Women in New Turkish Cinema:

An Analysis of “Climates”, “Three Monkeys” and “Once upon a time in Anatolia”

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*Scene is from the film “Three Monkeys” by Nuri Bilge Ceylan (2008 NBC Film)*

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Abstract

This study investigated the cinematic representations of women in ‘Climates’ ‘Three Monkeys’ and ‘Once upon a time in Anatolia’ created by Nuri Bilge Ceylan. It explored the image of women and the ideologies that affects them in the aforementioned films. For the analysis, semiotics is used and feminist film theory is applied. The findings indicated that the women images are affected by patriarchal ideology. Female characters were portrayed as weak or weakened by men regardless of their representative social group. The results showed similarities to Mulvey’s argument and to Friedan’s definition of feminine mystique. Male gaze dominates the visual pleasures and the female characters showed similar features as described by Mulvey and Friedan.

Keywords

new Turkish cinema, women, patriarchy, femininity, masculinity, film, feminist film theory, Mulvey, Semiotics
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1. Introduction

A neoliberal economic model has influenced Turkish nation since the 1980’s. During the 1980’s, a military coup had come to an end, initiating discussion of Turkey’s full integration into the global capitalist system started. The ensuing process of integration not only affected Turkey's economy and politics but also brought legal and technological changes that influenced particularly to the national cultural products and spurred Turkey’s modernization (see Keyder 1987). Although, the modernization and the liberalization processes were not entirely new to Turkish society, this period led to greater social change and has brought new aspects to the society. Despite modernization, however, Turkey, like many other countries in the world, still remains a patriarchal and male dominated state. Accordingly, throughout cinema history, cinematic representation of women has always been under patriarchal discourse (Erdogan cited in Soykan 1993). The aforementioned features of modernization have also had its effects on the new Turkish cinema. The researcher’s consideration for this study is that; how women are represented in the films of the globally respected Turkish filmmaker as Nuri Bilge Ceylan?

Ceylan is distinctive from many new wave filmmakers, as his films ignore the larger political issues and rather focusing on individual stories. Despite undergoing political changes in Turkish society, he makes rather decidedly apolitical films. Recently, new Turkish cinema has become an appealing research area with studies centred around Turkey’s politics and identity crisis. Asuman Suner’s book, New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory (2010), describes Turkish cinema’s awakening process after the military coup in 1980. In this book, Suner mainly reflects upon political issues in Turkey and their effects on the Turkish cinema. There has, however, been very little academic work done concerning the representation of women and/or how femininity and masculinity are represented in Turkish cinema. For instance, Deniz Derman wrote several reviews in 1996 on scholar Soykan’s book called The Woman in Turkish Cinema, 1920-1990, which investigates the representation of women in film during this period. However, Soykan’s book only covers the years from 1920 to 1990. Besides, another scholar Eylem Atakav, published a book named; Women and Turkish Cinema: Gender Politics, Cultural Identity and Representation
(2011) which focuses on women and Turkish cinema in the context of gender politics, cultural identity and representation throughout cinema history. While these studies explore some aspects of gender and cultural identity, neither has specifically focused on the cinematic representation of women in new Turkish cinema. Furthermore, a case study of a film by a Turkish director has never been conducted in academic terms.

This study investigates the representation of women in Turkish cinema in relationship to patriarchal norms and values using three films. These three films are ‘Once upon a time in Anatolia’, ‘Three Monkeys’ and ‘Climates’ created by the modern Turkish director, Nuri Bilge Ceylan. Semiology will be the key method used to identify the signs, codes and myths and to distinguish between the naturalized and stereotyped representation of women.

The study will be presented as following: Chapter 2, background of Turkish Republic and Turkish cinema will be given. In chapter 3, the research problem will be presented. In chapter 4, theoretical framework and the literature review will be discussed. Further on, in chapter 5, data collection and methodology will be explained. In chapter 6, analysis and the results will be given. In chapter, 7 discussion, conclusion and limitations will be presented. In chapter 8, further research will be discussed.

2. Background

2.1. Background of Turkish Republic and Its Relation with the Modernity:

In 1923, the Turkish Republic was established and the Ottoman Empire came to an end. The republic accepted secular modern rules, which were adopted from the Swiss “modern” law system. However, modernity was not a new phenomenon for Turks: the Empire "capitulated and accepted the validity of the paradigm of modernity early in the nineteenth century” (Keyder 1993:19). At the same time, modernization did not yet fit well with the Ottoman cultural background and was more associated with the West: Ottomans had to experience otherness with the modernization since modernization was identified with the West and Western and European countries (ibid). Caglar Keyder gives a relevant background of
modernity for Turks in his article “The Dilemma of Cultural Identity on the Margin of Europe” (1993). As he suggests, the Ottoman Empire was multicultural and governed by Islamic traditions, which hindered imposing the Christian based cultural homogeneity of modernisation on the ruled nations (Keyder 1993: 19). Looking at the world history one can see that modernity was most easily applied to nation states. Yet, the modernity reinforced as a consequence of nation-states. The need for a new Republic with one nation was raised for consideration when the Ottoman Empire collapsed right after the 1st World War. In 1923, the Turkish Republic was established led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and modern values and laws were adapted. The new Republic attempted to build a one nation even though the conjuncture of the territory was based on multi nationality. The formation of the Republic had a large impact on Turkish society, especially on culture and cultural products such as cinema. Cinema has its own evolution during the Republic years and was very much affected by economical and political changes. (see Keyder 1993) A background to Turkish cinema and the emergence of new Turkish cinema will be given in section 2.2. below.

2. 2. Turkish Cinema and the Arise of New-Wave movement

As mentioned earlier, the Turkish Republic was established after the 1st World War in 1923. In the early years of the Turkish Republic (1923-1939), Muhsin Ertugrul, who was a theatre actor and director, almost completely dominated the cinema of the newly founded republic. In those years, films were being adopted from stage dramas and many films were highly influenced by European or American cinema. In the 1940’s, the transition era, Turkish cinema gained more cinematic perspective (Suner 2010: 2). Due to tax reduction on domestic films, the film sector started to grow intensively after 1950’s. The political situation in parallel with economic growth helped Turkish cinema during this period to become increasingly commercial and allowed filmmakers to develop individual style. Turkish cinema at this time reflected a mix of traditional society and modern secular culture.

From 1950 until the 1970’s military coup, Turkish cinema was living its golden years, producing approximately 200 films per year. (Buker cited in Suner 2010: 3) However, the 1970’s saw a clash of rightist and leftist groups and thereafter-military coup that had a negative effect on the film sector. Nevertheless, during those years, Yilmaz Guney were
making political films and became a legendary director. His movie “The Way” (Yol) was awarded with Palme d’Or at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival (ibid: 5). It was the first globally known Turkish film. During the third military coup in 1980, the political situation worsened and the authoritarian censorship and bad economical situation hindered new film productions.

Neo liberal changes to the economical system towards full integration of Turkey with the global capitalist system started in the mid-1980. This process “widened the income gap and increased social polarization creating a picture of two Turkeys, Western and Eastern, existing side by side without much contact each other” (Keyder and Kandiyoti, mentioned in Suner 2010: 7). During the 1970’s, the global feminist movement had very little influence on Turkish cinema. A sub-genre of “women’s films” did emerge but it was not as influential as it was in western countries. Following radical social and economic transformation, Turkish cinema was weakened in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. With Americanization, IMF’s intervention, commencement of private TV’s, Turkish cinema had its hardest years. In the mid 1990’s, Turkish cinema gained suite of new young male directors such as Yavuz Turgul, Cagan Irmak, Ezel Akay, Serdar Akar, Mustafa Altioklar, Osman Sinav, Omer Faruk Sorak and Yilmaz Erdogan and cinema became more popular gaining domestic, commercial, promotion and distribution success. (Suner 2010: 5-15) In the recent years, Turkey has undergone unconventional economic and cultural transformation. The per capita GDP reached $8500 in 2008 making the Turkish economy the sixth most productive in Europe and the 17th largest in the world, with nearly 80% of the population living in urban areas” (Aydin 2009: 298) In this recent period, a distinct avant garde cinema style has emerged. Nuri Bilge Ceylan, whose films are the subject of this study, made his very first film “The Small Town” (Kasaba), Zeki Demirkubuz made the film “Innocence” (Masumiyet). Moreover, a female director entered the sector in those years: Yesim Ustaoglu with the “Journey to the Sun” (Güneş Yolculuk). All of these directors gained international success. Their distinct style, characterised by being independent and avant garde, has continued to be successful and appreciated with the global awards. They had their own movement that is considered as new wave Turkish cinema. Apart from them, Dervis Zaim, Handan Ipekci, Reha Erdem, Semih Kaplanoglu and Ugur Yucel also contributed to this new wave cinematic style. (Suner 2010: 5-15) Even though modernization and economical growth brought more freedom to new Turkish cinema, female directors are still quite rare. According to Suner, female directors of
new Turkish cinema such as Yesim Ustaoglu, Handan Ipekci, Tomris Giritlioglu, and Buket Ilhan “often downplay the question of gender in their films, consistent with this observation, women directors often tend to distance themselves from a feminist position” (ibid: 178). Therefore, the feministic perspective often does not take place in the films of these female new-wave directors. There has been a shift in recent years, with new directors such as Pelin Esmer and Eylem Kaftan more confident to discuss gender subjects and identify personally with a feminist position (ibid: 178). Although, gender issues are started to be a part of the new-wave Turkish cinema, these films and their directors have not yet become globally known.

