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ISLAMIC NATIONAL CINEMA MOVEMENT:
MODERNIZATION OF TRADITIONALISM

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Abstract

This research discusses the evolution of the interpretation of religion in Islamic Turkish National Cinema Movement over the years. Accordingly, this research is conducted with three different movies from three different times as follows; Birleşen Yollar (1970) (Crossroads), Yalnız Değilsiniz (1990), (You are Not Alone) and The Imam (2005). This paper will investigate that the interpretation of religion transformed from traditional language to modern language by the socio-political changes in the country since the formation of this movement in the 1970s with Birleşen Yollar (Crossroads) directed by Yücel Çakmaklı. While the Islamic filmmakers resist the modernization movements until the beginning of the 2000s, this study will demonstrate that they started to find a way for the compatibility of religion and modernization. Moreover, this paper finds that the Islamic filmmakers mainly focus on the engagement of a female character and to call the spectator to turn back their essence until the 2000s. Drawing on the similar paradigms among these three movies, this research is conducted with Rick Altman's the Semantic/Syntactic approach. Besides his methods, David Bordwell's cognitive theory and Jackie Stacy and Richard Dyer's stardom approaches are another relevant methods for this study.

Research Question(s) and Overall Aim of the Project

The Islamic National Cinema movement in Turkey is one of the most significant trends that emerged in the 1970s for seeking to create a national cinema language in the country, and it gained a substantial national acclaim in the following years. Until the end of the 1990s, the favorite theme of the Islamic Cinema was encouraging the Islamic way of life in that people can find the 'true happiness.' This movement, also, aimed to provide a counter-ideology against westernization and modernization movements in the country. However, it is essential to analyze the fact that when it comes to the 2000s, Islamic cinema promoted, Diken (2018)

claims, 'the compatibility of Islam and modernity' (Diken, 2018:74). While this could make it an interesting and rich exploration for the engagement of Islamic films with the expression of religion in a historical context, it remains largely in the terra incognita. Although there have been some researches on religion in Turkish Cinema, 'Islamic Cinema Movement' has stayed in the corner, not having been paid attention in academia.

Furthermore, other than a few brief studies based on religion in Turkish Cinema, this trend has been examined solely with individual articles and some chapters rather than a comprehensive study that emphasizes the development of the movement. As such, my research aims to contribute to filling in this gap by studying the expression of religion in Islamic national films. My research circles around the following two themes: At first, I will be exploring the characteristic features of Islamic National Cinema films such as general themes of the movies, main binary oppositions, which are rich/poor, traditional/modern and rural/urban, and the representation of female gender. By doing this, I will be identifying the main similarities and differences between the three movies I have chosen for this study. After having been classified the fundamental themes in each film, I will try and answer the question of how the Islamic Cinema movement especially dealt with the representation of female gender and expression of religion parallel to the changing social transformations in Turkey since the 1970s.

Eventually, three different movies from three different times were chosen for this research. The first movie I want to focus on is *Birleşen Yollar* (1970) (Crossroads) directed by Yücel Çakmaklı. *Birleşen Yollar* was made at the time that right-wing political parties became more visible and stronger in the parliament. Famously, Necmettin Erbakan's *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party) had a persuasive authority in the council and the public. This film is significant for my research because it was considered as the pioneer of the Islamic National Cinema Movement in Turkey by the critics (Savaş Arslan (2007), Dilek Kaya and Umut

Azak (2015)). *Birleşen Yollar* discursively attempts to bring religion or Islam into the cinema as a counter-ideology in Turkish Cinema first time against to Westernization or modernization movements in Turkey. Parallel to this film's aim, it, also, should be bear in the mind that *Milli Görüş* (National View) ideology that calls citizens back to the essence so that the country can progress faster was appeared in Turkish politics especially by Necmettin Erbakan's efforts. Accordingly, this ideology seems to appear in Turkish cinema as the filmmaker in *Birleşen Yollar* communicates with audiences through characters to be enlightened, calling the spectator to turn back to the essence.

Basically, *Birleşen Yollar* is based on a romance between Feyza, who is a daughter of rich family adapted to Westernize lifestyle, and Bilal, who is a son of a middle-class family adapted to the Islamic way of life. As the story follows, Feyza is influenced by Bilal and, as a result, she adapts to the Islamic way of life. Narrative-wise, the film promotes an Islamic way of life over the modernization in that people can find the 'true happiness.' Mirroring the social changes, the movie was set in an urban area, and the movie pictures different binary oppositions such as rural vs. urban, traditional vs. modern and rich vs. poor.

The second movie I want to focus on *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990) (You Are not Alone) directed by Mesut Uçakan. This movie was made when the debate around headscarf had become an important issue in Turkish politics and society. Prior to 90s, Turkish laicism had not been tolerated females with a hijab in governmental institutions and schools for a long time. The idea behind this is that the veil was seen as an obstacle for modernization progress in the country. Hence, many female students and women were not allowed in those places. So, this film attempts to polemize this issue by picturing the struggle of female students who express their faith by wearing a headscarf. Accordingly, *Yalnız Değilsiniz* is essential for my research to analyze the gender issue in Turkish politics in the 90s. Furthermore, another important

feature of the film is that the filmmaker aims to enlighten a female character, like *Birleşen Yollar*.

Basically, the story laid on a life of a daughter of a wealthy family, Serpil, who studies medicine and started questions about life, death, and the afterlife after her grandmother dies. Following the story, she decides to live her life through the rules of Islam and, thus, she covers her hair with a hijab. But, her family considers this transformation as a 'psychological disorder,' and she is put in a clinic. Regarding the social conditions of the society, the movie focuses on the difficulties females faced in the society due to their headscarf. Just like *Birleşen Yollar*, this movie also presents those binary oppositions such as rural vs. urban, traditional vs. modern and rich vs. poor.

Third movie I want to focus on *The Imam* (2004) directed by Ismail Güneş. Compared to *Birleşen Yollar* and *Yalnız Değilsiniz*, this movie takes a position for compatibility of Islam and modernity rather than the enlightening of a character or resisting to Westernization movements in the country. So, this movie offers my research a fresh approach to analyze the evaluation of interpretation of religion in a socio-cultural context and the reasons behind it. Regarding the film's aim, it, also, should bear in the mind that the new parliament under the rule of the new right-wing political party, which is Justice and Development Party (AKP), prepared a different religious discourse for Turkish politics than previous ideologies. Brian Silverstein (2011) demonstrates that because this new government wants to build strong ties with European Union (EU) in its first five years of management, it internalized the basic concepts of EU entry protocols such as freedom of choice, personal freedoms and civil rights. As *The Imam* takes issue with the compatibility of Islam and modernity, the film, Diken (2018) argues, correlates traditional Islam and the modernity through a modern and traditional cleric (Diken, 2018:73). It draws a sharp contrast between two clerics to show that

Islam does not have to be radical and conservative; it can be fashionable and moderate. Thus, the protagonist, Emre, reconciles Islam and modernity, having been presented as a modern cleric. Upon his graduation from a vocational religious high school, he trains to be an information technologies expert at the university. After completing his master degree at a British university, he returns to İstanbul to set up a software company with his business partner, Mert. Emre's physical appearance and lifestyle give no hint that he is a religious person. We meet him riding a motorcycle on the steps of Anatolia and listening to rock music. When he arrived in the town, villagers are surprised because Emre does not match the conventional cleric figure. As the story follows, the tension occurs between Emre and the traditional cleric in the village.

The Discursive Roots of Islamic National Cinema Movement in Turkey

The relationship between Islam and Western modernity has always been a key component of the discussion. This might be because the method of modernization included the debilitating and often the substitution of more seasoned Islamic associations with "modern" organizations (Çayır, 2007: XIV). Hence, Islamic movements emerged through a range of social, cultural and political platforms to designate a new Muslim stance to a socio-economic pressure of modernity and liberalism. In Turkey's case, As the programs toward making modern Turkey required new necessary political and cultural associations, the bond with the Ottoman past was broken (Keymen, 2007:220). Thus, Turkish society has adopted Western institutions, customs, and manners with the replacement of older Islamic institutions. Eventually, although Islamism having been silence to the modernization programs in Turkey during the early period of the new republic, new Islamic actors have begun to play an essential role in Turkish politics and society since the 1970s.

Prior to 1970s, religious right or Islamist right was a dissenting group within Turkish politics since Democrat Party (DP) come to power on the strength of support from nationalists, Islamists, and liberal leftists. This was the first time that a right-wing party won the elections since the establishment of the republic in 1950. Investigating to DP's approach to religion, Şencer Ayata (2009) found that because the belief in DP's view was first social concrete for the social cohesion, this party's policy was about to bring Islam as a living social custom into the standard of Turkish governmental issues (Ayata, 2009:43). However, the power of the Democrat Party was demolished by the military cup in 1960. When the calendars showed up the beginning of the 1970s, a new Islamic Movement which is called *Milli Görüş* (National View) led by Necmettin Erbakan emerged in the Turkish politics and social life and this ideology was, also, represented by *Milli Selamet Partisi* (National Salvation Party) in the parliament.

Kenan Çayır (2007) found that the predominant Islamic reactions of the 1970s and 1980s in Muslim world towards to western modernity were to set out a new approach to Islam as an arrangement of thought and reasonable/political qualities that introduced a new model for both state and society (Çayır (2007). Parallel with other Muslim contexts, *Milli Görüş* actors considered themselves as politically conservative, and they sought an idea 'freeing Turkey from the logic of the Western-dominated ideologies' (Silverstein, 2011:103). Necmettin Erbakan said that the imitation of the West which 'upholds the power, not the right' was the most significant problem of the Islamic World at that time (Bora, 2002:263). Naturally, this ideology found supporters oneself in the cinema.

