to find inspiration in ‘their own history and people’; ‘to find a language that is right for the country’...[[28]](#endnote-28)

In his attempt to conceptualize ideas on ‘national cinemas’, Andrew Higson identifies the criticism-based approach as one of the four ways to engage with national film culture.[[29]](#endnote-29) Refiğ’s film criticism and theoretical writings worked towards a new idea of national cinema by analyzing the ways producers, scriptwriters and directors constructed Turkish film’s characters, the dominant narrative discourse and dramatic motifs, as well as the use of traditional and visual source materials. Surely, Refiğ also used some of the genres and conventions of Hollywood cinema in his early filmmaking. However, he progressively turned to Turkish popular culture to refine his filmic style. As a matter of fact, Refiğ’s writings stressed the necessity for Turkish directors to create authentic films by borrowing and combining traditional imagery with ordinary and everyday life themes.

**Selected Translations From *Fight For a National Cinema* (*Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, 1971)**

WESTERNIZATION AND TURKISH CINEMA[[30]](#endnote-30)

The fortune of the real soldier

is poverty on his road.

YUNUS EMRE

I shall begin by mentioning at first that I started to become bothered by constant theoretical talk. It is actually more interesting to concentrate on more concrete examples. Unfortunately, the concepts of ‘westernization’ and ‘Peoples’ cinema’ that we have put forward have been used erroneously by all sorts of people without context or clue. We should, therefore, return to the heart of the matter.

We claim that when we think about our cinema, the concepts and values derived from the west lead us nowhere, or rather lead us to a dead end. To value the future of our cinema we must, first and foremost, define its past and current situation within its own historical conditions. Those who understand, please come forward, because you still have not done so! The ‘critics’ whirl around in circles, covering the same ground, turning over the same points, as if in a trance like a Mevlevi dervish does, exclaiming ‘Oh modern cinema, modern cinema *oh la la*!’

What is the issue then? They say that contemporary cinema narrates the human, that there is no humanism in Turkish cinema! They complain about the lack of ‘humanism’ as if the Turkish people are in great need of it. To understand this claim one must retrace humanism and the roots of the Turkish thought.

Humanism emerged as a thought and art movement of the rising bourgeoisie class in western Europe. During the feudal period, humanism questioned the idea of God and explored the position of man accordingly. It shares great similarities with the reform movement in religion. Humanism cannot be thought outside the historical, social and economic structures of the west. The art of the bourgeoisie that narrates humanity has replaced the art of feudalism that narrates God. In fact, both locate the principle of private property at their foundation. The feudal landowner, who was responsible to no one but God, was the absolute ruler and owner of his land. With the domination of the commercial and industrial economy, the feudal class, based on the agricultural economy, has lost its social hegemony to the bourgeoisie class, based on this new economic order. The humanist art that cries out ‘human, human’ is the final victory tune of the bourgeoisie as a consequence of this class struggle. The cries of liberty are echoes of the rumble of this war.

The bourgeoisie class, as we know it, still shows immense talents for devilish negotiations based on capitalistic interest. To overthrow feudality, the bourgeois class first allied with the landless peasants and once they achieved social hegemony, they allied with the feudal class against the peasantry and working class. After the mid-nineteenth century, the bourgeoisie sat at the bargaining table with the working class, as the latter gained power over time. The west's famous ‘social democracy,’ that we all greatly admire, is the product of this new negotiation.

If we are to consider Renaissance humanism as pangs of conscience for the Inquisition and its millions of victims who perished in the name of God, we shall see the new humanism, brought with existentialism, as a shame felt for World War II’s bloodshed, who were murdered in the name of the fatherland and on behalf of the bourgeoisie. As Kemal Tahir once stated, it would be inappropriate to associate the guilty conscience of the western thinkers and artists with Turkish people who had no part in these bloody crimes.

Having presented the roots of the ‘individualistic’ worldview and the understanding of humanism of the west, let us now look at the structure of our society.