3. Research Problem

Nuri Bilge Ceylan (NBC) who is known for his success in the European cinema sector created the films that subject of this study: Climates was awarded with the FIPRESCI Prize (2006), Three Monkeys won the Best Director Award (2008) and Once upon a time in Anatolia was awarded with the Grand Prix (2011) in Cannes Film Festival. (NBC film) Ceylan is considered an independent filmmaker. His films are therefore, expected to be intellectual films not aiming at popularity or market success but aiming to provide an alternative voice to dominant ideology. Independent films have different practices than mainstream dominant media, are often low budget projects financed privately or without government’s support (Hayward 2006: 200). This study will investigate, the women representations in Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s last three films. Additionally, it will try to identify the dominant ideology that affects women’s image. The films that are subject of this study are considered as examples of independent cinema therefore it will be appealing to investigate whether the films contain residue of the patriarchal structure and/or if they give new, more modern image of gender relations.

The research seeks to answer following questions:

- How are women (female characters) represented in Climates, Three Monkeys and Once upon a time in Anatolia?
• What are the myths that the films drawing on? Are there any myths that reflect patriarchal point of view?

Accordingly, sub-questions of this study will be;
• How are relations between women and men represented in those films?

Without a doubt, when one writes about femininity, masculinity should also take its place. Therefore, second sub-question will be;
• How masculinity is represented in those films?

The films will be evaluated with feminist film theory to analyze patriarchal sub-messages. Feminist film theory pioneered the idea that cinema predominantly adopts a male position. (Mulvey 2009) The researcher wonders if the female characters are represented as stereotypical female figures according to Friedan and Mulvey’s definitions of cinematic woman figures, which is produced by and presented to male gaze. Besides, the study seeks to identify what is normalized while using those conceptions. However, this research does not aim to reach generalizations from particular examples, instead, strives to reach how generalizations are influential in these particular examples. The researcher wonders if an intellectual new cinema product such as these films carry residues from the patriarchal structure. Patriarchy is a concept that has met with much criticism. However, it remains the best tool for understanding women’s subordinate position (Alexander and Taylor 1981 cited in Hollows 2000, 8). According to Hollows, patriarchy is a universal form of oppression based on biological differences between men and women (Hollows 2000: 7). Patriarchy is also acknowledged to “cut cross and be crossed cut by other forms of inequality and power” (ibid). Ramazanoglu argues that, ‘theories of patriarchy are implicitly and explicitly, theories which explain the creation and maintenance of man’s social, ideological, sexual, political and economic dominance. (Ramazanoglu cited in ibid) Even though feminists disagreed about the causes and characteristics of patriarchy, many shared the idea that “the cornerstone of all women’s oppressions was the patriarchal system where the system is based on male dominance” (ibid, 5). In patriarchal system women are subjugated to men. In those systems, feminine values are defined as underrated compared to masculine values. For example, to ‘accuse’ someone for ‘behaving like a woman’ is a way of humiliation from a patriarchal
point of view. For many second wave feminists, femininity was self evidently problematic and seen as fundamental to understanding women’s oppression. Feminine values are passive submissive and dependent in a patriarchal system. In addition to that as Hollows argues that ‘culturally produced masculine and feminine roles, were mapped to biological differences between males and females making them appear to be part of women’s biological nature rather than cultural constructions’ (Hollows 2000: 10). That can lead cultural constructions to seen as biological nature. For Rosen, films both ‘reflect the changing societal image of women and present a distorted image of women’ (Rosen cited in ibid: 41). Haskell argues similarly, “film not only reflects society’s accepted role definitions but also reinforces these narrow definitions of femininity” (ibid). Therefore, it will be appealing to consider and discuss these films critically, to be able to analyze how women are represented and what is the ideology behind the representations. According to results representations of female characters will be discussed if they are considered as reflections of the societal female image or the representations are mostly covering the distorted image of women. However, this study does not aim to reach general conclusion from a particular example, instead, aims to discuss the society’s perspective or what is “normalized”, that is considered as influential and represented in the films.

3.1. Why Climates (2006), Three Monkeys(2008) and Once upon a time in Anatolia(2011) are selected for this study?

Together with the global success of the director Nuri Bilge Ceylan, the aforementioned films became globally popular and gained prestigious success. They are not only appreciated by national cinema authorities but also welcomed to international festivals. When one conceive of Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s films, can comprehend the global success; his films tells stories from everyday life with a simple language without missing the details. Mostly, they are focusing on human relations, de facto perceptions of human desires, apprehensions, passions, ambitions and so on. Moreover, Climates, Three Monkeys and Once upon a Time in Anatolia are not only representing the aforementioned characteristic but also telling stories from three different parts of Turkish society. Therefore, it is significant to interrogate how he frames Turkish society in his films and why they were attractive to the global audience. As mentioned in the
Chapter 2, after the influence of liberal capitalist system Turkish society had transformations with consequences of industrialization and modernization. This process brought a social change and transformation in the social structure. “In modern Turkey, one can easily observe a progressive transformation during the last several decades. This is due to several factors, including democratization, urbanization and, most importantly, rapidly expanding higher educational opportunities for ordinary people, which created new opportunities for the expansion of middle classes” (Aydin 2009: 298). In sociological terms, the progressive transformation created different strata of modern Turkey. The economical gap between urban or rural parts created irrepressible and unplanned domestic immigration. This gap has brought cultural gap between different strata of the society. Since these different stratum groups are expected to have dissimilar habits, at least three parts of society should be in question while investigating the women representations. Thus, in the selected films the stories are told from those three parts of the society; Climates presents a relationship story between educated intellectual couple lives in Istanbul. Three Monkeys presents the story of a lower class family, (possibly) migrated from rural parts of Turkey to Istanbul. Once upon a Time in Anatolia presents a story of a group of rural people and their relations. In short, these films are representing three parts of the society. First film is a story of urban and educated characters; second, rural but possibly migrated to urban, non-educated characters, finally, rural and non-educated characters as representatives of three strata. Last but not least, those three films are also director’s very last three films in a chronological order, which means it is expected to present people from today’s Turkey.

4. Theoretical Framework:

The feminist film theory will be used as the theoretical lens of this study. Accordingly, two theoretical conceptions will be used to identify representations of woman in the films. In order to analyze the films, Laura Mulvey’s theoretical framework will be introduced in the section 4.1. to shed a light on male gaze. Further on, in the section 4.2. the term ‘feminine mystique’ will be presented and finally in the section 4.3 absence of women will be discussed.
4.1. Feminist Film Theory and Mulvey:

“Feminist film theory” developed in the early 1970’s under the influence of the women’s movement. Along with the emergence of structuralism within the humanities and the influence of Marxism, semiotics, and psychoanalysis feminist film theory has gained its importance (Smelik 2009: 179). The theory has a psychoanalytic background and based on Freud’s term of *scopophilia*, that is an instinct of pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object (Mulvey 2009: 25). Laura Mulvey states that films thus have always had “something of the erotic” that satisfying our scopophilic instinct because of the darkness and privacy (Smelik 2009: 180). According to Smelik, in the darkness of the cinema, the viewer is a voyeur who can unlimitedly look at the silver screen” (ibid). Yet, the viewer gets their pleasure from viewing the presentation of the erotic.