As a part of Turkish culture and identity, Islam was not new in the Turkish Cinema. But, Islamic discourse was based on the view of Westernized elites and the representation of religion in films was at an only symbolic level until the 70s. Accordingly, Islamic clerics were thus often represented as obstacles to the development of society and as unethical

traitors who used religion for their interests. Also, those movies portrayed religious characters as uncultured citizens while westernized characters as educated people being doctors, teachers, lawyers and so on. The main reason behind this could be using the power of cinema to spread innovations of modernization movements in public.

Moreover, cinema was not pleased to welcome by the conservative Muslim community in the early years of the republic because of seeing cinema as sin representatives. But, Muslim intellectuals and directors understood the futility of any physical or verbal resistance to this power and, thus Muslim intellectuals or filmmakers started using cinema to share their own ideologies. Therefore, they decided to use the cinema as an ideological tool, just like their secularist colleagues, and to create their own 'counter-cinema,' as Prophet Muhammad was often put forward: 'arm yourself with the weapons of the enemy' (Dilek Kaya and Umut Azak, 2015:261). Eventually, they wanted to create a 'National Cinema' that brought religion into the cinema as an ideological and cultural discourse and addressed damage of modernization movements in the lives of Muslim people.

Dilek Kaya and Umut Azak (2015) found that attempts to formulate a Turkish national cinema begun and gained popularity in the 1960s as a response to 'Western cultural colonialism' and Western Marxist belief systems which formed Turkish cinema of the time. Against this practice, Turkish filmmakers wanted to develop a distinct way of story-telling that allow them to develop a 'truly' Turkish national cinema. However, as with many discussions around national cinema around the world, there are a lot of things that Turkish film-makers or scholars cannot agree on. One of the central debates is a 'modernization vs. tradition' as such views could be considered as a typical cultural debate between Islamic conservatism and westernize elites. While these debates are relatively recent, the 'modernization vs. tradition' debates go back to the establishment of the new Turkish Republic, and possibly beyond.

Journey to the past, Feroz Ahmad (1993) found that Liberals in the Ottoman Empire belonged to the upper-classes of society. They were mostly well-educated, cultured and talking in foreign languages, especially in French. After the decay of the Ottoman Empire, they joint around Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (who was the founder of the new Turkish Republic and played a leading role for modernization programs in Turkey). Accordingly, those liberals argued that Turkey was built and rose in the picture of the Kemalist first class which won the national battle against foreign invaders and the old administration rather than 'the ashes of the Ottoman Empire' (Feroz, 1993:4). The supporters of the traditional view, however, argued that Karpas credits Ziya Gökalp's (who is a famous Turkish thinker who lived from 1876 until 1924) view that the Turks are an age-old millenary nation with a unique national culture. For Gökalp, the Turks constituted the basis of the Ottoman-Muslim comity (Karpas, 2004:3). Not interestingly, this debate appeared in the national cinema discussion in Turkey.

Even in the beginning, the supporters of Turkish national cinema could not agree on which is the most suitable word for expressing Turkish national cinema. While traditional scholars or filmmakers preferred to use *milli* to endorse the Muslim extent of national identity and the Ottoman-Islamic legacy (MTTB (1973)), secular scholars or filmmakers preferred to use *ulusal* to avoid the conservatism. Both words translated into English as 'national.' But, because the word *milli* for national is a borrowed word from the Arabic language it is linked to the conservative, nationalistic association in Turkey (De Brujin, 2012;23). On the contrary, Dilek Kaya and Umut Azak (2015) found that the word *ulus* for national had a secular overtone having no connection with Ottoman/Islamic past (Kaya and Azak, 2015:259).

At this point I come, more briefly, I want to make concerning Turkish cinema in relation to *Milli* (National) Cinema concept that is mainly associated with the conservative and nationalistic circles. While this concept was called as *Milli* (national) Cinema in the beginning, it was called by different names following years such as *Beyaz* (white) Cinema,

Yeşil (Green) Cinema, *Hidayet* (guidance) Cinema, and *Manevi* (spiritual) Cinema. Yücel Çakmaklı is considered to be the pioneer of the current movement of the National Cinema with his theory and practice. He combined the elements of morality in the search for the locality of the national cinema movement with the forms of Yeşilçam (Turkish Cinema's Hollywood in the past) cinema. According to him, the Turkish national cinema should represent Turkish national culture that includes 'Turkish beliefs, national characters, and traditions' (Çakmaklı cited in MTTB (1973)). Yücel Çakmaklı offered those three concepts for Turkish National Cinema in the National Cinema panel discussion organized by MTTB in 1973. Ultimately, since Çakmaklı's focus, films of this stream has mostly been dealing with the religious concepts.

One of the main concerns in these Islamic films of Turkish National cinema movement is gender relations in Turkish society, especially female gender identity. In this context, what is interesting in *Birleşen Yollar* (1970) and *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990) is the female characters to go to the enlightenment process. The filmmakers focused on protagonist female characters to illuminate with the Islamic way of life rather than males. According to Savaş Arslan (2007), this situation could be read concerning the patriarchal culture of Turkish society (Arslan, 2007). He demonstrates that because almost all filmmakers of Yeşilçam (including Islamic filmmakers) were male, their gender might cause them to further focus on the cleanness of young females instead of males (Arslan, 2007:164). But, the politics of dress codes seem to be more important in this case. What seems interesting in those two movies is that the process of enlightenment is compiled by wearing a headscarf. This might lead us to discuss the reception of dress reforms during the establishment on the new Turkish Republic in order to break the bonds with the Ottoman Empire.

Savaş Arslan (2007) argues that dress reform has always been an arena characterized by sharp gender differences (Arslan, 2007:164). Indicating this issue, while conservative and

seculars sides accepted male dressing codes, woman dressing codes have always been a problematic issue in Turkish politics as well as in public. On the one side of an argument, from a secular perspective, the headscarf of female citizens was seen as an obstacle to modern Turkey, and, thus, many female citizens were not allowed to work in state jobs and study at the universities because of their headscarf. From a conservative perspective, modern female dresses have always been concerned by the Muslim community as they viewed it was an 'emblem of corrupt modernization' (Azak and Kaya, 2015:260).

This situation seems to be very significant for Islamic film-makers as they highlight the headscarf in their movies. Investigating this issue, it should be considered that dress in Muslim contexts in all cultures is, as Giddens notes, "a means of symbolic display, a way of giving external form to narratives of self-identity" (Giddens, 1991:62). In parallel with this argument then, the hijab might be considered one of the most recognizable elements to express Muslim identity. Furthermore, Haddad (1998) found that women in several Islamist texts of the Arab world are "relegated to the task of being the last bastion against foreign penetration" (Haddad 1998:21). In both cases, the headscarf in Çakmaklı's and Uçakan's movies could be a border or a castle between Muslims and seculars in society. In other words, it functions as a curtain to divide insider and outsider categories.

Despite indicating critical social issues, Islamic filmmakers have been mostly criticised by film critics because of following only classical *Yeşilçam* melodrama narrative structure and technical elements. Besides this, their films were also criticized by many film scholars for stitching to just resisting westernization and modernization movements rather than offering an alternative view. Those all criticizing might be true because Çakmaklı and Uçakan seemed to provide a stereotyped collective identity for audiences, creating a sharp contrast between westernization and modernization. In other words, they tend to divide people into two categories; 'ones who from us and ones who are not.'

But, it should also be considered that we are looking at the past from today. Considering those times, in the 1970s, left vs. right conflict was a general tendency in all over the world because of the influence of the cold war period. Turkish politics, also, was challenged by a different type of leftist and rightist groups. Consequently, this ambiguous situation of Turkish politics might push people to choose their sides.

Furthermore, Martinelli (2005) argues that the term modern implies ‘depreciation of the old and traditional’ (Martinelli, 2005:5). Accordingly, Kemalist (who are the followers of Kemal Atatürk) intellectuals and political administrators had attempted to regret bonds with Ottoman Empire past through modernization progress in the country. Accordingly, the radical innovations throughout the modernization processes, such as the abolishment of Caliphate and Sultanate, hats and clothing innovations and the establishment of the secular republic happened in the country. Indeed, this attempt to create a ‘new’ identity with innovations might lead to emerge ‘other’ in Turkish socio-cultural life. While these innovations are accepted by the secular circle, they are not accepted by the conservative community. Ultimately, this leads them to regroup themselves.

Moving on Islamic National Cinema in the 1990s, it should be considered that the period between 1989 and 1995 is called ‘Golden Age’ for Islamic cinema by critics in conjunction with social and political conditions in Turkey. Prior to 1990s, efforts for Islamic national cinema come to a stop because of the experience of the military coup in 1982 and financial difficulties. However, the conservative attitudes of the Prime Minister Turgut Özal, who took management of the government from the military in 1987, influence this increase of Islamic filmmaking.