Towards the final years of the Byzantine Empire, people became either landless or land-slave peasants due to an aristocracy that owned large masses of Anatolian territories. With the Turkish conquest of Anatolia, a great land transformation occurred, one that was based on ancient Turkish traditions and on the Islamic conquest law. The state ownership system thereby replaced private land ownership. It is due to this state-owned land system (*miri*), established during the Seljukian era and maintained by the Ottomans, that Turkey came to have a different social harmony and order that cannot be compared to European countries. [[31]](#endnote-31)

In *The Development of Capitalism in Turkey*, dr. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı suggests that

Ottomans are a state and empire that is created with primitive socialist tolerance and nomad democracy and established firmly with aid of the Janissaries' striking power. The Ottoman army was not isolated from the people as much as it was thought as in the (western) capitalist army that was secluded from economic life and collective production.[[32]](#endnote-32)

Mustafa Cezar, in *The* *Levends in the History of Ottomans*, writes: ‘We can say that during the era when the manorial system was practiced, the Ottoman State possessed a socialist state structure in terms of village administration and economy.’[[33]](#endnote-33) Thus the Ottoman state system was not a device used by a class to oppress another, like in Europe - it was a system that fed and protected its people. The term used by Sencer Divitçioğlu to describe this process is ‘Gracious State’.[[34]](#endnote-34)

Of course, there is a substantial difference in worldview and understanding of humanity between the west and Turkish society. The former is based on private land ownership and the latter on manorial land ownership. Therefore, ideas borrowed haphazardly from the west will not find their equivalent in our society - they will only remain a fantasy. This is the reason why Turkish society constantly resists revolutions that do not arise from within the needs of the whole of Turkish society and which are imposed by western thinking.

The shift of the commercial economy from road transportation to maritime lines, the discovery of America, imperialism and the development of capitalism are factors that caused the Ottoman State to rail against the western world. In the novel *Tired Warrior* (*Yorgun Savaşçı*), Tahir writes: ‘Ottomans have seen that since the state has grown poor and become weak, they will fail to fulfill their duties to their peoples.[[35]](#endnote-35) They wanted to abandon the responsibilities, akin to the west, and impose the duty on the classes. But the rich from the east are different from the bourgeoisie of the west… Can our rich become bourgeoisie? No! The rich who thrived thanks to the state remains forever indebted to the state. For that reason westernization did not save us from this trajectory’

Apart from saving, westernization made things even worse. Since the Tanzimat movement, all the essential institutions of the Turkish state were shaken.[[36]](#endnote-36) From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, the sultan's household troops took over state-owned lands and farms became private property under local landlords (*ayans*, *aghas*). In the imperial era, the manorial system began to deteriorate under the system of landed proprietors. Later, western states attempted to create a capitalist class based on non-Muslims. When this failed, the Republican state tried to create a nationalist capitalist class. This failed, too. The Turkish nation became divided in an unprecedented way. On the one hand, the administrative class consisted of civil servants who mostly inhabited big cities; on the other hand, the peasant class, who felt neglected, found salvation in nomad Turkish traditions, Islamic law, the mosque and the congregation. This social category reacted against those western sayings ‘He who saves his ship is the captain’ and ‘Every tub must stand on its own bottom’.

The new administrative class, wittingly or unwittingly, became the imperial police of western thought and art. It is estranged from its people, belittles them, and even regards them as enemy. Today, the attitudes of Turkish intellectuals are the result of this situation.

Turkish cinema is a (national) cinema that survives with the support provided by the people. It does not have the support and help that theater, music, and painting have received from the state. Turkish cinema is born from Turkish people’s need to watch contemporary films that reflect on traditional folk stories, theatrical plays, shadow puppetry, light comedies, and festivals. Surely, arts like painting, theater and music, which are the products of westernized state policies, are quite separate from cinema, which is born from within the people.

It can be claimed that there are many contrary opinions concerning the technical and aesthetic aspects of the Turkish cinema today. There are numerous advantages in making these different opinions subject to constructive debate. But one cannot say that Turkish cinema is founded on a system of exploitation. Such a system can only exist when a capital-based industry is present. The Turkish cinema industry is based not on a capital industry but on labour. Today, what makes the making of more than 250 movies a year in Turkey possible is not the presence of a certain capital but the bonds calculated according to the number of people who will pay to watch the film.[[37]](#endnote-37) From this perspective, Turkish cinema is a cinema of the people.

But as in any other folk art, this is not a conclusion but rather a starting point. The real issue of Turkish cinema is returning what derives from the people back to them. This cannot be done by spreading threats stolen from random western magazines. Populism is not hanging torn socks in the living room, or collecting wooden spoons or listening to Alawite songs. Western imperialists are doing this kind of folk exoticism very well, too.

Populism cannot be achieved by dictating random worldviews or enforcing alien values and tastes. It is totally impossible to force Turkish people to accept these, to those who formed the basis of a 600 year-old empire. The popular reaction against westernism, although it was brought up by the Turkish state itself, is the best evidence for westernization’s failure. Populism is possible by approaching the people as citizens, understanding them rather than seeing them from an imperial perspective. Turkish cinema is a window that opens to the thoughts, pleasures, and excitements of the people. It is a great treasure for intellectuals who desire to get close to the people and to understand them.

