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PERFORMATIVITY AND THE REPRODUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN
TURKISH INDEPENDENT CINEMA

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**PERFORMATIVITY AND THE REPRODUCTION OF MASCULINITY IN
TURKISH INDEPENDENT CINEMA**

**BAĞIMSIZ TÜRK SİNEMASINDA PERFORMATİVİTE VE ERKEKLİĞİN
YENİDEN ÜRETİMİ**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
ÖZET	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
1. CHAPTER 1: GENDER STUDIES AND MASCULINITY	7
1.1. Defining The Boundaries Between Sex and Gender	7
1.2. Judith Butler’s Discussion on Sex, Gender and Performativity	11
2. CHAPTER 2: MASCULINITY STUDIES	17
2.1. Gender and Masculinity	18
2.2. Different Conceptions of Masculinities and Connell's Approach	20
2.3. Hegemonic Masculinity	22
2.4. The Diversity of Masculinities	28
2.5. Are Masculinities in Crisis?	29
2.6. Masculinity as Performativity	33
3. CHAPTER 3: GENDER, MASCULINITY AND FILM STUDIES	40
3.1. Cinema, Society and Sociology	40
3.2. Gender Studies in Cinema: A Historical Overview	42
3.3. Cinematic Narrative and Its Tools	48
3.3.1. The Spectator and Identification	49
3.3.2. Point-of-View	52
3.3.3. Subjective Camera	54
3.3.4. Male Gaze and Mulvey’s Account	56
3.4. Masculinity, Crisis and Cinema	62
3.5. Performativity, Performance and Cinema	69
4. CHAPTER 4: MASCULINITY CRISIS AND TURKISH CINEMA	75

4.1. Towards a New Cinema of Turkey: An Overview of Turkish Cinema After 1990	75
4.2. Intellectuals in Masculinity Crisis: Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demikubuz's Cinema	80
4.2.1. Conflicting Masculinities	86
4.2.2. Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown	90
CONCLUSION	102
REFERENCES	108

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, we hear a lot about masculinity being in crisis, with gender norms being challenged and some privileges of the hegemonic masculinity being lost. Yet, does this crisis open new doors for us to question and criticize the norms of hegemonic masculinity? Departing from this question, my thesis aims to discuss whether we can expect from this crisis new possibilities for subverting the stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity or not. To lead this discussion, I approach masculinity, and hence hegemonic masculinity, as a category of gender. This approach refers basically to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, by which sex and gender are seen as socially constructed via performative acts. The concept of *performative* provides us the potential to problematize masculinity without assuming normative meanings, essentialist definitions and hegemonic standards. To analyze different forms of performative masculinity, I also refer to some film studies, which focus on the male characters in performance. Most popular films in Hollywood and Yeşilçam cinema show us mostly the examples of hegemonic masculinity. Yet, we can expect to see some roles of masculinity with the potentials of criticizing the hegemonic masculinity in the films of independent cinema. For this reason, this thesis analyzes four films, specifically portraying male characters in the masculinity crisis, in the Turkish independent cinema. These films are namely, Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *İklimler (Climates)* and *Uzak (Distant)*, and Zeki Demirkubuz's *Bekleme Odası (Waiting Room)* and *Bulantı (Nausea)*. With close examination, we see that these films indeed continue reproducing the hegemonic masculinity while portraying it in crisis. Hence, it is ambiguous if the portrayal of masculinity in crisis offers us enough potentials for the critique of the hegemonic masculinity. To my thesis, only when the masculinity crisis is interpreted also as performative, the possibilities for the critique and the subversion of hegemonic masculinity can appear.

Keywords: Performativity, Hegemonic Masculinity, Masculinity as Performativity, Masculinity Crisis, Turkish Independent Cinema