After the end of the cold war period, the conflict between left vs. right become more moderate. Accordingly, political Islam slightly was shifted. In Turkey’s case, even though

some military and bureaucratic elites still treated unapproved appearances of Islamism- particularly the headscarf some liberal, and leftist groups have guarded headscarved young ladies' rights to their expression of Islamic faiths with a headscarf in schools and governmental institutions. However, in the early years of their rules in the beginning of 2000s, as Kenan Çayır mentions, the new Muslim Politicians of Turkey's Justice and Development Party use to have a fair and liberal talk, particularly in comparison with the fierce methods of legislative issues that maintained by earlier Islamic activists (Çayır, 2007:XIII). Eventually, a reconsideration of this shift in positive attitudes of different ideologies towards each other could be crucial to understanding the personal, emotional, and symbolic levels of tensions between Islamists and modernists. In this case, it should be bear in mind that, the secular circle in Turkey are neither non-religious nor atheistic and not all religious people have a negative attitude towards the modernization movements.

Methodology / Theoretical Framework

I will be making both textual and contextual analysis. In my textual analysis, I will attempt to describe and interpret how the characteristics of the binary oppositions are represented in those movies. In my contextual analysis, I will be assessing the films in its historical, cultural or social context. I will be looking at what the movies tell us about the conditions of Turkish society and politics.

This study has conducted a range of approaches to understand what the *Birleşen Yollar*, (1970) (Crossroads), *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990) (You are not Alone) and *The Imam* (2005) movies are trying to tell spectators. As their story lay on religious discourse, some patterns can be seen as plenty of other typical religious movies offer such as good vs. evil, gender relationships in the society and characters from different social, economic classes. In this sense, one of the best methods for analysis of the film could be Rick Altman's genre

approach. This approach could help me to identify similarities and differences between those three movies I picked to discuss for this dissertation. He indicates that 'genres are appropriate tools for the spectator's taste and they are pronounced *by* someone and addressed *to* someone, the identity of speaker and audience always informs statements about genre' (Altman, 1999:102). However, Altman identifies that producers, exhibitors, the viewer, and critics have their voices to understand the 'genre' term differently.

Altman in 1999 *Film/Genre* book proposed the Semantic/Syntactic approach to avoid the problems of definition of the genre. In the case of this method, Semantic Approach mainly focuses on conventions of the genre that reach out to the spectator. Characters, props, location, and music are essential paradigms to identify the genre of the piece. Syntactic Approach, on the other hand, could be classified as the relationship between those paradigms and the structure of the narrative. For example, a western film is expected to have cowboys make a duo for something valuable such as a woman, treasure, and freedom.

Besides Rick Altman's genre method, as those movies are concerned with religious ideologies rather than stylistic concerns, thematic criticism could be a more relevant approach for this research. Thomas Elsasser and Warren Buckland in their *Studying Contemporary American Film identify* offer three essential elements that will be a part of a thematic analysis of a film. First, identification of a general theme could be considered the primary step. The most potential meaning or general meaning of a narrative is mostly encompassed in the opening credits so that audiences can create a hypothesis what the movie is going to be about. The second step of Elsasser and Buckland (2002) is that identifying the connections amongst the specific and the general (Elsasser and Buckland, 2002:118). In this case, when analyzing the movies which approach help me to look at films obliquely, figuring out what a film is stating in a roundabout way.

David Bordwell's cognitive theory of film comprehension and Jack Stacey's and Richard Dyer's works on stardom, also, could be another useful approach for analyzing those three movies, especially *Birleşen Yollar* (1970) (Crossroads), for one thing, the moviemaker of *Birleşen Yollar* worked with famous stars such as Turkan Şoray and İzzet Günay to communicate with spectator more efficiently. However, the representation of the main female protagonist character, Feyza played by Turkan Şoray who is one of the famous Turkish female movie stars, could challenge the basic premise of the film. This representation might read in relation to female identification with the star image on the screen. In this case, Jackie Stacey's 1993 'Feminine Fascination' chapter in her *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* book and Richard Dyer's works on stardom and charisma could provide a relevant approach for the representation of gender in *Birleşen Yollar* movie.

Because the interpretation could vary among spectators Bordwell's cognitive theory of film could be the fundamental approach in my work. The basic premise of Bordwell's argument is that narration of a movie is a mechanism whereby films furnish cues to spectators who use interpretative schema to construct ordered, intelligible stories in their minds (Broadwell cited in Stam, 2014:226)). From his point of view, it could be argued the experience with a media image can be different among spectators. Certeau (1984) also demonstrates that,

Readers are travelers; they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves. (Carteau, 1984:174 cited in Altman, 1999:211).

Furthermore, Bordwell offers a range of concepts to identify how narration works – such as 'various hypotheses the syuzhet encourages spectator to generate, various gaps constructed by the syuzhet constructs, types of exposition employed by the syuzhet and broad narrational strategies such as 'knowledgeability, self-consciousness, and communicativeness.' (Bordwell

cited in Elsasser and Buckland, 2002:172). Eventually, with this method, Bordwell encourage the film critics to identify patterns, gaps and the organization of syuzhet in a film thereby analyzing what the film is trying to tell the spectators. Applying this method, those three movies mentioned earlier can be analysed critically. As it has already been mentioned in the introduction chapter, these films concerned with religious ideologies. Dilek Kaya and Umut Azak argue that the film discursively promoted an Islamic way of life ‘as the only means to true happiness.’ (Kaya and Azak, 2015:258). However, from a cognitive reading of the *Birleşen Yollar* movie, it could be discerned some ambiguities and inconsistencies. First, the distinction between class and westernization issues in the film does not seem to be clear. While the filmmaker pictures middle-class community as happily Muslim people, the upper-class society is featured as people who adopted to Westernize life damaging the essence of Turkish culture. The main problem in here is that whether there are not people who adapted to the Islamic way of life in between people in a high-class community or there are not people who embrace to Westernize life of style in between middle class.

Above all, compared to *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990) (You Are Not Alone) which will be analysed in chapter 2 and *Birleşen Yollar*, what is interesting in these films is the gender of the protagonist characters who go through a moral transformation: they are both young women. Besides this, both these two movies emphasize women dress codes. This might be read in relation to dress reforms through modernization movement when the new republic was established. However, although men dress codes were accepted by Islamist and Western elite sides women dress systems have always been a critical component for the discussion. Because this issue is the crucial theme of *Yalnız Değilsiniz* movie, it will become the subject of debate in chapter two.

Packing those approaches, Rick Altman’s the Semantic/Syntactic approach help me to tell apart the puzzle pieces. In other words, it will help me to identify the patterns in those

movies. Then, Bordwell's cognitive theory will come in to look at those pieces critically. Ultimately, Dyer's and Stacey's approach will help me to understand whether those pieces fit or not in the puzzle.

Chapter 2: Textual and Contextual Analysis of *Birleşen Yollar* (Crossroads) (1970)

Analyses of Themes in Çakmaklı's Movies

Yücel Çakmaklı indicates the concept of *Milli Cinema* (National Cinema) first time in his 1964 'The need for National Cinema' article in *Tohum* Journal. According to him: 'Turkish cinema will be able to achieve the identity of the National Cinema only by giving films reflecting the Anatolian realities of the Muslim Turkish people, who are formed by the beliefs, civilians, and traditions of the Muslim Turkish people' (Çakmaklı, 1964). He argues that 'if such films are made, they will be interested and popular in Turkish society so that the National Cinema will be born. In the end, it must be a cinema far away from imitation, rooted, connected with the nation, based on cultural backgrounds and national and spiritual values' (Cited in Yılmaz (2017)).

In order to implement his idea, he established Elif Film company. As a first step, he took *Birleşen Yollar* (Crossroads) (1970) that was adapted from Şuke Yüksel Şenler's *Huzur Sokağı* (The Peaceful Street) novel. As it was mentioned above, despite *Crossroads* lack to offer an alternative view for Turkish national cinema this film is essential being the first movie to look at the modernization from a religious perspective. Accordingly, *Crossroads*

was the first film to introduce Islam in Turkish cinema as a counter-ideology against modernization movements. Çakmaklı continued making films around the same themes.

One thematic analysis of Yücel Çakmaklı claims that Çakmaklı's work might be seen as an attempt to map out the cultural alienation (Westernise) that the Turkish society has been exposed for the last two hundred years. (Yenen, 2012:254). Accordingly, Çakmaklı aims to withstand against this cultural alienation with the elements of indigenous culture that are defined by himself as 'Turkish beliefs, national character, and tradition.' According to Çakmaklı, characteristic features of Turkish people have been lost because the modernization movements caused Turkish people to forget their identity with adopting a different form of life. He claims that Turkish people must turn back to values they have forgotten. Therefore, many of Çakmaklı's films had dealt with the moral transformation of a character or small group of characters from the modern lifestyle into the Islamic way of life in where his characters find the true happiness. Examples include characters adopted to westernize lifestyle in *Birleşen Yollar* (1970) (Crossroads), *Zehra* (1972), *Oğlum Osman* (1973) (Osman, My Son). Female characters in *Birleşen Yollar* and *Zehra* left from them westernize lifestyle habits such as going parties, playing gambling and drinking alcohol and, thus, they start adapting to the Islamic way of life with wearing a headscarf at the end of the films. Osman in *Oğlum Osman* repents his behavior towards his culture and religion after having rejected everything that is traditional.

Regarding Çakmaklı's main themes, it could be argued that he criticizes the modernization process of the society through characters. According to Havva Yılmaz (2017), Çakmaklı indicates in his films that the exchange of a strong civilization with a Western way of life has led society to a crisis of identity (Yılmaz, 2017). Besides, characters or a group of characters in Çakmaklı's movies who traditionally have not broken their ties with the past are socio-economically weak, although it corresponds to a large population in the country. On the

country, characters who are socio-economically strong in his movies reject traditional values adopting to westernize life-style. Hence, it could be argued that Çakmaklı's movies signify class conflict, to withdrawing sharp contrast between those two groups.