I, Halit Refiğ, learned everything I know about Turkey and Turkish people from my occupation and my interest in Turkish cinema. I am proud to be one of the pioneers of the first real folk art that comes from and will return to the people...

(1967)

CONCEPTUAL DEBATES[[38]](#endnote-38)

1. People’s Cinema

Since Turkish cinema was not founded by foreign capital, it is not the cinema of imperialism. It is neither the cinema of the bourgeoisie since it was not founded by national capitalism, nor the cinema of the state since it was not founded by the government. Turkish cinema is a ‘people’s cinema’ since it is based on labour rather than capital and was born out of Turkish people’s necessity of watching films. Today, even Turkish film producers, who have enough capital, do business by taking long-term bonds. They rely on the open credit of people and public opinion. As soon as people cut out this support (when they give up seeing Turkish films), the filmmaking in Turkey becomes restricted to one or two films made by some brave fellows.

The closed economic structure of Turkish cinema unavoidably shares similar sentiments and attitudes with Turkish folk arts (such as Anatolian folk paintings, Turkish folk stories, *meddah*/public storyteller, *ortaoyunu*/comedies and *Hacivat-Karagoz* shadow plays), whose roots are based on a self-sufficient local economy. In this respect, to ignore Turkish cinema is no different from ignoring other Turkish folk arts. Like in other folk arts, developmental and changing opportunities are very limited in Turkish cinema.

Therefore, it is impossible to put the Turkish cinema on a pedestal –just as other folk arts. The real value of Turkish cinema and folk arts is that they are a treasure with eternal prosperity for the national arts researchers and performers. They show us how to move people; the way people express their excitement, as well as their reactions and opinions about certain issues.

It is not because Turkish cinema is a folk cinema that it possesses a completely populist characteristic. A lot of folk poems have been written to entertain the landlords, a lot of folk songs have been sung to praise the tribal masters, haven’t they?

However, Turkish cinema often made populist experiments (in genre, star system, plotlines), whose features depended on the fashion of the time. Yet just like my own films, these works approached the issue by treating Turkish people as if they belonged to a capitalist bourgeois system, as in western societies. As a result, our populist films appeared insufficient in terms of thinking and narrative, and our audience was usually disinterested in these films, which they considered extraneous, and even deviant. Of course more populist films will be made in Turkish cinema. However, an understanding of populism based on historical characteristics of Turkish society rather than western populism patterns will both provide immensely solid and unique works of cinema and bridge the gap between Turkish filmmakers and the people. So far, this challenge has been hard to achieve.

(1968)

1. National cinema

Before explaining the concepts of ‘national cinema’ and ‘folk cinema’, it is best to mention Muhsin Ertuğrul’s filmmaking, which happened over a period of seventeen years. Muhsin’s cinema was mostly based on western sources (films, plays and novels). In terms of its outer and internal structure, Muhsin’s film aesthetics were influenced by western classical theatre. During the single party’s (1923-1946) westernization efforts, Ertuğrul’s cinema pretty much reflected the artistic and intellectual style of the period. In the 1950s, the movement pioneered by Lütfü Akad, Osman Seden and Atıf Yılmaz aimed to improve the language of cinema and purify it from the influence of the theatre. However, this was merely a matter of adopting western cinematic influences instead of western theatrical influences. The real reaction to Ertuğrul’s cinema came from certain filmmakers who were trying to get into the business in Yeşilçam Street in Beyoğlu. They were neither interested in theatre nor in western cinema and their financial and technical capabilities were extremely limited. The films they produced, even though they were extremely commercial and primitive in terms of technique and aesthetics, had a lot of national characteristics. Traditional Turkish theatrical arts were indeed at the roots of their film practices. In contrast with Ertuğrul’s cinema, which drew on characteristics from the single-party period, Yeşilçam cinema, which began in the years of the government’s Democrat Party, became a progressive and positive step in the history of Turkish cinema. In other words, cinema started having national characteristics, in the same way as politics were becoming public. The people who best represented Yeşilçam cinema were prominently employed in Fuat Rutkay’s company, Halk Film. Vedat Örfi Bengü, Seyfi Havaeri, Memduh Ün, Hüseyin Peyda, Şinasi Özonuk and Nuri Akıncı, who belonged to scratchy film offices on Yesilcam Street were also representatives of this type of cinema. Undoubtedly, the most typical examples of Yeşilçam cinema were produced by Muharrem Gürses. Even though he did it in a very vulgar and primitive form, Gürses was a filmmaker who revealed the attitudes and sentiments of Turkish people in a way that was appropriate for traditional Turkish theatrical arts. He was indeed the most attention-grabbing director among the pioneers of Turkish art cinema.