ÖZET

Son yıllarda, cinsiyet normlarının değişime uğraması ve hegemonik erkekliğin ayrıcalıklarının azalmasıyla, erkekliğin krizde olduğu iddialarını sıklıkla duyarız. Peki, bu kriz, erkeklik normlarını, özellikle hegemonik erkeklik değerlerini sorunsallaştırmak için bize yeni kapılar açıyor mu? Bu sorudan hareketle, tezim erkeklik krizinin bizlere hegemonik erkeklik biçimlerinin sorgulamak ve eleştirmek için yeni imkânlar açıp açmadığını tartışmaya çalışıyor. Bu tartışma öncelikle erkekliği ve hegemonik erkekliği bir toplumsal cinsiyet kategorisi olarak ele alır. Bu yaklaşım esasen Judith Butler'ın *performatif* eylemlerle inşa edilen cinsiyet ve toplumsal cinsiyet teorisini temel alır. *Performatif* kavramı, bize erkeklik biçimlerini normatif anlamlardan, özcü tanımlardan ve hegemonik standartlardan uzaklaştırarak sorunsallaştırma imkânı sağlar. Performatif erkeklik biçimlerini incelemek üzere, tez ayrıca performans alanında çeşitli erkek karakterleri ele alan film çalışmalarına bakmaktadır. Hollywood ve Yeşilçam gibi popüler sinema örneklerinde, performatif olarak beliren birçok hegemonik erkeklik biçimi görürüz. Ancak bağımsız sinema örneklerinde hegemonik cinsiyet normlarını eleştiren ve tartışmaya açan erkeklik rolleri görmeyi bekleyebiliriz. Bu sebeple, tez bağımsız Türk sinemasında, çeşitli erkek karakterleri erkeklik krizi bağlamında öne çıkaran dört filmi ele alır. Bunlar sırasıyla Nuri Bilge Ceylan'ın *İklimler* ve *Uzak* filmleri ile Zeki Demikubuz'un *Bekleme Odası* ve *Bulantı* filmleridir. Yakından incelediğimizde görürüz ki, bu filmlerin hegemonik erkekliği kriz içerisinde gösterirken yeniden üreten bir yanı da vardır. Dolayısıyla, krizde gördüğümüz erkeklik tasvirlerinin hegemonik erkekliği eleştiriye açıp açmadığı belirsizdir. Benim tezime göre, bu eleştirilerin açılma imkânı filmlerdeki erkeklik krizlerinin de hegemonik erkeklik gibi ancak performatif bir toplumsal cinsiyet kavramıyla yorumlanması ile ortaya çıkabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Performativite, Hegemonik Erkeklik , Performans Olarak Erkeklik, Erkeklik Krizi, Bağımsız Türk Sineması

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, we hear many discussions on masculinity being in crisis, in terms of challenging gender norms. Especially, in recent Turkish cinema, we see many films with the characters of masculinity in crisis. Does this crisis open new ways for questioning the norms of masculinity, especially the norms of hegemonic masculinity? There has been not enough discussion of such masculine characters in gender studies. However, masculinity is becoming a topic of analysis, questioning and discussion with different perspectives in different disciplines, especially with the rise of masculinity studies as a specific area, following gender studies. With the crisis, the claim that masculinity is an unchanging, fixed, and innate norm loses its validity, as masculinity becomes visible as gender, with the influence of the feminist movement and gender studies. This claim is now open for discussion. Thus, the phenomenon of masculinity can be examined in different fields, not only in social sciences but also in film studies.

The emerging masculinity studies is a diverse field in which different starting points produce contrasting epistemological positions.¹ The Australian sociologist R.W. Connell is one of the major contributors to progressive academic research on men and masculinity. In addition, the concept of hegemonic masculinity as developed and articulated by Connell is an attempt to synthesize some of the fundamental ideas of Gramsci's theory of hegemony, such as the emphasis on sociocultural and ideological structures, and the importance of history.² Hegemonic masculinity is a concept which shows "how certain groups of men hold power and wealth in their hands, how they legitimize and regenerate dominant social relationships".³ Yet, RW Connell argues that

¹ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of Cambridge Press, 1995), 67.

² Richard Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 5.

³ Tim Carrigan, R.W. Connell and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," in *The Masculinity Studies Reader*, ed. Rachel Adams and David Savran (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 112.

we should talk about *masculinities*, not *masculinity* as she claims that there is no single universal male model.⁴

In this study, in order to discuss masculinity as gender without producing gender stereotypes again and again and without falling into determinism and essentialism, I will analyze and question primarily the concept of gender as a social and cultural construct established only according to binary lines. The concept of fixed gender subjectivity is an impossible definition, since it simply creates a category of dichotomist opposition (such as masculinity and femininity), it does not go any further than the biologically attributed sex. However, we can say that the concepts of gender and sex, which are included in many interdisciplinary studies, are both different from each other and replace each other in their historical development.