Analyses of Birleşen Yollar (Crossroads)

Searching the theme of the *Birleşen Yollar*, Elsaesser and Buckland (2002) offer, one of the most useful strategies is to analyze every scene of the movie to ascertain how each step contributes to the movie's general theme. However, this paper has not enough place to examine every step of the *Birleşen Yollar* movie. So, applying the Bordwell's cognitive theory, he argues that because the sequences establish the meaning of the narrative, the introductory part is crucial for the construction (Bordwell (1989)). In this case, analyzing the opening scenes of a film is essential to understand the general theme of a movie. Hence, this analysis will be conducted the opening scene and some important scenes that actively demonstrate the overall idea of the film. Furthermore, because the class subject in this movie seems to indicate an essential issue in relation to modernization, this analysis will look at the modernization progress and social conditions of Turkish society in those times. Last but not at least, as the representation of gender is playing a crucial role in the movie this analysis will turn to David Bordwell's cognitive approach and Jackie Stacey's stardom approach that indicates the relationship between stardom and female spectator as well as the location of gender in the society in those times.

The movie begins with the Rumeli Walls that were established in the 15th century by Ottoman Empire as if these walls allegorically represents the protection of traditional values in the country. Following the scene, after having been shown Istanbul University building, which also was established during Ottoman times, spectators are introduced protagonist character,

Bilal (Izzet Gunay). He is sitting on the table alone in order to study the lesson, isolating himself from other classmates who sit next to him (Image 1). Then, the secondary character, Leyla (Aynur Aydan), who likes Bilal, comes to Bilal's table and started talking to him. Leyla is pictured as a woman who is wearing luxury dresses and going parties as the narrative goes by. She says; 'I am bored. I do not want to attend the lectures today. I want to go to the cinema, but I need a gentleman who can take me there.' Bilal replies; 'Leave me alone, Leyla. I want to read something.'



Figure 1. Bilal (on the left) studying lesson isolating himself from his classmates. Leyla tells him she wants to go to the cinema instead of attending the lectures.

As the story follows, the filmmaker continues to picture students who adopted to westernize modernity as unsuccessful students who are only going to clubs, playing gambling and drinking alcohol. The reason behind this could be the attitude of the filmmaker towards his secular colleagues and modernization movements in the country. As it was mentioned earlier, from westernized elites' views, religious characters had always represented as uncultured citizens while secular or liberal characters are educated people being doctors, teachers, lawyers and so on. On the contrary, Çakmaklı pictures his characters opposite to the way his secular colleagues did previously. So, his attitude could be explained as if he takes the revenge on his secular colleagues by using the same weapon.

In scene 2, the environment where Bilal lives in is introduced to spectators. There are old houses that have mostly been made of the wood in the street. However, it is shown a new apartment building in the background when Bilal meets Hayri Dede who seems to be an old inhabitant of the neighborhood. Hayri Dede indicates: 'Moving to the apartment started. This first apartment building in our street seems to ruin our peace. This such kind of places welcomes to other people. Those people neither like us nor negotiate with us' (Figure 2). Following the scene, two main protagonist characters, Bilal and Feyza (Turkan Şoray) look at each other from their houses. This scene is interesting in terms of characters perspectives; there are two different windows, and they look at those different lives with curious eyes (Figure 3).



Figure 2. Bilal talks to Hayri Dede. Hayri Dede says to him: 'This first apartment building in our street seems to ruin our peace.'

As it can be seen in Figure 2, the new apartment building located between two old wooden houses in the mise-en-scene, just like separating two brothers. Though Hayri Dede is worried that this new building damages the lives of people in the neighborhood. In this scene, an apartment building could be a strong signifier for modernization. Because, apartment buildings can commonly be seen in modern cities, as the buildings and streets are logically arranged, and modernist buildings are simple and practical. In this sense, Hayri Dede's

anxiety might be read in relation to the relationship between class and modernization in Turkish society in the 1970s.

As it was mentioned above, the filmmaker pictures only upper-class community as being adapted to the westernize lifestyle with partying, gambling and drinking alcohol. Middle-class, on the other hand, pictured as ‘good’ people to be adapted to the Islamic way of life. The reason behind this could be the perception of the ‘other’ in the country that comes from the establishment of the new Turkish Republic. Naturally, as a dominant class imposes dominant values on all groups in a society, the filmmaker seems to develop a perception of ‘other’ towards them with feeling himself to belong to the middle-class community.



Figure 3. Bilal and Feyza look at each other first time.

The scene where Bilal and Feyza look at each other signifies the motivation of the filmmaker or the film precisely. While they look at each other, the shots come back and forth between Feyza and Bilal. What is interesting in this scene is the place of the camera that is shown in Figure 3. While the spectator looks at Feyza from Bilal's house, they never look at Bilal from Feyza's home. This image is a signifier that the filmmaker looks at a high-class community from a middle-class perspective.

In scene 3 and scene 4, Feyza's and Bilal's families are introduced to spectators inside of their houses when they are having breakfast. While Feyza's home decorated with expansive ornamentations and her breakfast table is resplendent, Bilal's house seems to be modest having been refurbished by mostly religious decorations and his breakfast table is made as simple as possible (Figure 4 and Figure 5). When Feyza asks: 'How was yesterday?'. Her mother replies: 'You father won the poker game.' Following the story, her family is pictured when playing gambling in their house in order to demonstrate this situation visually in the spectator's eyes (Figure 6).

On the contrary, Bilal's mother is worried that Bilal could marry a girl who plays gambling and drinks alcohol. Above all, what is interesting in this scene is that Bilal is not interested in Şükran, who visits his house wearing a headscarf, in the first place although he is interested in Feyza, who does not wear hijab at the beginning. In this case, it could be argued that despite the filmmaker's effort to encourage female spectator to wear a headscarf, the things could be another way around. In other words, the filmmaker could contribute the westernize look with the image of star in the screen and the chose of Bilal.

This subject could be read in relation to Richard Dyer's and Jackie Stacey's stardom approach. Accordingly, Dyer (2007) credited Weber having preceded him in identifying the Marilyn Monroe's charisma on the screen, suggesting that 'the charismatic figure or group offers a value, order or stability to counterpoise this.' (Dyer (2007) cited in Redmond and Holmes, 2007:83). Building upon this argument, Jackie Stacey's 1993 'Feminine Fascination' chapter in her *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* book offers 'extra-cinematic identificatory practices' which mostly indicates the outside the cinematic-context (Stacey, 1993). In other words, a female spectator applies the features of the object that has been seen on the screen. Hence, a female spectator can pretend like the star

he has seen on the screen, or they copy of the star's hair, appearance, and makeups in their daily lives.

In the light of those ideas, it could be argued that although Yücel Çakmaklı attempts to problematize the issue of Westernization movements in the country from his perspective, his method and content in this movie are questionable in terms of the representation of female gender. Çakmaklı represents Feyza's character as a wealthy and modern woman in the beginning in order to show her moral transformation. She is wearing luxury clothes, taking pieces of jewelry and having excellent make-up, picturing a beautiful woman on the screen. Accordingly, it is, also, important to highlight that Bilal chooses Feyza over the girl who wears a headscarf. As the narrative follows, she gave up this lifestyle adopting to the Islamic way of life with wearing hijab and, thus, she is pictured as having found the true happiness. Çakmaklı uses Turkan Şoray, who is one of the famous female Turkish stars, in order to make his messages stronger. However, the problem is here that although Çakmaklı attempted to make spectator anticipate Westernise way of life, he could somehow contribute it. Because female spectator can engage with Turkan Şoray's charming object in the beginning since Turkan Şoray is portrayed as a charismatic figure offering a new look for the female spectator as a star. Therefore, the female spectator can apply her look in their lives with making up like her or shaping their hairs rather than covering it.



Figure 4. Feyza is having breakfast with her family.



Figure 5. Bilal is having breakfast with his mother



Figure 6. Feyza's family is playing gambling in the background.



Figure 7. Şükran, who is Bilal's future wife, visits Bilal's family.

Following the opening credits, the filmmaker continues to reinforce his stance against western modernization with secondary themes. Besides rural/urban, traditional/modern, and rich/poor, the filmmaker also uses the Ottoman music against Western music. The scene where Feyza prefers a classical Turkish song, which is called 'Ey Büt-i Nev Eda' composed by Hammâmîzâde İsmâil Dede Efendi in the 19th century in Ottoman times, over western

rock music is crucial to understand the identity crisis in Feyza's personality. As it was mentioned, Feyza is pictured as an unhappy person in her lifestyle. However, the music that rises from her music box is appeared to be her desire to nostalgic past. When she is singing this song, Bilal cannot withstand her voice.



Figure 8. Feyza is singing accompanied with her music box. As it can be seen in the image, there is a young lady model, that represents women in Ottoman times, at the top of the music box.

Following the narrative, Feyza makes a bet about Leyla, who already appeared at the beginning of the movie (Figure 1), that she would convince him to come to her birthday party. After this bet, the romance between Bilal and Feyza unfolds in romantic comedy fashion. Feyza is covering her hair with a headscarf and having a car accident to get Bilal (Figure 9). Eventually, they become friends started spending time together. The locations of the scenes where Feyza and Bilal are together appeared to be mostly historical and religious places such as Ottoman walls and mosques (Figure 10-11). In such research, after having spent time with Bilal, Feyza's self is divided and battleground between westernized and traditional. Eventually, her westernize look gives away to her other person that is enlightened by Islam. But, Feyza's enlightenment process happens slowly. She starts wearing a hat to cover her head (Figure 10). Then, she covers her head with a headscarf gifted by Bilal (Figure

11). Finally, she replaces her luxury dressing with modest clothing (Figure 12). Ultimately, she accepts Bilal's marriage offers.