Yeşilçam cinema, which had a life of just ten years, was a ground for preparation of both the emergence of the people’s cinema and national cinema. The emergence of cinema coincided with the electrification of Anatolia. The creation of urban households coincided with the emergence of audiences who watched Turkish films. As a result of Yeşilçam’s success, Turkish film production increased and filmmaking came to be known as a professional vocation. Yet since there was not enough capital to produce films in large numbers (the amount of movie-goers was increasing at the same time), the bonds issued by production companies started to finance Turkish films. This *bond system,* which came to be standard practice after 1958-60, was based on the agreement that a film’s expenses would be reimbursed only after the film was made and the ticket was sold. As the real bond owners were the audiences, these films were supposed to be made according to the taste of the Turkish audience: stories people loved, stars people adored and fashionable music of the day. These films flourished in Turkish cinema, along with Turkey’s first ‘star system’. Neither the producers nor the directors were concerned with contemporary topics. Rather, stylish actors and actresses such as Türkan Şoray, Yılmaz Güney, Cüneyt Arkın, Hülya Koçyiğit and Sadri Alışık became Turkish cinema’s emblems. I do not know what others think but, this is what I mean by ‘people’s cinema’ when I refer to that kind of film practice. I accept this type of cinema as ‘people’s cinema’ because it was based neither on private capital nor on the government’s economic support. Instead, it possessed a general and ‘anonymous’ artistic character. Even though this ‘people’s cinema’ was based on Yeşilçam cinema, it no longer has a relationship with it, because Yeşilçam cinema did not have a star – or hero-based - narrative system nor a bond system based on public support. Nevertheless, with the appearance of bonds and Turkish stardom, no film companies, including Fuat Rutkay’s Halk Film company in Yeşilçam Street, survived. Today, there is little or no scientific merit in associating contemporary Turkish cinema with Yeşilçam cinema. The filmmaking practices that existed briefly between mid-1940 to mid-1950s, which are sometimes related to Yeşilçam, existed for only ten years and naturally disappeared.

Despite all the developments in the technique and language of cinema, we actually cannot possibly say that this ‘people’s cinema’, which began to improve from 1958 to 1960, is as positive and progressive as Yeşilçam cinema. One of the most important aspects of ‘people’s cinema’ was its stereotyping tendencies and more generally, the loss of its nationalistic characteristics due to foreign influences. Remakes of foreign films and narrative emulation were indeed characteristic practices of the period.[[39]](#endnote-39) According to certain authors, this was never the directors’ and producers’ fault. If there is something to blame, it is the stars’ stereotypical personalities and the people’s dependence on foreign support.

‘National cinema’ is a concept which came to be used consciously from 1966-67 onwards. This is not a popular movement like ‘people’s cinema’ but a form of cinema which was theorized by directors like Metin Erksan and Halit Refiğ and by institutions such as the Turkish Film Archive. The concept of ‘National cinema’ was born as a reaction both to ‘people’s cinema’ and the admiration for Western cinema. This kind of depends on the government’s general policies on culture and on public support. Ever since today, Turkish people rely upon foreign production rather than the domestic one. Turkish economy is mainly based on immigrant workers in Germany, American support and foreign capital investments. There is no support from the public nor an official promotion from the government. In this sense, the examples of ‘national cinema’ are limited to a number of films such as *Sevmek Zamanı* (*Time to Love*, 1965), *Kuyu* (*Well*, 1968) and *Bir Türke Gönül Verdim* (*I Lost My Heart to a Turk*, 1969).

Today, Turkish cinema is on the threshold of a new change. Turkish films reached a remarkable number of foreign markets for the first time in history. The fact that Turkish films are being screened in countries like Iran, Egypt and Greece will undoubtedly have an impact on Turkish cinema. The faster there will be money coming from foreign countries, even more than what the domestic market can provide, the more Turkish filmmakers will have to accept this new source of revenue. Just as Yeşilçam disappeared, now the company bond system is dying out. Co-productions bring foreign actors, with they own cultural characteristics, to our cinema. This improvement, without doubt, is disadvantageous both to the existing ‘people’s cinema’ and the theoretical ‘national cinema’. Yet if expanding abroad can empower Turkish cinema economically, a Middle Eastern cinema, where Turkish cinema has a dominant and unitary role, could potentially born. This type of cinema would be different than, and a reaction against, western cinema. That is, of course, unless higher politics aborts such attempts …

(1970)

HISTORY WILL BE THE ULTIMATE JUDGE[[40]](#endnote-40)

III. While we were asleep, Osman Bey was not, he waited for us. Poverty was finally at hand, and he did not act in stinginess like many did. He tried to clothe our naked, feed our unfed, no matter if he could or not.