Feminist film theorist Mulvey, made an analysis on Hollywood movies made between 1930 and 1960 which indicates that cinema mostly positions from a male gaze. In other words, the aforementioned erotic film viewing is presented from a male perspective. (ibid) Later in 1975, Mulvey wrote an article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” which pioneered the flow of feminist, psychoanalytic discourse of film viewing (Thornham 1999: 54). In this article Mulvey used Freud’s castration theory. The theory was founded by Freud and stated that “the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold: she firstly symbolizes the castration threat her real lack of a penis and secondly thereby raises her child into the symbolic” (Mulvey 2009:14). Freud argued that women turn her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis. (ibid) In psychoanalytic terms, this process is called *phallocentric order*. While, in cinema she claims that the woman connotes to lack of penis, implying a threat of castration and erotic pleasure (ibid: 22). She hereby uses castration theory as a base of her study, and claims that the woman’s body is a threat to men and reminds of a castration in cinema. “The voyeuristic gaze at the woman’s body is unsettling for the man because it is different; in Freud’s words woman’s body represents ‘castrated’ body and Mulvey’s analysis considers “the notion of the castration complex” (Mulvey cited in Smelik 2009: 180). Mulvey suggests two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: “investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery, to punish her, saving of the guilty object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring” (Mulvey
Similarly, Hollows argues that ‘woman signifies to men is the threat that they might lose the positive attributes associated with masculinity and become more like the feminine other’ (Hollows 2000: 47). Therefore dominant cinema uses mechanisms, which eliminates this threat through specific forms of looking: fetishism and voyeurism. The first avenue, fetishistic scopophilia, builds up the physical beauty of the women body as objects and transforming it into something satisfying in itself. (Mulvey 2009:22) The second avenue, voyeurism has associations with sadism: sadistic desire to punish for her lack of penis as a reminiscent of castration (ibid). In Smelik’s words, “female star is turned into an ideal beauty, fetish, whose flawless perfection turns any attention away from her difference, her otherness” or “often followed by violence, rape or even murder” (Smelik 2009: 181).

As stated before, feminist film theorists declared that in films the spectator mostly considered being a male looking at female bodies. Recently, Anneke Smelik, wrote the article “Lara Croft, Kill Bill, and the battle for theory in feminist film studies” in 2009 suggested that the cinema is “a case of a threefold male gaze: camera, character, and spectator” She also mentions Mulvey’s analysis, “as the camera work, the framing, the editing, and the music objectify the woman’s body and turn it into a passive spectacle for the voyeuristic gaze: to-be-looked-at-ness” (Smelik 2009:180). Accordingly, Johnston’s claimed that ”the figure of woman functions within film as a sign within a patriarchal discourse, not as a reflection of reality, Mulvey added in analysis of how cinema as an ‘apparatus’ creates a position for the film spectator, drawing on psychoanalytic theory to explain this positioning” (Thornham 1999 ibid: 54).

In short, according to feminist film theorists, woman stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, as an object (Mulvey 2009: 14). In patriarchal society, ‘pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female’ (Mulvey 1992, 27). However, it is essential to begin to break this image by examining patriarchy with psychoanalysis tools. We can at least advance our understanding of the status quo, of the patriarchal order in which we are caught. It would be a step for women not to seen as other, as an object, but as subject.
4.2. Friedan’s classical term ‘The feminine mystique’

Correspondingly to the feminist film theory, Betty Friedan’s classical term ‘the feminine mystique’ will also help to interpret the films and the women representations in the films. The term stressed upon similar women’s presentations in films that are presented as “healthy, beautiful, educated concerned with her husband their children and home” (Hollows 2000: 11). This classic term is being used to identify the women who are striving to fulfill their own feminine potential promoted by media forms. In the films subject to this research, - *Climates, Three Monkeys* and *Once upon a time in Anatolia* - protagonist female characters will be discussed whether they have the similar qualifications as Friedan’s feminine mystique concept. According to Friedan, feminine values are not produced by women but are reproduced and became a common sense (ibid) She wrote her book “Feminine Mystique” in 1963 after 1940’s labor union movements (Horrowitz 1996). Friedan offered “a feminist reworking of important themes in a genre of social criticism, including the notion of important themes of faltering masculine identity” (ibid: 3). She had a critical view of functionalism, which sees women biologically as housewives for maintaining the social order. Her book surely had its influence to first feminist movements (ibid, 1993). This classical concept even the years has passed is applicable to various mediums such as cinema. Surely, there have been much criticism of so-called biological order however; media have not changed its attitude to woman roles and still showing their position as it was defined in Friedan’s feminine mystique. Therefore, this conceptualization is still quite relevant and will be useful in this study as well. Similarly, Mulvey’s conceptions were also criticized as being out of date. For example, Smelik claims that, “classic voyeurism occurs less frequently in today’s cinema, voyeurism is less directed through the male gaze, which means the spectator does not look along with a male character, rather with a neutral camera.” According to her, the phenomenon of the voyeuristic gaze is also extended for male body. She states, “today not only woman are objectified and eroticized but also men are also expected to be beautiful, super thin and super fit. (Smelik 2009: 182) As Michael Foucault also mentioned “Contemporary culture expects both women and men to discipline their body” (Foucault 1980: 183). The question hereby would be “Would that be applicable for Turkish cinema?” One can easily claim that this is an optimistic view of reading of the equality, cannot be generalized to the rest of the world where the traditional values are still rather strong. Therefore, Smelik’s idea of contemporary cinema
will be discussed related to Turkish cinema in the discussion section by using the findings of this study.

4. 3. The Absence of Woman

According to Sharon Smith "The role of a woman in a film almost always revolves around her physical attraction and the mating games she plays with the male characters. Even when a woman is the central character she is generally shown as confused, or helpless and in danger, or passive, or as a purely sexual being” (Smith, 1999: 15). Above, in the sections 4.2 and 4.3 Mulvey’s mechanisms and Friedan’s concept were presented to investigate the women image in media, in films. According to them, male domination produces this underrepresentation. As Jessie Bernard (1973) states “no one considers the way women experience the world.” (Bernard cited in Tuchman, 1987: 4) This underrepresentation also leads to women that are absent or silenced in films. Even though they are involved in the story they are annihilated. “They are seen as men’s silent or unopinionated consort “(Tuchman, 1987: 4) When it comes to new wave Turkish cinema Suner summarizes the picture by saying “new wave cinema has a masculinist outlook”. (Suner, 2010: 174) According to her, regardless whether they are art or popular the films story is centred around a male protagonist and “women are portrayed not as active subjects, but as objects of male desire”. She also suggests that “the absence of women is one of the defining characteristics of new wave cinema” (ibid: 163). Her argument about new wave Turkish cinema perfectly matches with Mulvey’s investigation of Hollywood movies between 1930 and 1960 that will be mentioned further in Chapter 4. Suner continues her argument by saying, “it is true that women are absent in the majority of these films. Women are always represented as they are seen by men, in the final analysis, these films are about men, and women leak into the stories only as objects of male desire.” (Suner 2010: 174) To summarise, Suner’s studies claim that even though we live in a modern society, women in Turkish cinema are still presented as either mute, absent or as objects of male desire. This view supports Mulvey and Friedan’s earlier works. Therefore, the study will be done with the acknowledgement of absent, silenced and annihilated female images.
5. Data collection and Methodology

Christian Metz states that “cinema is a vast subject and there are more ways than one to enter it. It raises problems of aesthetics, of sociology and of semiotics as well as of the psychologies of perception and intellection” (Metz 1991: 3). With an acknowledgment of Metz suggestion and considering the time limitations, the aforementioned films will be analyzed by using a qualitative method, semiotics. Moreover, since the researcher has a sociology background and the film theory is based on psychoanalysis, it is safe to suggest that the study will also use the help of sociology and psychoanalysis.