Figure 9. Feyza pretends to wear a headscarf when Bilal comes to their houses to repair the electricity.



Figure 10. Feyza's transformation is featured slowly. She first covers her head with a hat. Besides this, the walls which built in Ottoman times is shown in the background.



Figure 11. Feyza covers her head with a headscarf that is gifted by Bilal, and she seems to head for the mosque that is appeared at the background



Figure 12. Feyza in a modest dress at her birthday party and receiving an expensive gift.

However, her birthday party ruins their love. Because Leyla tells Bilal about the bet, he abandons Feyza. Following the story, while Bilal marries Şükran (Image 7,) Feyza marries a wealthy businessman who becomes a gambler. Next, because the filmmaker wanted to focus on the enlightenment process of Feyza, the narrative follows Feyza's life with not informing Bilal and his life until they meet again after years (Figure 13). Feyza is getting divorced from her husband, and she stands her legs with her daughter, not getting any support from her rich family. Years after, not surprising in a melodramatic structure, Feyza's daughter meets Bilal's son coincidentally when he traits Feyza as a doctor. Before Feyza's death, she saw her daughter married to Bilal's son, and the film ends.



Figure 13. Feyza meets Bilal after years. Feyza decided to cover her hair adapting to the Islamic way of life.

From the scenes mentioned so far, we can already identify the fundamental themes of the film. The opening six scenes seem to emphasize the theme of the identity issue of Turkish people who are squeezed between the modern and traditional during the modernization adventure of society that has begun in Ottoman Empire and progressed parallel to the new Turkish Republic. The filmmaker explores this theme by drawing binary oppositions such as traditional/modern, Eastern/Western music, apartment building/townhouse, and praying/partying. He is drawing sharp distinctions between traditional and westernize lifestyle by putting different scenes one after the other. It seems to say that Çakmaklı takes an opposite stand the westernization movements and high-class community. While life in a middle-class society, which adapted to the Islamic way of life, is featured as happily, living in an upper-class society pictured as unhappy with playing gambling, partying with Western music and drinking alcohol. Also, the middle-class population in the neighborhood is worried if new people who move to the new apartment building could damage their lives. However, it does not seem clear whether the upper-high class community could be a threat to the life of people in the neighborhood or modernization and westernization could be a threat. In other words, it is important to ask what does being in the upper-high class require to be adopted to Westernization and modernization or what kind of relationship between class and modernization can exist. This theme might tell spectator something about the politics and the conditions of Turkish society in which it was made. It is clear in the film that secular citizens are pictured as people who are always partying, playing gambling and drinking alcohol.

Chapter 3: Textual and Contextual Analysis of *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (You are not Alone) (1970)

Analyses of Themes in Uçakan's Movies

Hilmi Maktav (2010) argues that what makes Mesut Uçakan significant in Turkish cinema is putting his identity forward in his movies (Maktav, 2010:33). In fact, Maktav brings to our attention that Uçakan presents his personality as a Muslim in his films. Just like Yücel Çakmaklı, he is positioned against the moral values of the Western modernity, promoting 'Islamic lifestyle' in the daily life of people in Turkish society. Therefore, many of Uçakan's movies are dealt with the problems, that he thought, caused by modernization progress in Turkish society. Uçakan, also, is interested in Islamic philosophy. He attempts to reveal the advantages of Islamic philosophy against the Western ideologies. Furthermore, his characters are traveling the spiritual journey in his movies to reach 'the pure truth', especially the existence of the God. For example, Selman in *Anka Kuşu* (2006) (Phoenix) starts his journey with these questions.

What if there is no substance? If everything is a dream, what are those things that I have seen? Why cannot we go to another time and place? Who puts these borders? Who is God? If he is so powerful, does not he see those flowing blood? Is he enjoying all this?

Following the story of this movie, Selman starts researching the Islamic philosophy books in order to answer his questions. This kind of travel to spiritual word to find the 'pure truth' gained popularity in the 90s between Islamic filmmakers. However, protagonist characters, who are mostly Muslims, in those movies faced many difficulties especially caused by secularist antagonist characters. In other words, while Muslim characters are pictured as 'good' people who suffer during their journey secularist characters are pictures as 'bad' people who obstruct them.

Critiques have also identified Mesut Uçakan and his movies as a part of Islamic Cinema movements per the ideological aspects of his movies. Even though Islamic cinema movement gained significance in the 1970s, it had failed to demonstrate its power until the early 1990s. However, in the 90s, it raised again due to, especially, the debate around the headscarf in Turkish politics. Mesut Uçakan was one of the significant movie-director that makes religious movies in those years.

Furthermore, he criticized Çakmaklı's cinema. According to him 'In Çakmaklı's cinema, religion is only criticized for being considered as 'a matter of culture (Mesut Uçakan cited in Yenen, 2012:258). Uçakan argues that 'Islam is the most critical element that brings the national culture to life, as well as the economic, social, political and ethical views, should be used in the national cinema (Mesut Uçakan cited in Yenen, 2012:259)). In particular, between 1990 and 1995, he made it possible to define national cinema as only "Islamic cinema."

The Analysis of *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990) (You Are Not Alone)

The analysis of the themes of *Yalnız Değilsiniz* will be based on Elsaesser and Buckland (2002) approaches, just like *Birleşen Yollar* movie, as the opening credits are playing an essential role in the narrative establishment. Moreover, another relevant approach for this analysis is Rick Altman's Semantic/Syntactic approach. Because it is a religious movie there are some paradigms repeated in this movie such binary oppositions as poor/rich, traditional/modern and rural/urban.

Yalnız Değilsiniz was announced with the following phrase: "She had only one wish in life, to live according to her faith." (cited in Savaş Arslan, 2007:168). As this advertisement title indicates, the movie is concerned with a girl faced difficulties because of her wish to live as a

Muslim in the society. While *Birleşen Yollar* seems to relate the headscarf problem through a personal level, calling spectators back to the essence, *Yalnız Değilsiniz* appears to indicate the headscarf issue in a social context, reminding the spectators that the story of the protagonist character is shared by many Muslim female students in the society. Besides the headscarf issue, the filmmaker in this film is dealing with the negative influence of western modernity on Turkish society, traveling to the holy world and the enlightenment of his protagonist character.

Basically, the story follows the daughter of a wealthy family, Serpil, who starts questioning the death and afterlife after her grandmother passed away. She believes that she could find her answers in the spiritual universe rather than the temporary and material world. And, thus, as in the narrative depicted, her self is divided between modernize the look and Muslim appearance. Ultimately, just like Feyza in *Birleşen Yollar*, her westernize side gives way to her other person that is enlightened by Islam. However, her transformation is not accepted by her family and the environment. After all, she starts facing many difficulties in the society because of her chose.

The movie alternates between the Islamic way of life and modernization. While the film promotes the Islamic way of life as 'only true happiness,' modern life is pictured as full of the vices. Accordingly, the film presents secular characters as playing gambling, cheating their husbands or wives, drinking alcohol and partying. Muslim characters, on the other hand, are pictured as seeking deep thoughts and suffering in the society because of the attitudes of secular administrations towards them.

The opening sequence of *Yalnız Değilsiniz* pictures the contrast between religious people and non-religious people lifestyles. The scene starts with the protagonist character, Serpil, when riding a bicycle between apartment buildings (Figure 14). The apartment buildings are

concerned by Yücel Çakamaklı in his *Birleşen Yollar* (Crossroads) movie, too as mentioned earlier. Following the sequence, the filmmaker shows modern Istanbul as a global capitalist society with the advertisement that mostly addresses people who adapted to modern lifestyle such as, La Femme women's stockings, a Turkish beer advertisement (Figure 15) and Mudurnu Fried Chicken, which is a Turkish version of KFC. Next, when Serpil is riding her bicycle in the city center she stopped by an old street seller, who sells 'hurma' (date) which is mostly associated with breaking the fast during the holy month of Muslim people, Ramadan. (Figure 16).



Figure 14. The film starts with Serpil riding bicycle between apartment buildings.

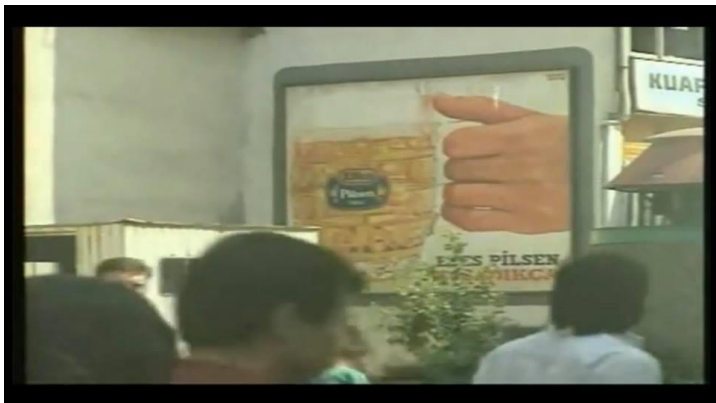


Figure 15. A picture of beer appears on the screen.



Figure 16. Street seller is selling Hurma.