*MOTHER STATE*[[41]](#endnote-41)

From 1967 to 1969, I was facing various problems, far away from the film set. Meanwhile, the staff of *Sinematek* and *Genç Sinema* (whose brains cannot function due to the feverish tingling of rage, whose eyes are bloodshot because of greed), were calling Metin Erksan and I (with their drooling mouths), ‘the gate hounds of Yeşilçam’, ‘Mussolini worshippers’, ‘censorship collaborators’ and ‘highway robbery bandits’.

I was trying to put this time to good use by searching the sources of Turkish culture. Before the publication of *Mother State*, Tahir hinted at the cornerstone of our culture in *The Tired Warrior*:

While the state has become a device for one class to crash another at different times in the west, in the east the state has an emancipatory role for all classes. Therefore there have been times in the west when societies existed without the presence of a state but in the east, no society has ever existed without a state. In the east, the state is the pre-requisite for the existence and dissolution of societies…

From the systematization of Sufism by the *mudarris* (headmasters) of Nizamiye Madrassah Gazalî (Islamic University of the middle-ages) until the beginnings of westernization, there has been a great agreement between the worldviews of state-sponsored art and Turkish folk art. From this perspective, Mevlânâ and Yunus have said the same things in different styles, Nedim and Karacaoğlan have expressed the same excitement in different ways.[[42]](#endnote-42)

In contrast with the individual drama caused by class struggle (which I believe is the essence of western arts), traditional Turkish arts are based on the idealization of the concepts of beauty, goodness, virtue and behaviors. They are also based on narratives that portray culturally emblematic characters that live in a society ruled by a divine order. In this sense, the understanding of realism in Turkish and western arts have evolved in completely different directions. Turkish arts do not strive to represent the outer and physical appearances of the world. Rather, Turkish arts represent an interpretation of reality within the framework of a divine order, embodied by the state. In contrast with western arts that represent nature as it is, traditional style and expression patterns exist in Turkish arts, as in other eastern arts. This difference is most obvious between western theater and traditional Turkish theatrical plays, between Renaissance painting and ornamentations and embroidery used in Turkish books to increase the power of expression.

There is a huge gap between theater that narrates the drama of the individual as a product of class society and Karagöz’s shadow play, which describes a classless society. In comparison with the Aristotelian understanding of realist theater, Karagöz’s understanding of realism finds its origins in Sufism. The opening stanzas (Ghazal)[[43]](#endnote-43) in a Karagöz play express this idea:

This screen is the platform to tame the eye on representation

It is a mastery of imitation yet, a fine reproduction of reality.[[44]](#endnote-44)

Therefore, it is impossible to find a (creative) way out from Karagöz or other Turkish theatrical plays to a westernized representational theater. It is also in vain to find middle ground, a fusion within miniature for accommodating/adopting a westernized style of painting. Our national theater’s attempts, which are inspired by Brecht’s epic theater are unbearable charades. Turgut Zaim’s honorable attempts to westernize his own style resulted in nothing else but closing this avenue for Turkish artists.

Like in every work of art, Turkish artworks have emerged in particular eras, under particular conditions and responded to particular needs. Where the conditions for the existence of an art form disappear, it becomes dead and inefficient, and attempts to revive it can only give rise to useless art products. In today’s art scene, artworks that do not take the people’s needs into consideration and are pale copies of western or traditional Turkish sources, without authentic interpretations, are doomed to fail, even though the adaptations were, at the time of their inception, contemporaneous and fashionable. Turkish architecture and literature have produced the most successful examples of pragmatism and eclecticism against powerful states. However, once the state started to weaken, these art forms became miserably low in quality. In parallel with the Empire’s decline, the architecture of Islamic-Ottoman social complexes started to disappear; buildings constructed by Unionists, in agreement with Ziya Gökalp’s romantic Turkism (i.e., useless lancet arches, stalactite capitals and domes) have taken weird outdated shapes; buildings constructed regardless of local conditions and needs, have turned into places where even villagers who lost their homes in natural disasters wouldn’t want to live in. Along with these changes, the domination of Anatolian Turkish in daily dialect was a natural process; Turkish language was purified, its logic structure was undermined and all its living words dismissed due to foreign tendencies. Instead the purist writer Ataç tried to get rid of all living words and logic in Turkish language in favor of creating a so-called ‘pure’ but artificial Turkish idiom, whose underlying system was the French secularist thought. In the end this ‘pure Turkish’ language became alienating and usually unintelligible to the reader. Today, it is funny to see the metropolitan casinos’ efforts to entertain the people through corrupted music such as folk songs, which have nothing to do with Turkey. These are all freaks that emerged when we tried to westernize our national values, like stones crushed in between gears, actions that accelerate the dissolution of our society.