As semiotics will be the method while studying the aforementioned films, to avoid the complications, scenes will be selected by the researcher and semiotics will be applied to the selected scenes. In addition to that, narratives will also be discussed by using semiotic methodology. Without a doubt, Turkish cinema, mainstream or independent, is not fixed. Hence, it is inconvenient to make generalizations from only three films. Therefore, this study does not aim to reach a conclusion that generalizes how woman actually are or represented in Turkish society. The researcher rather aims to analyze how female figures are represented in “Climates”, “Three Monkeys” and “Once upon a time in Anatolia”. In other words, the results of this study are expected to reach knowledge of whether the patriarchal norms and values are effective on those specific examples. Semiology will help to investigate the interpretations of the meanings and explore what is there in relation to what is absent. Semiotics has been used in film theory for interpreting the film texts, presenting the way they produce meanings and “naturalization” of the mainstream cinema for many studies. By the time and with the development of psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism; semiotics has changed and spectator positioning and spectator’s role in the meaning production has also been taken into account in the meaning production. (Hayward 2006: 323) Without a doubt, the selected films are open to diverse interpretations. It is clear that, to do a reception study via quantitative method or interviews with the viewers would provide various interpretations. However, even if reception analysis would deliver interesting results, due to practical reasons such as time constraints and geographical obstacles it was impossible to attach them to this research. Therefore, the study will not cover interviews; instead the researcher will try to identify possible common codes of the society. Yet, meanings are not individual and most of them are learned during the
socialization process. Nonetheless, the researcher acknowledges that semiotics is a method may lead to relative discussions as the researcher has the full responsibility of meaning making process. Even if, the researcher will try to keep herself away from subjectivity, it is difficult to be entirely protected from relativity in any research. No matter what the method will be, drawbacks are inevitable. Namely, considering the research subject semiotics is the most adequate method and therefore, it will be used to decode the meanings.

5.1 Structural Semiology:

Semiology is a term that is first used by Ferdinand de Saussure, in his lectures of Structural Linguistics. The term states the study of signs within society. American philosopher C.S. Peirce also used the term semiology in his studies of signs. However, Saussure’s theories have larger influence on film theories. (Hayward 2006: 320) Saussure pioneered the idea that there is an arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified that can address other sign systems, meaning that language is a cultural system and signifiers are not necessarily meaning (signifying) the same things depending on where and how they are used. In other words, semiotics is a study of “social production of meaning through linguistic sign systems, stresses that language as a cultural production is societally not individually bounds” (ibid: 320). There are, certainly, other meaning systems than language such as images, texts, etc. Semiotics became a helpful tool to analyze process of meaning production in various sign systems such as literature, cinema, television, advertising and other popular culture products. (ibid) According to Saussure, language does not only refer the reality, “language becomes a signifying system that sets “reality” before ears.” It mediates the reality that has an ideological function. (ibid: 321) Given that cinema as a sign system produces meanings, it can be seen as a language as Hayward argues. Therefore, semiotics will be useful for both decoding the language and signs in the film and decoding the film as a language. Roland Barthes, developed the idea of how to identify signs and how they work in culture in 1957. Barthes, introduced two steps of signification; denotations and connotation¹ (ibid: 322). According to

¹ Denotation refers to “first order of meaning, when the first order meets the values and discourses of the culture.” Connotation means “all associative & evaluative meanings attributed to the sign by the culture or the person involved in using it – and as such is always sensitive to context.” (Hayward, 2006: 322)
Barthes there are three order of meanings, first order is denotation, second order is connotation, the third order of meaning is myth. For example, the first meaning of the word “dog” denotes an animal. If one uses the word “dog” to define a person who is ‘not liked’, then “dog” connotes, “a bad person” in their society. Yet, the ranges of connotations generate “myths”. In the same example, being malicious identified with dogs and the word is considered as curse. Myth in Barthes’ terminology is range of signs to communicate a social and political message about the world (Bignell 2002, 21). “Myth is the way in which we are enabled to understand the culture in which we fine which we find ourselves. All of those meanings lead to the third order of meaning: ideology” (Hayward 2006: 322). Ideology is the discourse, “the system of ideas that explains, makes sense of society” (ibid: 192).

In this study the researcher will use Barthes’ way of analyzing significations. The cinematic representations will be identified with Barthes’ structural semiology. Structural semiotic point of view pioneered the idea that is based on: “rather than human culture is being built on an essential human nature, it is our culture which gives us our assumptions about what human nature is”. (Bignell 2002: 225) The researcher should identify the ‘social meanings’ in the images that are in Barthes terminology: “connotations”. Yet, range of connotations, myths will also be discussed related to dominant ideology since ‘signs can only be understood in relation to other signs within the system’ (Hayward 2006: 321) In other words, myth is our assumptions regarding the human nature. Yet, myths are closely related to dominant ideology. Namely, semiotic analysis “shows how the meanings of signs in texts and visuals are at once constrained by codes and ideological structures, also how signs can be read in different ways because they always depend for their meaning on their relationship with the signs in other texts” (ibid: 225). By keeping these definitions in mind, when considering the myth the researcher will be aware of the variety of meaning of signs or myth that are denoted in the image. Barthes’ Semiology is considered as structural Semiology, as mentioned above, also known with acquiescence of audience perspective and several meanings of signs and texts (ibid: 225). This method recognizes the audiences as decoding multi accentual messages differently from each other. Therefore, the researcher should acknowledge the variance of meanings, as the audience will not be considered as passive receivers.

However, due to aforementioned reasons the semiotics method will be the only method. In a further research semi structured interview would also provide spectators’ decoding to ensure
the audience perspective and also increase the reliability of the study while semiotics providing a way of understanding how film texts constructed and reproduced ‘reality’ by decoding conversations and visual realities in the films.

5.2. Limitations of semiotics

Considering the analysis of films there are potential limiting factors of semiotics, Firstly, variety and amount of signs and myths causes ambiguity of the meanings when the researcher tries to analyze everything in one or more contexts. Secondly, even though structuralist semiology acknowledges audience perspective, the range of different results from possible audience would cause another ambiguity (Bignell 2002: 32). Thirdly, the researcher should distinguish how the meaning is constructed in the film differently from what an ordinary reader would. Researcher is in a full responsibility to come up with an underlying meaning of the signs, relating to the medium, relating the signs to mythic meanings and ideological values, which would cause another obscurity and subjectivity. On the other hand, the researcher is also under the influence of ideological myth thus it is challenging to maintain the objective attitude. (ibid: 39) Nevertheless, these limitations do not mean that it is inadequate to make a research by using the semiotics method. On the contrary, the researcher should consider and takes account of the limitations, which the semiotic method brings with it, and uses the useful parts of the method.


This chapter presents the analysis of the three films. In sections 6.1.1, 6.2.1 and 6.3.1, the plots will be given. In sections 6.1.2, 6.2.2, and 6.3.2, the narratives of the each film will be analyzed through semiotics. In sections 6.1.3, 6.2.3 and 6.3.3, the selected scenes will be presented and analyzed. The selected scenes are ones in patriarchal connotations have been identified and are numbered sequentially. The analysis of moving images will not be considered as independent of the language of the film. “Universal for all filmic texts must be
considered within the context of relations established within and by each filmic text” (Eisenstein cited in Rifkin 1994: 38). In films images are not “still” so they will be considered within the other related images and the language.

6.1 CLIMATES

Image (1) is a scene from *Climates*

6.1.1 The plot of *Climates*:

Characters:

Ø Male Character: Isa- Protagonist
Ø First Female Character: Bahar- Antagonist
Ø Second Female Character: Serap- Supporting Character

The film begins with a middle class couple on vacation. It is a hot summer day in the South of Turkey and the couple is sunbathing near the seaside. Isa, the main character, a lecturer at a university, is taking pictures of ancient monuments for his thesis while Bahar, the second main character, watches him. Bahar falls asleep and in her dream Isa is smothering her in sand. Then, suddenly she wakes up and everything seems normal. She goes to swim, and while she is swimming, Isa rehearses his break up speech on the beach, and tells her that he wants to break up. This is when we first hear the second female character’s name, Serap, for the first time. Isa claims that “Serap issue” (Serap and Isa had an affair) went too far in their relationship. On their way back to the city with a motorbike, Bahar unexpectedly closes Isa’s
eyes with her hands, which leads them to have an accident. Afterwards they are separated and
do not see each other for a long time. In the fall time, in Istanbul, Isa meets with a couple by
chance at a music market. Serap, the second female character appears for the first time in that
scene with her boyfriend. Isa goes to Serap’s home in the night where she is alone. From Isa
and Serap’s conversation, the viewer suspects that Isa has been unfaithful to Bahar with Serap
on prior occasions. Initially Serap and Isa flirt, but as the situation escalates it becomes
strange and ends with a scene in which Isa and Serap have rape like sexual intercourse. When
winter comes, Isa hears that Bahar is in the eastern province of Turkey working for a TV
series. He decides to go there and convince her to get back together with him. Bahar does not
want to be with him anymore. Nonetheless, late at night, she decides to stay over in Isa’s
room and be close to him. When they awake in the morning, Isa asks Bahar to go back to her
work and he flies back to Istanbul alone.