Following the scene, Serpil's family is introduced to the spectator. Serpil, her mother, father, and grandmother meet at a dinner table in a Ramadan evening, waiting for breaking their fast. While Serpil and her grandmother are fasting her father and mother are not fasting. (**Figure 17**). Next, the spectator learns that Serpil's father has a mistress and her mother loves gambling (**Figure 18**). This is interesting because compared to *Birleşen Yollar* (Crossroads) movie both films picture those rich mothers as people who love gambling. This is an important signifier to show that there are still the same attitudes towards to modern and upper-class community although the tension becomes softer.



Figure 17. Serpil and her family are waiting for breaking the fast. Because they are not fasting, her father (on the left) and her mother (on the right) are impatient to start the meal.



Figure 18. Serpil's mother is playing gambling.

Another similarity between *Birleşen Yollar* and *Yalnız Değilsiniz* is that the representation of students who adopted to western modernity. Just like Yücel Çakmaklı, Mesut Uçakan portrays young students at the universities as giving home parties, drinking alcohol and using drugs (**Figure 19**). Among these students, Serpil's religious classmate, Salih (Efkan Efekan) and his fiancée, Gülğen (Nur Incegöl) are pictured as students who protect Islamic values. Compared to Bilal in *Birleşen Yollar* and Salih in *Yalnız Değilsiniz*, while Bilal isolated himself from his classmates (Figure 1), Salih seems to be more integrated to his classmates. Although Salih does not join their parties, he is pictured having fun with their company (**Figure 20**). This might be read as a sign the fight between two sides becomes softer. They are coming side by side at least rather than isolating themselves from each other.



Figure 19. Serpil's secular friends are giving a home party.



Figure 20. Salih (on the left) is sitting together with his classmates unlike Bilal in *Birleşen Yollar*. He even pays the bill of the table by himself.

However, Salih's fiancée has been struggling with attending the lectures. She is not allowed to attend the lectures because of her headscarf. In the meantime, Serpil's cousin, Füsün (Funda Birtek), comes from abroad. Opposed to Serpil's first stage toward Islamic enlightenment, her family asks Füsün to warn Serpil about the way she chose. Füsün is a feminist woman who wants to spread her opinions through a feminist association which is called 'Independent Woman.' Her look is interesting in terms of her dress and hair. She is pictured masculine on the screen with her short hairs, jeans, and a shirt that were mostly associated with male gender identity in the 90s in Turkey (**Figure 21**). She believes that women are 'puppet' in the society and she wants to resist the ambushes that established in their womanhood, reminding women citizens their own identity as a female. The filmmaker seems to sympathize with Füsün as the narrative depicts. Salih argues that because Füsün is questioning herself and life, she could flare up with very interesting ideas. At the end of the film, Füsün, Salih and his fiancée start becoming a friend.



Figure 21. Fusun (on the right) looks very masculine with her jeans, shirt, and short hair.

Füsun asks Serpil for help with her fight that is about the reclaim women the places they deserved in the society. But, Serpil keeps seeing her grandmother in her dreams and keeps having profound questions about herself and her existence. Ultimately, her investigation leads her to believe in the existence of Allah and, thus, she starts covering herself with a headscarf and loose-fitting clothes. However, her new look is not welcomed by her family. The first time her mother sees her when praying, she is yelling at her for what kind of person she turns out (**Figure 22**). Despite her family's attitudes towards her, she keeps wearing a headscarf, and she does not change her dress style. As the story follows, she faced many difficulties. She is not allowed her exam because of her dress (**Figure 23**), and her family burns her all religious books.



Figure 22. Serpil's mother is yelling at her when she saw her while praying.



Figure 23. Serpil and her friends are not allowed to enter the classroom.

Next, after having seen this, she goes mad and breaks all alcoholic bottles as a response to her family. Therefore, her family decides to get some help from a professional psychiatrist. But, it does not get any help for Serpil to change her attitudes. Eventually, her family considers this shift as a 'psychological disorder' and, thus, they decide to put her in a mental hospital. After Serpil is placed in a private clinic by her family because the psychiatrist wanted to use this daughter of a famous family for his newly opened clinic, Serpil turns into a picture for the clinic in a daily paper with the following title: 'A victim of religious activist, Serpil went mad.'

The representation of the psychiatrist is interesting regarding the way he does his job. His method is questionable. First of all, although a psychiatrist generally talks his/her patients alone in a private place, the psychiatrist in *Yalnız Değilsiniz* talks to Serpil in their saloon in front of her cousin and her mother. Second, the psychiatrist character in the film seems to be in an aggressive manner, asking questions as if he holds Serpil responsible for damaging their saloons rather than trying to understand her. For example:

The psychiatrist: You messed up the hall.

Serpil: They provoked me.

The psychiatrist: Tearing three or five books is a provocation?



Figure 24. The psychiatrist talks to Serpil about her aggressive attitude in the past towards alcohol bottles in the saloon. His body language is very offensive. He is using his hands in such a way he underestimates Serpil

This representation could be read about a result of the filmmakers' prejudice towards the West. He seems to want to show audiences the 'shallowness' of the psychological science. However, the filmmaker seems to lack enough information about the session between a psychiatrist and his client.

Yalnız Değilsiniz includes many of the themes common to Mesut Uçakan's films such as travel to the spiritual world, rich vs. poor and the headscarf issue in Turkish politics. The life of the hero, Serpil, is shifted from Westernize lifestyle into the Islamic way of life by the enlightenment of Islam. But, Serpil is unable to establish a healthy relationship with her environment beyond his belief. Besides this, her environment and the science of the West, such as psychology, is shown to be shallow, pleasure-seeking and an obstacle for Muslims as Serpil is put in a clinic and not allowed to enter her class because of the headscarf.

What seems to be the most interesting element in this film is the enlightenment of a female character, just like *Birleşen Yollar*. Arguably, on the surface level, the filmmakers in *Yalnız Değilsiniz* seem to indicate the struggle of female citizens because of their hijabs in the society. However, there could be some deeper reasons why they chose to illuminate a female character by using the headscarf in their movies.

First of all, it should bear in mind that the headscarf is one of the most visible and recognizable symbols of the Islamic identity. It helps to distinguish Muslims from

secular/westernize circle. For example, when a spectator sees a woman with a hijab, they can understand that she is a Muslim. So, this feature could make the hijab a strong weapon against the counter-ideology in politics. Accordingly, Göle (2002) found that the headscarf was presented as 'the most powerful meta-political icon' in the 1980s that differentiates Muslims. This might be true for Islamic National Cinema circle in Turkish Cinema as they communicate with their audiences through characters.

Moreover, in line with the argument above, the headscarf is, also, help the filmmakers helps to distinguish between insider and outsider categories. As the Islamic Cinema challenges against the modernization movements, the westernized lifestyle and people are pictured as being shallow and distorted with partying, playing gambling and being an obstacle for Muslim people. So, the filmmakers seem to marginalize and create 'other,' attempting to collect one of their own beside them. In this case, the headscarf might function as a border or a castle that separate insider and outsider.

CHAPTER 4: Textual and Contextual Analysis of *The Imam* (2005)

Analyses of Themes in Ismail Güneş's Movies

Ismail Güneş was born in 1961 in Samsun where is located next to Blacksea in the north of Turkey. He was grown there, but he moved to Istanbul for his high-school education. After finishing high school, Natuk Baytan, who is a well-known conservative director with his historical movies in Yeşilçam, hired him as an assistant. They worked together in eight films, and their relationship becomes two fellows who share the same values much more than master-apprentice relationship. Following years, after Baytan's death, he started making his own films as a director.

Ismail Güneş indicates that 'We do not only have to make movies for Muslims. We should not. We have to expand our message' (cited in Yenen, 2012:259). This quote seems to imply that Ismail Güneş is not happy for previous Islamic National Turkish films as he seems to criticize previous Islamic films to be made only for Muslim spectator. Accordingly, he sends messages to secular spectator beside Muslim audiences. Furthermore, İsmail Güneş tries to keep the art action in front of the message anxiety in the national cinema movement.

According to him, for a work to be a product of art, it has to deal with that country first. So, Islamic elements or messages are playing an essential role in his movies.

Many of Güneş's films focus on a character or small group of characters in Turkish society as a conservative people. He is mostly emphasizing religious and moral values among them.

When doing this, he does not seem to take a side of a group. Unlike Çakmaklı and Uçakan, although he does not seem to be happy with the westernized lifestyle, he is attempting to find a way of the compatibility of religion and modern life rather than resisting or rejecting. He even criticises moral rules among people. Examples include, the filmmakers criticize the murderer of a young girl, Ayşe, *Ateşin Düştüğü Yer* (Where The Fire Burns) because of the customs when she gets pregnant. Also, the filmmaker in *The Imam* criticise the strict attitudes of conventional cleric towards people in the village.

The Analysis of *The Imam*

First, as a religious movie, this part of the analysis will mainly use Altman's genre approach. Altman claims that genres evolve dialectically such as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (Altman,1999). While thesis indicates the films that have come before anti-thesis is a new film deviates from a certain number of genre conventions. Synthesis, on the other hand, signifies the evolution of the genre. Applying Altman's genre approach, *Birleşen Yollar* could be considered as a thesis as it was the pioneer of the Islamic national cinema. In this sense, *Yalnız Değilsiniz* could be the anti-thesis as a new film. Ultimately, *The Imam* could be the signifier of the evaluation of the genre.