If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called “sex” is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the subjects of sex/gender/desire consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.⁵

Judith Butler's work, which evaluates gender as a role rather than a fixed or given set of attributes that are directly related to the gender of an individual, is directed towards the performative nature of gender. Butler opposes to the essentialist idea that each human being possesses at its core an innate, natural and ontological gender. For the philosopher, on the contrary, it is the incorporation of social norms, through an indefinite reiteration and repetition of statements recited by bodies, which creates gender. The lack of a true gender concept is central to the understanding of performative masculinity. When there is no real gender at stake, 'real' or prescriptive images of gender are created, produced, and reproduced in culture, particularly through

⁴ R.W. Connell, *The Man and the Boys* (California: University of California Press, 2000), 10.

⁵ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York & London: Routledge, 1990), 9-10.

men's and women's magazines on television, in movies, and on most of the other media platforms.⁶

The concept of performative gender masculinity creates the opportunity to problematize masculinity positions by depriving them of normative meanings and standards. Discussing masculinity free from the illusion of a fixed and essential position in this context shows that multiple identities and masculinities can be possible through change and re-signification.

The concept of performative masculinity emerges as a strong point of reference in almost every field. One of these fields is film studies, and hence cinema.⁷ First of all, cinema is reflection of society. Because cinema, like the other arts, draws its source from society and transmits its own resource back to society. Therefore, cinema has the power to influence society. Cinema can thus act on our understanding determined by the dominant discourse with its power. This power is very important because visual images can be perceived and can be processed in the subconscious of individuals as reality. In other words, in the visual arts, the cinematographic product is a social construction made up of representations and performances. Having a function in the society that produces it, cinema bears witness to reality, tries to act on representations and mentalities, regulates tensions or makes them forgotten.⁸ From this point of view, cinema derives from reality as much as reality is influenced by cinema. Thus, cinema is a domain for the reproduction of reality and performativity. This reproduction, in the field of cinema, functions as a dominant ideology. It can make the cinematic reality become the reality of society. In this case, the cinema appears as a field, which

⁶ Donna Peberdy, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 28.

⁷ Nejat Ulusoy, "Günümüz Türk Sinemasında Erkek Filmlerinin Yükselişi ve Erkeklik Krizi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, 101, (Güz 2004): 145.

⁸ Anne Goliot-Lété and Francis Vanoye, *Précis D'Analyse Filmique* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2009), 47.

reproduces political, cultural, ethnic and gender inequalities in social life. In this way, it is clear that cinema is an important area for gender studies.

Considerable research has been carried out also on the history and traditions of Turkish cinema, especially with regard to gender and nationality. Most of these studies on Turkish genres and cinema have focused mostly on the representations of women, who can be characters, actresses, directors, writers, or filmmakers. However, women are not the only gender, men are also gendered identities. Hence, masculinity needs to be studied in those fields, as well. Yet, in gender and film studies in Turkey, masculinity is, with few exceptions, often remains invisible. Femininity and masculinity are indeed two concepts linked to each other. However, they are usually taken in an oppositional and exclusionary dichotomy. It should not be forgotten that this dichotomy as a capacity of danger in the sense of determining, reproducing, and building limits of this binary sex.

As has been said, the researches on women, especially in cinema, took place on the front lines for years. Yet, the researches on masculinity are increasing, day by day. Researches need to examine, not only the women, who make up the "less privileged" part, but also the men and their worlds, who constitute the "privileged" part.⁹ It is impossible to solve women's problems by dealing with the concept of man or masculinity only from one point of view. Looking at gender studies in a unipolar way misses a crucial point. And in this context, it makes gender studies insufficient. As a result, the development of masculinity studies is very important in all fields. Today, it is necessary to try to understand masculinity in the areas it manifests male identity and its prevailing values. Masculinity Studies are interdisciplinary studies, shedding light

⁹ H. Bahadır Türk "Eril Tahakkümü Yeniden Düşünmek: Erkeklik Çalışmaları İçin Bir İmkân Olarak Pierre Bourdieu," *Toplum ve Bilim*, 112, (2008): 121.

on the sources and different manifestations of male power, as masculinity is a historical, cultural, and social fiction.¹⁰