6.1.2. Narrative, Characters and Meaning in *Climates*: Females are
represented as good and valuable or bad and punishable.

The myth in this film is male superiority. The film as a whole presents a patriarchal point of
view where the women are either weak and valuable or strong and offensive whereas male
characters are presented as having a fear of commitment. The connotations that will be
discussed below intersect at the point of patriarchal discourse. Even though this film cannot
be considered a part of dominant commercial cinema, feminine representations can still be
considered with reference to Mulvey’s forms.

The central male character of Isa differs in his relationship to the two main female characters.
The first main female character, Bahar, represents the intellectual, valuable, worthy, ‘good’
woman while the second female character, Serap, represents, an intellectual but offensive,
‘bad’ woman. Serap has a strong character and can stand on her own two feet without need
for a man. However, during the narrative the spectator is not encouraged to identify or
empathise with her.

Friedan’s concept of the “feminine mystique” (that defines women as healthy, beautiful,
educated concerned with her husband her children and her home) is clearly visible and
represented by Bahar in this film. Bahar is represented as the ‘good’ female character committed to Isa. However, Serap is prominent with her sexuality, presented in a rape like scene (see Section 6.1.3 - Images and Meanings) ‘The mechanism of voyeurism overcomes the threat that women represent by seeking to investigate her, understand her mystery and thus render her knowable, controllable and subject to male mastery’ (Hollows 2000: 47). Serap and Isa’s sexual intercourse scene can be considered as a typical voyeurism scene. Along with the montage of the film, the “big brother” like location of the camera provides the viewer with a voyeuristic view. Moreover, fetishism in these scenes is also visible with the Serap character’s sexuality in the intercourse scene. Isa’s attitudes during the intercourse scene with Serap are harsh and shows similarity to rape scenes. Mulvey mentions that, fetishism turns woman into an image of woman safe, enjoyable and unthreatening in cinema by turning some part of the body into a fetish can be made pleasurable (Hollows 2000, 47). One can claim that the reason for viewing Serap’s sexuality is to make her unthreatening and ‘weaken’ her, as her character is too strong to exist with stability as a woman whereas, Bahar is already innocent enough with her weaknesses. One can claim that there is no sexual representation of her, as she is not a threat for male power. Bahar is represented as dependent upon her relationship with an obsession for commitment: her main reason for returning to Isa at the end of the film. Bahar is forgiving, whereas, Serap is presented as independent and emotionally free.

In summary, according to the findings of narrative semiotics with the help of Mulvey’s forms and Friedan’s feminine mystique concept; femininity is represented in two ways in Climates; the passive, safe, protected and dependable female character represented by Bahar and the dangerous, irritating and independent female character represented by Serap. However, in both cases the masculine character eventually defeated the women. Serap is forced to have unwanted sex, whilst Bahar is beaten emotionally. In Section 6.1.3 below, the connotations will be discussed in detail in relation to the narrative.

6.1.3. Scenes, Moving Images and Meaning in Climates:

The section outlines the specific scenes from Climates in which patriarchal connotations were identified for analysis. Further on, the meaning making process of moving images will take place. The selected scenes are numbered sequentially.
I. Selected scene 1 (starts from 00:14:00): The scene lasts about 90 seconds. The first female character Bahar’s body is presented from a voyeuristic perspective while she sleeps on a beach and sweats. The camera is located right next to her head so the frame shows her body from between her breasts.

In this scene, Mulvey’s definition of cinematic woman figures is reproduced as it is presented to and from male gaze. The female character is presented with her body from a perspective that shows her breasts and she sweats while breathing heavily. Further evidence of a male gaze is that the scene ends up with Isa (male character) kissing her and putting sand on her as if attacking her to her death. (Isa’s attack was actually Bahar’s dream.) As mentioned in the theory section, Smelik suggests that cinema is “a case of a threefold ‘male’ gaze: camera, character, and spectator”. This scene fully verifies the threefold male gaze as it shows the male gaze, by using the female character’s body and male audience pleasure. The scene continues with Isa attempting to kill her (as part of the dream) which demonstrates Smelik’s suggestions that women representations are often followed by “violence, rape or even murder”. (Smelik 2009: 181)

II. Selected scene 2 (starts from 31:00:00) Isa meets a male friend by chance at a bookstore The second female character, Serap enters the scene with Isa’s friend. Isa asks the man if they have married yet. The man gets very uncomfortable, breathes a sigh and says “no”.

This scene is the first scene in the film Climates that portrays the myth of the “male commitment problem”. The sigh denotes the male characters discomfort. This scene introduces the “myth” which will be the main issue of the film. Unsurprisingly, men hold the conversation of commitment (marriage). The female character remains silent while the male character displays his discomfort regarding the question of marriage. This scene identifies marriage as a commitment as a male fear. This myth of “men’s fear of commitment” is a construction of patriarchal ideology.

III. Selected scene 3 (starts from 00:37:00) Serap and Isa at Serap’s home having a conversation while she (Serap) smokes. Her way of smoking is presented.

   Serap: I haven’t seen you for a while. Did Bahar go out of town again?

   Isa: What do you mean?
She starts to laugh hysterically, loud, quite annoyingly, a laugh that lasts more than one minute. Isa starts to eat nuts from the table and throws nuts to Serap expecting her to catch it. A nut drops on the floor.

The “nut” in this scene is essential as it represents a sign. This scene will be discussed further in relation to scene 5 and details will be given (see selected scene V).

IV. Selected scene 4 (starts from 00:40:00) A moving image of Serap’s sharp-pointed shoes.

Isa: How can you wear these sharp-pointed shoes? So ugly...

The physical appearance of the female character plays a major role in meaning making as it can provide indications of the prevailing myths. What characterises a bad woman? Stereotypically, bad female characters are expected not to have an innocent look instead, have sinful qualities. Her sharp pointed shoes represent Serap as a bad woman: as the round pointed shoes are a sign of childishness and innocence. Protagonist female characters of fairy tales or cartoons’ are always drawn with soft round pointed shoes while sharp pointed shoes are code for fetishism. Recall Mulvey’s mechanisms, which eliminate the “female (castration) threat” through specific forms of looking fetishism and voyeurism.

V. Selected scene 5 (starting from 00:38:00 to 00:45:00). This scene will be discussed in relation to scene 3.

The first moving image: Serap, and Isa eat nuts.

Second moving image: Isa drops a nut on the floor.

Third moving image: Isa wants Serap to eat the nut that is dropped.

Fourth: Isa puts the nut in Serap’s mouth at the end of their act of sexual intercourse.

Selected moving images are from the scene that is presented as ‘forced sexual intercourse.’ There has been a discussion going on by cinema authorities on this scene. For some of them, this scene is a rape scene while others believe this violent forced sexual scene is espousal of two sides. Therefore, in this study the scene will be called: a “rape like” scene.

One can claim that the act of ‘forced ingestion of a nut’ is a metaphor for the forced sex act. The “dropped nut” can be considered symbolic of the masculine sexual organ, which is the
female character is forced to accept. The “eating of nuts” in the first image signifies Serap and Isa’s situation where their power is balanced, which is extinguished by Isa demanding that Serap eat the “dropped nut” in the second scene. This demand also gives an early indication of Isa’s desire of sexual intercourse. Finally, in the third image, the dropped nut is eaten by Serap, signifies the dominance and authority of the male character; the weakness of woman despite all of her strong features. In summary, the images signify the process of turning the strong female figure into an unthreatening weak figure. In other words, the codes signify the myth of ‘male superiority’ and therefore patriarchal ideology where the feminine figure is subjugated by the masculine figure. As it was discussed earlier in the theory section according to Mulvey’s analysis “dominant woman figures” signify a threat representing castration. In order to eliminate this threat dominant cinema uses mechanisms, specific forms of looking such as fetishism and voyeurism. It is clear that in this scene a similar result to Mulvey’s aforementioned research can be introduced. The location of the camera, scenes with female body foreground and fetishist scenes such as the rape like scene and ‘the nut’ brings the researcher to a similar interpretation as Mulvey’s as the male gaze, fetishism and voyeurism are identified.