Moreover, the second relevant approach is Bordwell's cognitive theory. Bordwell lists some common themes in the all forms of human communications such as suffering, identify the mystery of behavior, freedom and religious doctrines. A useful way to identify the themes in *The Imam* could be to consider those common themes that can be seen in among all human communication.

Compared to *Birleşen Yollar* (Crossroads) and *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (You are not alone) the attitudes of Islamic filmmakers towards modernization seemed to become softer although

there are still rigid principles. Although characters from both sides (modern and traditional) in *Birleşen Yollar* have never met to discuss the problems, characters in *Yalnız Değilsiniz* seem to try to negotiate each other to a degree. But, both two films use those film as a propaganda tool. While *Birleşen Yollar* brings religion into the cinema first time as a counter-ideology against western modernity, *Yalnız Değilsiniz* is concerned with the headscarf problem in schools and governmental institutions in the country. The Imam, on the other hand, seems to offer a new political discourse. The filmmaker, Ismail Güneş, is concerned with the ‘compatibility of Islam and modernity.’ (Diken, 2018).

Basically, the story lays on Emre, shorter version of ‘Emrullah,’ who is a well-educated and successful computer programmer upon his graduation from a religious high school, goes to a village as a cleric during the Ramadan because of illnesses of his old cleric friend. While Emre hides his past from the secular environment he lives in; he still lives as a Muslim. Just like *Birleşen Yollar* and *Yalnız Değilsiniz*, the protagonist’s character’, Emre (Eşref Ziya), identity is divided between modern and traditional. However, the filmmaker does not concern with the enlightenment of the character in this movie, not pushing him to choose his side. On the contrary, the filmmaker attempts to find a midcourse between modern and traditional, calling traditional Muslim people to do not fear from modernization as well as calling secular elites to admit that Islam is reconciliation rather than reactionary.

The movie begins with Emre riding a motorcycle during two minutes on the road with n accomplishment of Mustafa Cihat’s, who mostly composes Islamic style music in Turkey, ‘Yolcusun Sen’ (You are a passenger song). The figure of the protagonist character on screen and the title of the movie (**Figure 25**). The title of the movie, Imam,' means cleric in the Turkish language. It is possible to say that the title next to the main character implies the real representative of the film or real representative of Islam as a modern cleric.

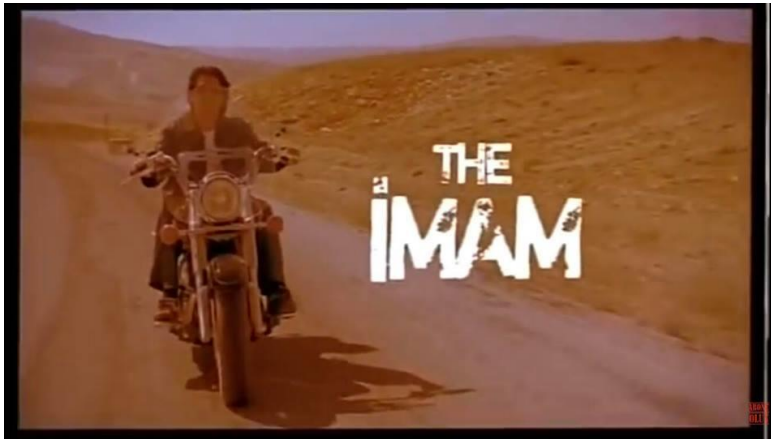


Figure 25. The movie starts with Emre riding a motorcycle.

The music which plays over the sequences are giving clues about the protagonist character and the story which is about to unfold, preparing Emre for his journey.

*'You are a passenger, the roads are yours, but whose inn is this?
Even if you ask, you cannot find who you are
You search a familiar face, but you cannot see any
These places are stranger to you; you cannot stay.'*

As the song indicates, Emre does not seem to fit his environment entirely. Although he joins parties with his friends, he never feels belong to this environment. But, to adapt to the circle he hides his religious education in the past from his friend, and he replaces his name with 'Emre' from 'Emrullah' which, is a borrowed word from the Arabic language, and it means 'God's command.' 'Emre,' on the other hand, is a shorter and modern version of his full given name and it means 'friend' that 'endows him with the necessary symbolic capital' (Diken, 2018:74). Hiding his past and his Muslim identity should be questioned here. In this context, Emre's concealment of her identity indicates the presence of tension in the background.

Erol Erkan (2015) explains Emre's attitude as 'symbolic capital' to gain social recognition. (Erol Erkan, 2015:80). In this way, he can constitute a different set of social status. In this

respect, it could be argued that secularism in Turkey could determine the scope of the power of the group formed their lifestyle and status rather than a management principle.

As the story follows, his old friend Mehmet (Emin Gürsoy) from his religious high school comes to visit him. Because Mehmet has been suffering from cancer for a while, he is upset not being on his job as a cleric in his village. So, Emre becomes a volunteer as a cleric in the mosque in Mehmet's village during his old friend's absence. The reason why he wants to go there could be explained his wish to escape from his dilemmas. His business partner, Mert (Mehmet Ali Tuncer), asks him:

Mert: You do not have to go there. Why are you doing this?

Emre: Maybe I am going to spend a quiet Ramadan free from the mercilessness of the business world or maybe I'm going to get myself stubbornness because of hiding my religious education.

Eventually, he travels to the village. In his journey, the motorcycle is playing an essential role in the narrative as he was introduced on his motorcycle in the opening credits (**Figure 25**).

Avcı and Kılınç (2009) argue that his bike embodies freedom and speed of modernization (Avcı and Kılınç, 2009:251). This might be true because Emre seems to feel free when riding his motorcycle.



Figure 26. Emre thinks about his past remembering his religious school times. People used to call him as ‘Corpse washer, corpse washer!’

When a villager asks:

A villager: Why are you riding so fast?

Emre: To run away!

He seems to escape from his inner thoughts. After all, after his internal dilemma is resolved he leaves his motorcycle in the village. His motorcycle, also, might imply the flow of modernization or globalization. It could represent the pace of modern life in such a way that people change their places so quick, and the variability of their everyday life is so fast in contemporary life. In this context, the filmmaker, also, invigorates the contrast between modern and traditional with using two different tools. While Emre is riding a motorcycle as a modern representative of Islam, Feyzullah (Ahmet Yenilmez), who is pictured as a stereotypical cleric in Turkish cinema, is riding a bicycle as a traditional representative of Islam. In this sense, this bicycle might represent the slowness and the stability of conventional life.



Figure 27. Hacı Feyzullah travels with his bicycle wherever he goes

Following the story, when Emre arrived in the village because they have never seen a cleric with long hair and riding a motorcycle, the villagers are surprised. But Emre is doing his job well. As he is teaching children the holy book of Islam, Qur'an, he also shows them how to use a computer (**Figure 28**) and let them ride his bicycle. In this case, it could be argued that Emre can be the child of a post-modern marriage between religion and science (Diken, 2018).



Figure 28. Emre is teaching children how to use a computer.

Spectator, soon, meet Zehra for the first time Emre come to the village. Zehra is dressed traditionally, but with a loosely tied headscarf (Figure 29). Zehra is not allowed to enroll to study agriculture at the university because of her hijab in the past. But, she still reads agriculture books to improve herself. The new veiling could explain the representation of Zehra with a loosely tied headscarf. Kenan Çayır (2007) found that 'the new Islamic

headscarf is different from traditional veiling that is associated with uneducated, mostly rural women' (Çayır, 2007:51).



Figure 29. Zehra is pictured with her headscarf. Compared to female characters in *Birleşen Yollar* and *Yalnız Değilsiniz*, Zehra's dress is less restricted. Her hairy even can be seen under her right ear.

Following the story, one day, Zehra gets stuck in the mud with her tractor during the rain. So, Emre wants to leave her home with his motorcycle. However, although he wants to help her, his attitude is not pleased to welcome by the villagers. The villagers are criticizing Emre's as acting against the moral rules of Islam. Hacı Feyzullah says: 'A cleric should not be like him.' Accordingly, villagers discuss whether Emre should leave being a cleric in the village. He has invited the coffee house and defends himself. The person who stands against Emre is mostly Hacı Feyzullah.

Emre: Why is not this behavior proper for me?

Hacı Feyzullah; Is it proper for you?

Emre: I assume that if you saw a woman getting drowned in the water, you would not have given your hand to rescue her, would you?

Hacı Feyzullah is located in the film as an antagonist character who resists Emre to be a cleric in their village so that the filmmaker can break the wrong things the society knows. With doing this, the filmmaker attempted to show two different interpretations of Islam through those two characters; permissive and open-minded vs. authoritarian and strict. Unlike Emre, Hacı Feyzullah spent his entire life in the village. So, he does not seem to have enough

ability to teach the Qur'an. He wishes to protect traditional values and this causes him to build prejudices towards the encroachments of modernization. He, also, is solidly against people who are using alcohol. Because they drink alcohol and use drugs, he calls the nomads in his village as 'drinkers' and 'opium lovers.' Therefore, Hacı Feyzullah does not want them to come to the mosque although Mehmet and Emre like them. As the story follows, while Emre is approaching the villagers with patience teaching the children how to use computer and Qur'an, Hacı Feyzullah is very critical of others, even his family. He beats son when he is failed to memorize the verses of the Qur'an. He judges Emre riding Zehra her home because of the rain. While a villager sings the 'ezan' (the call rises from the mosques five times in a day) very well after Emre teaches him, Hacı Feyzullah's son never cannot memorizes the verses of Qur'an although Hacı Feyzullah teaches him. In fact, contrasting Emre with a traditional cleric, Hacı Feyzullah, the filmmaker seems to argue that real Islam is based on tolerance rather than othering people.