Since Turkish cinema comes from the people and turns back to them, even in its most primitive films, it should reflect the people's static thinking and behaviors, even when the country is permeated by corrupted statesmen. The pressure of Turkish traditions on Turkish filmmakers is even stronger than state censorship. The cliché storylines, the stereotyped characters and behaviors are expressions of the directors’ reflections on the virtues and beauties of a once divine order (in Ottoman times). This lamented order has been long lost, or it probably has never existed. Today the duty of conscious and virtuous Turkish thinkers and artists is to protect the state from breaking down and the society from dissolving, to expose the people to the concrete realities of the day, as in traditional Turkish arts, to involve them in the interpretation of reality.

Does the Turkish cinema that is based on people carry on this duty? Absolutely not. Because under the influence of a thousand-year-old tradition of being governed by the state, people actually believe that their life conditions are in harmony with the Turkish state’s divine justice. Turkish films express a certain style, which contains ethical and aesthetic behaviors in accord with this order. In this sense, when watching Turkish films, the Turkish public is not passively exploited. On the contrary, for those who understand, the films are stimulant and thought provoking. Besides, Turkish cinema has accumulated a great power for collectively embracing the sentiments and excitements of the people.

Exposing the people to daily physical realities is the responsibility of the ‘national Turkish cinema’. Considering that privileged classes will never risk losing their properties due to a film’s commercial failure, I propose that the state should be in charge of financing and developing Turkey’s national cinema. However, this is only possible when the state administrators have a national consciousness. On the contrary, it cannot be done with administrators who aim to turn Turkey into a rural state of Europe and get away with money in their pockets. Despite their efforts, Turkish filmmakers, who want to produce national films, are often confronted with obstacles. Eventually, they only produce works that are lost like the seeds that are scorched under the vastness of a prairie. Metin Erksan’s films, which he made with great efforts, *The Well*, my film, and *I Gave My Heart to a Turk*, are only a few examples of the numerous efforts in building Turkey’s national cinema.

(1971)