VI. Selected scene 6 (starting from 00:45:00): When the “rape like” scene is completed, the scene immediately changes to another. Isa sits with her mother who is fixing his pants on the sewing machine. The sound of sewing machine and sexual intercourse intersects. His mother starts to talk about him having a child one day. He shows discomfort. The director apparently placed these two scenes one after another by intention: From a sex scene, to his mother’s scene, in other words from a ‘guilt’ scene to ‘innocence’. Yet, women are pictured as innocent when they are child or mothers. This stereotype is also visible in the scene. One can claim that this scene is also a myth of mother being innocent and a person who you can turn to after your guilt. In other words, myth of mothers being forgiver and holy can be identified in this example.

One interpretation of the scene would also be related with the male commitment issue, which is also brought up by mother. Myth of mother being the one who insists on his son’s commitment can also be understood by mother’s connotations of marriage and having him kids. Whilst, when father arrived to the scene they change the subject and talk about something completely unrelated to the film or scene.
VII. Selected scene 7 (starting from 00:47:00) Isa with his colleague sits in a sauna and talks about marriage again. His friend talks about his girlfriend and how he got annoyed when his girlfriend angrily shakes her finger towards him. He finished the sentence by saying, “I threatened her not to marry” and laughs.

This scene will be discussed in relation to the selected scene 8.

VIII. Selected scene 8 (Starting from 00:54:00)

*Isa:* You were saying that your girlfriend shakes her finger towards you.

*The colleague:* You have to see her now. She walks with her tail between her legs. Sure thing! She thought I would leave her and she went so scared.

The myth of men’s fear of commitment issue’ is represented once again. Isa’s colleague can even threat a woman not to marry. Moreover, his girlfriend is frightened by this threat, which makes her weak. In other words, the third female figure of the film is also framed as weak. The commitment problem also connotes to male freedom whilst females are already consented with commitment. This myth also brings the audience to the same ideology: *patriarchy*.

IX. Selected scene 8 (Starting from 01:09:00): The scene where the spectator finally observes Bahar with her strong side- her work. She makes a phone call and complains someone at work. However, the strong part of her does not last long, after a while spectators witness her crying lasts about 2 minutes long. She sits in a van and cries alone. She turns to a weak woman, once again.

As Suner also discusses in her book, New Turkish Cinema, the problem of belonging and commitment to a relationship is very much emphasized in this film (Suner 2010). The myth of “settling down threats man’s freedom” is being told whereas female figures are presented with their fear of losing their men, their commitment. Male character, Isa surely is not showed as a “good” character, not as usual protagonist that the spectators can easily engage themselves. In contrast, the character presented to irritate the audience. This makes the film distinctive from the mainstream cinema. Nevertheless, male characters always introduced with their strengths, with their passion of freedom whilst female characters were either very weak by nature or weakened by male characters. Briefly, the aforementioned myths bring us the reproduced
ideology that is patriarchy where the female characters’ common ground is ending up being weak.

6.2. THREE MONKEYS

Image (2) is a scene from Three Monkeys

6.2.1. The plot of Three Monkeys:

Characters:
Ø Female Character: Hacer- Protagonist
Ø First Male Character: Servet- Antagonist- The Boss
Ø Second Male Character: Eyup- Supporting Character- Husband
Ø Third Male Character: Ismail- Supporting Character- Son

Wealthy businessman and politician, Servet drives a car in the middle of the night. He loses the control of the car, hits a pedestrian and kills him. He drives the car and leaves the body at the scene. Then, Eyup (Servet’s driver) wakes up with Servet’s phone call. Eyup is a lower class man, living in a ghetto in Yedikule in Istanbul. He lives with his wife and his only son. Servet meets Eyup and explains the accident. He offers Eyup a lump sum payment with the exchange of taking the blame of the accident. He also suggests paying Eyup’s salary each month as he was working. Eyup accepts the deal to provide more facilities to his family for their future. He goes to jail and Servet goes back to his political career. After some time, Hacer (Eyup’s wife), who works as a blue-collar worker, worries about her son Ismail’s future. Ismail has been failing to enter university every year. He instead wants to start his own
business and suggests her mother to ask for a financial support from Servet to start an enterprise. Hacer goes to Servet’s office to ask for an advance payment. On the way back home, Servet sees her waiting in the bus stop and offers a lift. After an unspecified time passes, Ismail prepares himself for visiting his father. He leaves the apartment but something unexpected happens and he comes back home. He hears her mother voice coming from the bedroom. He peeps his mother’s affair with Servet (boss), but he does nothing and leaves the home. After, Servet leaves the apartment, Ismail (son) comes home and hits her mother but he says nothing to his father. Eyup gets released from the prison. However, Hacer falls in love with Servet and wants to maintain the affair. She even meets him, kneels down in front of Servet and begs for his love. Eyup senses that something is going wrong. He even shows violence to Hacer. One night, Eyup and Hacer are informed that Servet is murdered, they are invited to a police station. While police investigating the incident Eyup realizes that Hacer was having an affair with Servet. Finally, Ismail confesses that he killed Servet to Eyup and Hacer. Eyup, goes and finds a very poor man and makes the same proposition as Servet made to him on order to protect his son.

6.2.2. Narrative, Characters and Meaning in Three Monkeys: When there is guilt it is usually a woman who causes that.

In this narrative, female character, Hacer, is a subject of emotional and physical violence from all the male characters in the film. In the end, she appears the be one the who to blame for all the guilt of others. In other words, at the very end of the film the female character becomes the one who is responsible of all the antagonistic situations.

After her husband goes to jail Hacer could have the possibility to gain her freedom and could stand on her feet all-alone. In contrast, she immediately finds another commitment. The commitment characteristic of female characters was also visible in Climates. (see Analyze of Climates p. 23) As it was discussed in Climates, this characteristic is shown as their weakness. Female characters have no choice than being with a man otherwise they are shown as sad and miserable. In Hacer’s case, by falling in love with a rich man, she even increases
her dependence. Moreover, by introducing her desperately in love with a wealthy man, the writer shows her as an opportunist character as well. For instance, Hacer never visits her husband while he is in jail. She is pictured, as she has no endeavor to fix her relationship with her husband. Instead, she is miserable enough to peep Servet while he is with her family and captive enough to kneel down and beg Servet for love. She is also dangerous enough to wear her red sexy dress and blows his man’s mind out. One can say that female characteristics are underrepresented in this film as well. She is introduced with all her weaknesses as well as her evilness. The violence against woman represented three times from all of the male characters when she is founded “guilty”. Violence and sex usually are represented together. Sexual relationship between Hacer and her husband Eyup is framed as it was a punishment for “the guilty” woman. Mulvey’s forms of elimination female threats in the mainstream cinema, stands out in this example via fetishism again.

However, besides all of that, this film is also breaking clichés by picturing the mother not as a stereotypical mother, a sacred being. At least, she is shown with her emotions, femininity and her sexuality. However, these characteristics are shown to make her look like selfish, bad and guilty.

6.2.3. Images and Meaning in Three Monkeys:

The section outlines the specific scenes from Three Monkeys in which patriarchal connotations were identified for analysis. Further on, the meaning making process of moving images will take place. The selected scenes are numbered sequentially.

I. Selected scene 1 (starts from 00:43:00): The son (Ismail) slaps her mother when he discovers that her mother is cheating on her father.

When the son doesn’t have enough of power to do anything to Servet, the boss, the only guilty becomes his mother. Finally, stereotypical reaction is inevitable: violence against the weakest. In that case, once more, the weakest is the female character.

II. Selected scene 2 (starts from 00:58:00): Hacer watches Servet, while he carries a baby stroller to his car. His wife comes with their baby: A moving image of a happy family.
This scene is framing a voyeuristic gaze of woman for the first time. However, this gaze is still an imagination of male gaze of how woman should see a happy family image. The female character could only envy a happy family, a happy commitment. Female gaze is shown from a male perspective. The connotation of a happy family brings us to the same myth as it was in the film “Climates”: female wish for the commitment.