From the story of the movie mentioned so far, we can already identify the fundamental themes of the film. As it has been discussed above, the movie emphasizes the harmony of Islam and the modernization rather than being a propaganda tool which resists or rejects modernization and encourages the Islamic way of life. Compared to *Birleşen Yollar* (1970) and *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990), as it can be seen the languages of Islamic filmmakers are shifted. Not surprisingly, the Islamic discourse is, also, turned in Turkish politics and society.

In 2002, the Justice and Development (Adalet ve Kalkınma, or AKP) Party, which is formed of the "religious right," led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is the current president of Turkey, constituted the noncoalition government with an overwhelming majority in the parliament.

Despite AKP's religious right, their discourse is slightly different from Necmettin Erbakan's *milli görüş* (national view) in the 1970s. Crucially, Brian Silverstein (2011) found that religious discourse in AKP politics was based on the liberal terms of freedom of choice and

conscience (Silverstein, 2011:184). Furthermore, Kenan Çayır (2007) demonstrates that the new political language of the new Muslim politicians of AKP was based on liberal and democratic discourse (Çayır, 2007: XII). Based on this evidence, it seems reasonable to argue that the political attitudes of AKP in their early years influenced the interpretation of religion in Turkish cinema.



CONCLUSION/LIMITATIONS

This research has attempted to demonstrate that the political and social conditions of Turkish society influenced on the language of Islamic filmmakers to interpret the religion in their movies. Accordingly, three movies, which are *Birleşen Yollar* (1990) (Crossroads), *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990) (You Are Not Alone) and *The Imam* (2005), from there different times were chosen in order to understand what kind of socio-political changings happened in Turkey over years and how those changing impact the representation of religion on the screen.

Analysing filmic language of those movies, the first approach that has been used in the research is Rick Altman's the Semantic/Syntactic approach since the research identify the similar paradigms in those three movies. Furthermore, Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland offer a range of methods to identify the theme of the movies and the relationship between the theme and socio-cultural factors. Besides those two approaches, David Bordwell's approach helped me to judge the paradigms that are repeated in those films. Also, Jackie Stacey's and Richard Dyer's star approach help me to find the gaps in terms of the relationship between star and female spectator.

Subsequently, it has been found that the representation of the religion evolved in Turkish Islamic Cinema as Rick Altman (1999) indicates that genres evolve years. While the Islamic National Cinema began as opposing to westernization movements in the country and promoting the Islamic way of life, it turns out the compatibility of Islam and modernity. The emergence of Islamic cinema, also, was parallel to *Milli Görüş* (National movement) ideology that mainly focuses on bringing religion into the Turkish politics. Yücel Çakmaklı supported this view on the screen, and Çakmaklı was accepted as the pioneer of Islamic National Cinema. In time, the Islamic filmmakers carried on this movement.

Until the 1990s, as it has been demonstrated in the essay, the main purpose of Islamic filmmakers was to resist the Westernization movements. They pictured this opposition in their films by using some binary oppositions such as traditional vs. modern, rural vs. urban and rich vs. poor. One of the main similarities of *Birleşen Yollar and Yalnız Değilsiniz* was the representation of the upper-high class community. This group is pictured as drinking alcohols, playing gambling and partying. *The Imam* movie, on the other hand, does not seem to concern the class issue.

Another important issue that has been found is the representation of the female gender. *Birleşen Yollar and Yalnız Değilsiniz* seem to concern the headscarf issue in public. They give attention to struggles which female citizens, who expressed their faith with wearing hijab, faced in schools and governmental institutions over the years. However, the filmmaker of *The Imam* movie does not seem to concern with the headscarf since the socio-political atmosphere of Turkey become softer.

Furthermore, their research found that one of the significant patterns repeated in *Birleşen Yollar and Yalnız Değilsiniz* movies is the enlightenment of the female character. The chose of female gender identity to enlighten has been explained as the patriarchal structure of Turkish society and the perception of headscarf among Muslim people. Accordingly, it has been argued that the hijab is an important signifier to separate Muslims and secular. The research indicated that the hijab could have seen as the last castle against the modernization movements in the country.

However, *The Imam* movie concerns the enlightenment of a community rather than a particular character. The protagonist character of this film aims to show the faults of people in a village towards the modernization process. In other words, this movie emphasizes the negotiation between religion and modernization rather than pushing them into two different

spots. This film could be a signifier of the modernization of traditionalism in Islamic Cinema Movement.

Despite having good points of this research, this research includes some limitations inside.

First of all, this essay mainly focused on three movies due to the limitations of time and word limits. While those three movies offer fresh approaches to show the shift in the interpretation of religion in Islamic National Cinema in accordance with socio-political changes in Turkey, they should have been indicated more movies to reach more clear results. Furthermore, as the political atmosphere of Turkey has changed for last eighteen years under the rule of Justice and Development Party (AKP), which is still led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, it could have been looked at more recent movies. *Hür Adam* (2011) (Free Man) directed by Mehmet Tanrısever, *Allah'ın Sadık Kulu :Barla* (2011) (The Faithful Servant of the God: Barla) directed by Esin Orhan and *Somuncu Baba: Aşkın Sırrı* (2016) (Somuncu Father: The Secret of Love) can provide a fresh point of views for further researches.

Especially, *Hür Adam* is worth to analyze for further researches. The story of the film is set in the 1920s where the new Turkish Republic was established. This movie seems to withstand the modernization movements in the country. So, this could be read in relation to shift in AKP's policy in politics.

Word Count: 13634

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FILMOGRAPY

1. *Allah'ın Sadık Kulu :Barla* (2011) (The Faithful Servant of the God: Barla) directed by Orhan Öztürk Esin (Film). Turkey: Ser Film
2. *Anka Kuşu* (2006) directed by Mesut Uçakan (Film). Turkey: Sinema Ajans
3. *Ateşin Düştüğü Yer* (2012) (Where The Fire Burns) directed by Ismail Güneş (Film). Turkey: Sarmasik Sanatla
4. *Birleşen Yollar* (1970) (Crossroads) directed by Yücel Çakmaklı (Film). Turkey: Elif Film
5. *Hür Adam* (2011) (Free Man) directed by Mehmet Tanrısever (Film). Turkey: Feza Film
6. *Oğlum Osman* (1973) (Osman, My Son) directed by Yücel Çakmaklı (Film). Turkey: Elif Film
7. *Somuncu Baba: Aşkın Sırrı* (2016) (Somuncu Father: The Secret of Love) directed by Kürdad Kızbaz (Film). Turkey
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9. *Yalnız Değilsiniz* (1990) (You Are Not Alone) directed by Mesut Uçakan (Film) Turkey: Atlas Nehir İletişim
10. *Zehra* (1972) directed by Yücel Çakmaklı (Film). Turkey: Elif Film

APPENDIX:

Student Research Project Ethics Checklist

This checklist should be completed by the student (with the advice of their thesis/ dissertation supervisor) for all research projects.

Student name: Mustafa Kocabinar Student ID: 28978769
 Supervisor name: Tom Bergfelder Discipline: Film
 Programme of study: Humanities
 Project title: Dissertation

		YES	NO
1	Will your study involve living human participants?		X
2	Does the study involve children under 18?		X
3	Does the study involve adults who are specially vulnerable and/or unable to give informed consent?(e.g. people with learning difficulties, adults with dementia)		X
4	Will the study require the cooperation of a third party/ an advocate for access to possible participants? (e.g. students at school, residents of nursing home)		X
5	Does your research require collection and/ or storage of sensitive and/or personal data on any individual? (e.g. date of birth, criminal offences)		X
6	Could your research induce psychological stress or anxiety, or have negative consequences for participants, beyond the risks of everyday life?		X
7	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people)		X
8	Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics? (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)		X
9	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses or compensation of time) be offered to participants?		X
10	Are there any problems with participants' rights to remain anonymous, and/or ensuring that the information they provide is non-identifiable?		X
11	Will you have any difficulty communicating and assuring the right of participants to freely withdraw from the project at any time?		X
12	If you are working in a cross cultural setting, will you need to gain additional knowledge about the setting to work effectively? (e.g. gender roles, language use)		X
13	Are there potential risks to your own health and safety in conducting the study? (e.g. lone interviewing in other than public spaces)		X
14	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS?		X
15	Does the research project involve working with human tissue, organs, bones etc that are less than 100 years old?		X

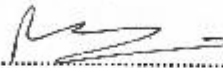
Please refer to the Research Project Ethics Guidance Notes for help in completing this checklist.

If you have answered NO to all of the above questions, discussed the form with your supervisor and had it signed and dated by both parties (see over), you may proceed with your research. A copy of the Checklist should be included in your eventual report/ dissertation/ thesis.

If you have answered YES to any of the questions, i.e. if your research involves human participants in any way, you will need to provide further information for consideration by the Humanities Ethics Committee and/or the university Research Governance Office. This information needs to be provided via the Electronic Research Governance Online (ERGO) system, available at www.ergo.soton.ac.uk.

CHOOSE ONE STATEMENT:

- I have completed the Ethics Checklist and confirm that my research does not involve human participants (nor human tissues etc).
- I have completed the Ethics Checklist and confirm that my research will involve human participants. I understand that this research needs to be reported and approved through the ERGO system, before the research commences.

Signature of student:  Date: 12-09-18

Signature of supervisor:  Date: 2/9/18