1. I would like to thank Dr. Victoria McCollum from Cinematic Arts at Ulster University for her diligent work on proofreading the manuscript. I also thank Orhan Sener and Sarphan Uzunoglu who assisted with the translation project. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. This book was first published by Hareket Yayınları in 1971 in Istanbul and later published twice. The third edition was published by Dergah Yayınları in 2013. Complete film writings of Halit Refiğ can be found in a recently published book: Ali Can Sekmeç, *Türk Sinemasının ‘Yorgun Savaşçı’sı Halit Refiğ*, İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Refig’s discussion of the concept of national cinema is a first in Turkish cinema studies. His attempt to define it according to cultural symbols and articulation of nationhood are ideas later discussed by film studies scholars in English in the late 1980s and early 1990s, independently from Refiğ’s film writings. See Andrew Higson, ‘The concept of national cinema’, *Screen* 30:4 (1989): 36-47; Stephen Crofts, ‘Reconceptualizing national cinema/s’, *Quarterly Review of Film & Video* 14:3 (1993): 49-67; Tom O'Regan, *Australian National Cinema*, London: Routledge, 1996. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Refiğ’s early film criticism begins with a pro-western stance but ends with a critique of Turkey’s forced modernization by the Kemalist elite. The detailed analyses of Turkish modernization and its impact on culture can be found in Erich Jan Zurcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, New York: IB Tauris, 2004; Carter V. Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism and Modernity: A History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. These cinephiles were initially inspired by Henri Langlois’ *Cinémathèque Française* and later became prominent film critics and film festival managers. The core group included Şakir Eczacıbaşı (photographer, philantrophist), Cevat Çapan (poet, academic), Onat Kutlar (film critic, screenwriter), Tuncan Okan (film director), Mengü Ertel (graphic artist), Jak Şalom and Sabahattin Eyüboğlu (literary critic and poet). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. See Hakkı Başgüney. *Türk Sinematek Derneği: Türkiye'de Sinema ve Politik Tartışma*, Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Halit Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, Istanbul: Hareket Yayınları, 1971. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Asli Daldal, *Art, Politics and Society: Social Realism in Italian and Turkish Cinemas*, Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2003. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. According to Refiğ, the representative films of the movement can be listed as follows: Metin Erksan's *Wrath of the Snakes* (*Yılanların Öcü*, 1962), *Dry Summer* (*Susuz Yaz*, 1963), Refiğ’s *Birds of Exile* (*Gurbet Kuşları*, 1964), Ertem Göreç's *Bus Riders* (*Otobüs Yolcuları*, 1961), *Awaking in the Dark* (*Karanlıkta Uyananlar*, 1965), and Duygu Sağıroğlu's *Never-ending Road* (*Bitmeyen Yol*, 1965). See Murat Akser ‘Turkish Independent Cinema: Between Bourgeois Auteurism and Political Radicalism’, in Doris Baltruschat and Mary P. Erickson (eds), *Independent Filmmaking Around The Globe*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Turkish shadow theatre is very much like its Greek and Japanese counterparts, two dimensional cardboard-cut characters are reflected from behind a white cloth screen lit by candle and adventures of different characters, such as Karagoz and Hacivat, are displayed for children during festivals. For more details see Serdar Öztürk, ‘Karagöz Co-Opted: Turkish Shadow Theatre of the Early Republic (1923-1945)’, *Asian Theatre Journal* (2006): 292-313. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. See John Morgan O'Connell, ‘Fine art, fine music: Controlling Turkish Taste at the Fine Arts Academy in 1926’, *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 32 (2000): 117-142 and Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey,* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Eylem Atakav (ed.), *Directory of World Cinema: Turkey,* Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. See İbrahim Türk, *Düşlerden Düşüncelere: Halit Refiğ*, İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2001; Ali Karadoğan, *Halit Refiğ: Bir Sinema'nın ve Sinemacı'nın Serüveni*, Ankara: DKİV Yayınları, 2003; Şengün Kılıç Hristidis, *Sinemada Ulusal Tavır: 'Halit Refiğ Kitabı'*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007; Gülşah Nezaket Maraşlı, *Bir Halit Refiğ Filmi*, Ankara: Elips Kitap, 2007; Halit Refiğ, *Doğruyu Aradım Güzeli Sevdim*, İstanbul: Bizim Kitaplar, 2009; Ahmet Toklu, *Bir Yorgun Savaşçı Halit Refiğ*, İstanbul: Sepya Yayıncılık, 2012; Gülper Refiğ, *Halitciğim: Halit Refiğ İle Bir Ömür*, Istanbul: Siyah Kuğu Yayınları, 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Some US universities like UCLA, Texas Austin and Wisconsin-Madison have Refiğ’s films with subtitled copies. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. The number of films produced per year and audience attendance in Turkish cinema was constantly rising in the 1960s and 1970s. Rekin Teksoy, *Turkish Cinema*, Istanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2008. Theater attendance in İstanbul in 1965 alone corresponded to 34,393,634 people. See Agâh Özgüç and Giovanni Scognamillo, *A Chronological History of the Turkish Cinema, 1914–1988*, Ankara: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Presidency of Film Office, General Directorate of the Fine Arts, 1988. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *The Routledge Dictionary of Turkish Cinema*, London: Routledge, 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. For a detailed discussion of Turkish state mechanism on censoring films see Dilek Kaya Mutlu, ‘Film Censorship During the Golden Age of Turkish Cinema,’ in Daniel Biltereyst and Roel Vande Winkel (eds), *Silencing Cinema: Film Censorship Around the World*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp.131-146. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. In 1952 his *Dark World* (*Karanlık Düny*a) was banned because of its depiction of poor peasants in Anatolia. After the addition of images of high crops, fertile land and high-tech farming machinery from American films, the release of the film was finally allowed. In 1961 the same Metin Erksan had to screen his *Wrath of the Serpents* (*Yılanların Öcü*) secretly to Cemal Gürsel, the President of the Republic, to bypass the censorship bureau. In 1963 Erksan smuggled his *Dry Summer* (*Susuz Yaz)* to Berlin Film Festival and won the Golden Bear for best film. See Atilla Dorsay, ‘An Overview of Turkish Cinema from its Origins to the Present Day’, in Günsel Renda and Carl Max Kortepeter(eds), *The Transformation of Turkish Culture: The Atatürk Legacy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Kingston Press, 1986, pp. 113-130. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. As happened throughout the world, Turkish cinema has also been influenced by Hollywood cinema. The Hollywood products invaded Turkish theaters and the audiences formed a specific set of expectations. The Turkish filmmakers strived to satisfy this kind of demand and produced Hollywood-ish films. Turkish westerns, film noirs, melodramas, gangster movies were produced. These were sometimes one-to-one adaptations of famous Hollywood films. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Some of these directors are Faruk Kenç, Sami Ayanoğlu, Turgut Demirağ, Lütfi Ömer Akad and Atıf Yılmaz. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. At this point critics drew a historical analogy. The difference between Hollywood and Turkish practice is analogous to the difference between feudal mode of production in western Europe and Asiatic mode of production in eastern countries in the Middle Ages. See Murat Akser, *Green Pine Resurrected: Film Genre, Parody and Intertextuality in Turkish Cinema*, Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Halit Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, İstanbul Hareket Yayınları 1971, pp. 96-97**.** [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. The Cinémathèque group are film critics who founded Türk Sinematek Derneği (Turkish Cinematheque Association), which screened film classics from all over the world in Istanbul in the 1970s. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, p.34 [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. The animosity between the two groups is also revealed in a recent interview with one of the founders of the Sinematek: Jak Salom”Cinema Has to be Seen on Big Screen: An Interview (Sinema Buyukperdede Izlenir)” <http://www.tsa.org.tr/yazi/yazidetay/215/jak-salom--%E2%80%9Csinema-buyuk-perdede-izlenir%E2%80%9D> Accessed 15 July 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. This was a famous novel adaptation by Halit Refiğ. Turkish state television TRT sponsored the project but a few months after completion of the project, the military government decided to burn the negatives of the film because of the film’s political message. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Today all private and public TV stations in Turkey rely heavily on Turkish films made in the golden era of Yeşilçam. A new urban teenage audience, as well as nostalgic parents, favor these classics. See Akser, *Green Pine Resurrected: Film Genre, Parody and Intertextuality in Turkish Cinema*, p.5. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy, ‘Deep Nation: The National Question and Turkish Cinema Culture’, in Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (eds), *Cinema and Nation,* London: Routledge, 2000, pp.191-208; p.214. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Higson, ‘The Concept of National Cinema’: 36–47; 36. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, pp. 73-78 [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Osman Turan, *Selçuklular Tarihi ve Türk-İslam Medeniyeti*, Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1965. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Türkiyede Kapitalizmin Gelişimi*, Istanbul: Mete Matbaasi, 1965. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Mustafa Cezar, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Levendler*, Istanbul: Çelikcilt Matbaası, 1965. The name derives from *Levend* (*Marine Soldier*) of the Ottoman Navy. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Sencer Divitçioğlu, *Asya Üretim Tarzı ve Osmanlı Toplumu*, İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1967. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Kemal Tahir, *Yorgun Savasci*, Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1965. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Proclaimed as a charter of rights in the name of the Sultan in 1839, *Tanzimat* meant reorganisation of the Ottoman state and governance structure and transformation of legal system in accordance with its western counterparts. It is also referred as a whole system ofwesternization of lifestyle idealized by Turkish intellectuals of the period. For details see M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Theater owners in Turkey in the 1960s pre-sold the tickets and then financed the making of the films. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Refig, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, pp. 89-94. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. There is a recent study detailing the amount of imitation of foreign cinema done by Turkish cinema. See Iain Robert Smith, *The Hollywood Meme: Transnational Adaptations in World Cinema*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Here the selection is from Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası*, pp.123-140. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. A novel by Kemal Tahir, published in 1967. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. All of these 12-14th century Turkish poets have written poetry whose roots laid in folk songs and legends. More on this can be found in Talat Sait Halman and Jayne L. Warner, *Rapture and Revolution: Essays on Turkish Literature*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007; Talât Sait Halman and İlhan Başgöz, *Yunus Emre and His Mystical Poetry*, Bloomington: Indiana University, 1981. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. The Ghazal is a poetic form consisting of rhyming couplets and a refrain, with each line sharing the same meter. A Ghazal may be understood as a poetic expression of both the pain of loss and the beauty of love. For examples of the genre see Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth (eds), *Ghazal as World Literature I: Transformations of a Literary Genre*, Wurzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2005. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. The original lines from Karagöz shadow play reads:” *Bu perde çeşm-i ehl-i zahire bir nakş-ı sûrettir/ Rümûz erbâbına ammâ ki temsil-i hakikattir”.* See Cevdet Kudret, *Karagöz*, Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1969. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)