III. Selected scene 3 (starts from 01:03:00): Eyup (Husband) is jealous of her wife Hacer. She acts strangely in her red sexy dress. In this scene sexual relation and violence intersects. Eyup leaves the scene as he hates Hacer. Eyup comes back to the scene, touches her. Hacer’s body is presented with one breast out from her red dress. She starts to laugh hysterically. Eyup tears up Hacer’s red dress.

Red sexy dress is a sign of feminine sexuality, which connotes to the code of sex that can be considered as mans sin. Myth can be considered as: “sex is a sin of men” that would explain why the scene ends with violence. Mulvey’s theory of fetishism and voyeurism is visible in this example as well. Besides, the spectator never sees male nudity, sexuality whereas Hacer’s body her red dress are represented clearly. Female figure is once more considered as the object of male desire. Yet, if femininity is a danger and/ or evil, the solution is presented with violence in the scene.

IV. Selected scene 4 (starts from 1:17:00) Hacer kneels down and begs Servet (the boss) not to leave her. (see image 2, p.24)

This image is also used as a popular image from the film. The image tells the story in short. She is wearing a red color cardigan. The red is presented for a sign of her guilt. It should not be a coincidence that she wears red here. Her head is almost on the floor and between Servet’s legs as she is completely miserable and depended on him. There would be no better image of her “being weak” as well as “being guilty”

V. Selected scene 5 (starts from 1:30:00) Eyup (husband) observes Hacer while she attempts to suicide from the balcony. She gives up. After a while, (starts from 1:30:00) when he is leaving the apartment:

Hacer: Where are you going?

Eyüp: (swears) Go and sleep or throw yourself from the balcony.
According to the story, there were many “guilt” actually performed by men such as accidental murder, exchange the blame of this murder, violence, Servet’s affair to his family and to Eyup. However, in the end of the film Isa tells his wife to throw herself as he blames her for everything happened to their family. As if she throws herself everything would be solved. It seems like the female character is viewed as guilty for what have happened and as a presence she is the one to blame.

According to the results of semiotics, in addition to the findings of previous film which was myth of “men’s fear of commitment” and “female weakness”; The myth of “female as a constant guilty” was identified. The common point of the myths is to appear in patriarchal ideology.

Furthermore, there are similarities between the second female character of Climates, Serap and Hacer. Serap is a woman in her middle ages who have a boyfriend. However, she does not hesitate to have an affair with Eyüp (male character), she even tries to seduce him. Hacer as a married woman experiences the similar situation. “Bad woman” personality was drawn within the similar characters and appearance with their sexuality. They have one more similar characteristic; long, hysterical laughs makes audience irritated. The reason of those laughs can either be their “guilt” or “misery”.

6.3. ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA

Image (3) is a scene from Once upon a time in Anatolia

6.3.1 The plot of Once upon a time in Anatolia
Film opens up with a scene that is shot from a very long distance. It is a very dark night and spectators hear sounds from a group of men and three cars. After a long while, when the camera gets closer, police officers, a doctor, gravediggers, gendarmes, a prosecutor and two homicide suspects are projected in the scene. They are on crime investigation and searching the buried body in the rural surroundings of the Anatolian town Keskin. Most of the film consists of searching for the body that is buried near a fountain. However, there are many fountains around the area. One of the suspects, Kenan and his mentally ill brother lead them to go to one fountain to another. However, each fountain looks the same as others and he gets confused or he pretends so. Meanwhile, the spectator witnesses their conversation about different topics such as, health, family, ex-wives, suicide, hierarchy, bureaucracy, ethics, and their jobs. Eventually, the prosecutor gets hungry and the group finds a village to eat and rest until dawn. After they have their meals, and go to rest, spectators meet the first female character in the film. She is the daughter of their host and presented as an angel-like beauty among all men. Meanwhile, one of the police officers investigates and finds the reason of the murder: victim Yasar’s son, was actually suspect Kenan’s son. (When Yasar had found out the secret, they fought and the fight led to victim’s death.) Right after the dawn, they finally find the body and bring it to the hospital for the autopsy. Victim Yasar’s wife (second female character) and his son wait outside the hospital and son throws a stone at suspect Kenan (He does not know that Kenan is his real father). The autopsy scene in hospital morgue is rather long and covers of loads of bureaucratic issues. The autopsy shows that the victim Yasar had been buried alive. Nevertheless, the doctor intentionally does not report this in order to protect the victim’s wife and son from more grief. The film closes up with a shot from the doctor’s
perspective from the autopsy room’s window. He looks after the son and the wife of the victim while they are walking away.

6.3.2. Narrative, Characters and Meaning in *Once upon a Time in Anatolia*:
Once more, the cause of the biggest problem is a woman.

In this film, rather than the story, discussions and conversations play the essential role. The real story is hidden behind the thoughts and relations between the characters. The film is not focusing on the secrets of the crimes. Instead, it focuses how the power relations affect the practical life, how hierarchy of power is effective on human relations and how these relations are dependent on each other. These complications are making the fact visible that the relationships are based on interests. However, these relations are only represented among male characters. Women are silenced in the film; they do not talk unless a man asks a question. It would be hard to discuss women representation in the film since there are very limited scenes with female characters. However, it is possible to discuss the “absence of women”. Men do all the complicated important work whereas woman is playing unimportant role in the story. (However, in the end of the film a woman appears to be the actual cause of the problem.) There is a big secret to be solved in the film by those men in such a bureaucratic, hierarchical and “serious” world. However, in this “complicated” world women are not there or not able to talk. Instead, the first woman is a passive character in the film and the second woman is actually the cause of the crime. The only part that a female becomes more visible is the part that when the first woman appears from the dark with a candle. The emphasis is on her beauty and innocence in contrast to the dirty and serious world of men. This scene with the woman where she is represented as angle-like gives the spectator the hints of male gaze. The camera perspectives and movements are presenting a gaze that displays her innocence and beauty with a voyeuristic perspective. This scene will also be discussed in *Images and Meanings* section. Voyeurism can be observed in relation to Mulvey’s theory in this male gaze. The dominant ideology can be identified as “patriarchy.” The myth can be
“man is strong and have the control over the complicated issues” while “woman is either way weak and innocent or cause of the complications”. Image of male characters are the symbols of power and authority whereas woman are silenced and potentially cause of problems or innocent as an angel.

6.3.4. Images and Meaning in *Once upon a time in Anatolia*

*Once upon a time in Anatolia* has a very limited amount of scenes with female characters. Therefore, the selected scenes will mostly be evaluated rather through the idea of absence and annihilation of woman. Further on, the meaning making process of moving images will take place. The selected scenes are numbered sequentially.

I. Selected scene 1 (starts from 00:19:00): A doctor, two suspects, a commissar and two police officers are sitting in a car. They are having a conversation that the prosecutor goes to toilet very often as he may have prostate problem. The commissar advises the doctor to do an inspection on the prosecutor’s prostate. The doctor says that he can also do an inspection of the commissar when the commissar visits his office.

   *The commissar answers: “Oh god forbid! I know how people do that thing”*

The first time when the spectator meets with masculinity issue. In this conversation, the commissar uses the prostate problem to insult the prosecutor. The doctor reminds him that he should also beware. Commissar gets upset and does not let him to even mention that. The sexual organ of the man is the taboo (at the same time a sign) that man should never have problems with. It is a symbol of masculinity, authority and being male and connotes to his authority and power.

II. Selected scene 2 (starts from 01:04:00): After more than one-hour the very first female character, Cemile, finally appears in the scene where there is power block out. She enters with a candle. She looks very young and innocent. The candle illuminates her face, her innocence. The spectator watches her serving to the men about 2 minutes, which can be considered a remarkably long time for a film. Each male character’s reaction to this innocent girl is presented one by one. This scene has nothing to do with the plot. As a matter of fact, Nuri
Bilge Ceylan stated in a seminar in Berlinale Talent Campus\(^2\) that this scene was not in the script until they saw the girl who was supposed to serve the tea. When they saw the girl they have realized how beautiful she looks and they immediately wanted to shoot this scene.

Accordingly, Friedan’s concept of feminine mystique is visible with Cemile character in this scene. As it was mentioned earlier Friedan defines feminine mystique as women who is healthy, beautiful, educated concerned with her husband their children and home (Hollows 2000, 11).

Besides, another interpretation of this scene could be displaying of female character as the caretaker. However, it will not be discussed here since the story is pictured in a rural area where the traditional division of labor should not be underestimated.

III. Selected scene 3 (02:07:00): The wife of suspect Kenan (Gülnaz) was invited to identify the body. The doctor asks if the body belongs to her husband. She does not answer as if she could not understand. He asks again. She hardly mumbles a sound that approves the doctor’s question. Then, the doctor writes a long report on behalf of her as if she says those words. During this time, he occasionally asks her if she confirms his words. She only approves with her head.

This is the scene that the spectator observes, her silence and guilt. The reasons of her not talking could be various. One interpretation could be that she is guilty and therefore she is afraid of talking. Another explanation could be that she feels sad that her husband is dead else she is silenced by men since the men already talks on behalf of her. Annihilation and silenced of woman, male character can talk on behalf of her. Finally, this story also ends up with women being guilty.

7. Conclusions

7.1. Analysis in summary

Two main questions were asked during the study:
• How are women (female characters) represented in the films “Climates, Three Monkeys and Once upon a time in Anatolia”?
• What are the myths that the films drawing on? Are there any myths that reflect patriarchal point of view?

Accordingly, two sub-questions were asked;
• How are relations between woman and man represented in those films?
• How is masculinity represented in those films?

In order to answer the research questions, scenes were selected and analyzed. For the analysis, of ‘Climates’, ‘Three Monkeys’ and ‘Once upon a time in Anatolia’ structuralist semiotics method was used. The method was employed in order to shed a light on ideological constructions of female characters in the films and helped to discuss the myths determined by dominant ideology. Moreover, Mulvey’s mechanisms were applied as a theoretical lens and Friedan’s feminine mystique definition were used to identify the representations.

According to the results; the myths classified in the films can be listed as follows:

- Men superiority.
- Women are either weak and valuable or strong and offensive.
- Men are afraid of commitment.
- Settling down threatens man’s freedom.
- Mothers are caretakers. They are identified with their innocence and holiness.
- Sex is a sin of men.
- Men are strong and have the control over the complicated issues.

The results showed that female characters are influenced by patriarchal ideology and its norms and values. Results indicated similarities with Mulvey’s mechanisms of voyeurism and fetishism that are tools to eliminate the female threat. Besides, female characters were
portrayed as stereotypical feminine figures regardless of their representative social group. According to the social group, the representation of women only differed in *Once upon a time in Anatolia* women were almost completely silenced while in the other two films women presented similarly in terms of their “sexuality”. Similar to Smelik suggestions, the female characters of the *Climates* and *Three Monkeys* were turned into an “ideal beauty, fetish, whose flawless perfection turns any attention away from her difference, her otherness” or “often followed by violence and rape” (Smelik 2009: 181). Female characters were represented mainly with their weaknesses or in the last resort men weaken them. In all three films women were actually threats for men’s world or they were the source of the “guilt”. Females were mostly presented as “feminine others” and therefore one could argue that the films were actually presented from a male gaze. Even in a scene where the spectator was supposed to see the female gaze, the scene was actually presented female gaze from a male perspective (see chapter 6 *Three Monkeys*, scene II).

Likewise, sexuality was shown as a “sin” in *Climates* and *Three Monkeys*: In *Climates* the only scene presents an intercourse was an affair scene, which was presented as much alike a rape scene. Similarly, in *Three Monkeys*, sex was implied either way with an affair or presented with violence. In *Once upon a time in Anatolia*, due to lack of female images, there was no implication on sexual interaction. However, guilt that was a central theme of this film, begun from an affair between the suspect and victim’s wife. Sex was as well pictured as a sin in this film.

7.2. Limitations

The analysis of motion pictures within social values and films as narratives is challenging. As social systems are complex; this study had to rely on abstraction and conceptualization. It can inevitably be quite relative and subjective (Sayer 2000: 21). It is difficult to avoid both “stereotypes” and “naturalization”. The results could be casual explanation, interpretation of the concepts but it cannot be considered as representative, cannot be generalized (ibid). However, the study contributes with significant knowledge to the current research area since few academic studies have taken a similar approach. The results and interpretations in this
study apply to the three films Climates, Three monkeys and Once upon a time in Anatolia and can not be applied more generally, for example, to “New Turkish cinema” as a whole.

In addition, Feminist film theories unintentionally reproduce gender inequalities themselves as they are based upon castration theory. Castration theory itself overrates the male values and discusses female values in comparison to male values. Despite this limitation, feminist film theory was a useful tool; assisting to identify the stereotypical and condemned presentation of women. Besides, this research is significant in that it takes Turkish film made by men and for men and analyses it by a woman from a woman’s perspective.

7.3. Discussion

As mentioned previously, according to Johnston’s argument "the figure of ‘woman’ functions within film as a sign within a patriarchal discourse, not as a reflection of reality (Thornham 1999: 54). In this study, the researcher investigated women representation together with their relations to men. The results showed high influence of patriarchy. A question here would be “Do such relations exist in Turkish society? As a matter of fact, the answer should be “yes”. ‘Could it be generalized?’ Well, “no”. According to some, the aforementioned films can be seen as an overview or a critique of those kinds of relationships. However, females are represented and portrayed consistently “in these ways” that is reproducing and stereotyping the image of desperate women. “These ways” of women representations often are harmful for the image of women as it would easily be “naturalized” and “stereotyped”. Yet, as Gaye Tuchman pointed out “mass media can disseminate the same message to all classes at the same time with authority and universality of reception in a decidedly one directional flow of information. (Tuchman 1978: 6) In other words, the stereotyping leads to a distorted image of women that is reproduced over and over. Without a doubt, the misrepresentation of women has been discussed over the years since the feminist movements started. Nevertheless, the image of women has not faced any significant changes yet. On the other hand, Maggie Humm argues that “the affinity between film/feminism/female cannot, of course, in itself create political change but equally, recognition of this affinity through collective practices could reveal the fallibility of traditional knowledge” (Humm 1997: 194). Therefore, it is essential to
investigate how media treats women and it is significant for the researchers to seek, analyze, critique the images that media produces and reproduces.

As mentioned, in chapter 4, Smelik suggests that in contemporary cinema, not only female figures but also male figures are also under the control of patriarchal ideology. (Smelik 2009: 182) This argument, of course, appropriate at some points: Firstly, in this era men are also subjected to ideals of being more attractive, healthy, shiny as women. However, in this study there were no results that stressed the male figures as an object of desire. It is therefore apparent that Smelik’s point of view covers only some cases peculiar to western cinema. Secondly, in a traditional patriarchal society, men are subjected to patriarchy as well. As in the example of scene I (see chapter 6, scene I, Once upon a time in Anatolia p.30) men were supposed to protect their manly features. Patriarchy is not merely a one-way subjection that only affects women. Correspondingly, this study did not show or claim that the women are the only subjugated element in dominant patriarchal society. However, it showed that women commonly face stereotyping, which distracts their image and leads to false representations. Moreover, peculiar to the selected films the story is still told from a male gaze that discredits women. This scopophilic contact with the female from male gaze could also be the reason why those films became popular and globally respected. The mechanism of fetishism and voyeurism could be the reason for global attention as they are considered as universal. This means that even though independent films are considered as alternative voice to dominant ideologies they are still under the effect of patriarchal point of view.

As conclusion, this study did not aim to reach general conclusion from the films *Climates*, *Three Monkeys* and *Once upon a time in Anatolia* instead, analyzed the films and discussed the perspective of film making and what is being normalized.

### 8. Further Research

Future studies should focus on a greater range of independent films and would be enhanced by the opportunity to interview the creator of the film and conduct a reception study which would increase the validity and reliability This study has covered both heterosexual representations and absence of women in the films directed by one of the most influential
directors of Turkey today. It would be meaningful to touch upon the reflection or absence of homosexual women represented in relevant films, which has not been included in this study.
9. References:


Rifkin, Benjamin (1994) Semiotics of Narration in Film and Prose Fiction: Case study of “Scarecrow” and “My friend Ivan Lapshin” Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York


Suner, Asuman (2010), New Turkish Cinema Belonging Identity and Memory. London: I.B. TAUtIS.


Online sources:

Wikipedia is used as a starting point for telling the plots of the films: "Climates", "Three Monkeys", “Once upon a time in Anatolia”


Conference of Nuri Bilge Ceylan (2012)

Images are copied from the website of NBC Film:

Trailers of the films

1. *Climates*

2. *Three Monkeys*

3. *Once upon a time in Anatolia*