Film studies are based mainly on traditional popular cinema. It is widely thought that art films refer to social issues more with the awareness of gender issues. Therefore, in this sense, the independent cinema is idealized by thinking of the task of liberating the sexes and emancipating them. However, some of these films still reproduce the male gaze of the traditional cinema, even if it is not claimed to be done so consciously.¹¹

This study aims to discuss the male characters in crisis in independent Turkish cinema in reference to Judith Butler's theory of performative gender, Connell's concept of masculinities and Mulvey's theory of male gaze. While focusing on how masculinities are socially formed, I will discuss the role of cinema in these processes of production and reproduction of the performative masculinity. The independent cinema is expected to question hegemonic gender norms and masculinity, which produces power and violence. However, in some of the films in the independent Turkish cinema, hegemonic discourses of violence and power relations are still reproduced, even though they focus on the crisis of masculinity. In this sense, there is an ambiguity whether when masculinity is displayed in crisis in films offers us a critique of hegemonic masculinity or not. I will try to analyze this ambiguity with the emergence of performative masculinity in the Turkish post-90s independent cinema with more focus on the reproduction of hegemonic gender norms.

In this context, it is necessary to look at the independent cinema with the lens of gender studies. Therefore, in the first chapter, I will focus on the connection between gender and performativity. I will take the concept of masculinity as an existential concept, just

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Robert P. Kolker, *Film, Form & Culture* (London & New York: Routledge 1999), 9.

like the concept of femininity. Masculinity, like femininity, is not an innate identity¹², but an existentially acquired identity.

In the second chapter, I will discuss the concepts of masculinity and performative masculinity in detail. Simply put, masculinity is a complex set of cultural resources that are created by society. Thus, it can be said that masculinity is produced or reproduced subsequently like femininity and that certain prices are paid in this process of production or reproduction. On the other hand, as Butler mentioned, the representation of men and masculinity in a culture is not something that happens by chance.¹³ Such representations are useful for men to 'get to know' themselves and other men in the culture and class they are associated with. Thus, male behavior is validated in terms of ideological correctness. In short, "male domination" is reproduced both as a reflection of a social reality and as a pattern in which men in the certain culture can find themselves.¹⁴ Following Butler's points, I will look at the concept of performativity in detail.

In the third chapter, I will try to explain why cinema is important to understand cultures and societies, to claim a connection between the performative masculinities in society and cinema. For that purpose, I will refer to gender and film studies, together. I will explain the techniques and tools of cinema to emphasize the impact of image and sounds on narrative in the reproduction of hegemonic gender norms.

In the fourth and last chapter, I will discuss mostly the films of Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*Uzak/Distant* and *İklimler/Climates*) and Zeki Demirkubuz (*Bekleme Odası/Waiting Room* and *Bulantı/Nausea*) with the help of cinematographic elements like point of view, subjective camera, gaze, and identification so on and with the help of sociological and psychological concepts in the field of cinema, I will focus on the male

¹² Simone de Beauvoir, "Lived Experience," in *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Books, 2009), 685.

¹³ Murat İri, *Türk Sineması'nda Erkeklik Performansları* (İstanbul: Derin Yayınları, 2016), 10.

¹⁴ Peberdy, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema*, 29.

characters in these films. I will take these male characters as examples of masculinities in crisis. It is possible to interpret the crisis as an opportunity to question the hegemonic masculinity, yet it is also important to discuss how the depiction of this crisis in those films lead to the reproduction of hegemonic norms of masculinities.

1. GENDER STUDIES AND MASCULINITY

In this chapter, first, the differences between gender and sex, then Butler's concept of performativity will be discussed. Finally, different approaches to the concept of masculinity will be explained.

1.1. Defining The Boundaries Between Sex and Gender

The concept of sex is usually associated with anatomical and biological distinctions in the human genitals. Gender, on the other hand, is thought to be associated with behavioral characteristics that support sexual categories and are socially constructed and learned. The concept of gender, as used today, appeared in our everyday language in the 1970s.¹⁵ Inseparable from the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which is part of the second-wave feminism, the research on relations between men and women developed with gender, referred to socio-cultural construction. According to the sociologist Ann Oakley:

‘Sex’ is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. ‘Gender’ however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine.’¹⁶

Gender is generally accepted to be a cultural difference based on the biological

¹⁵ Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan, *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies* (London: Sage Publication, 2004), 56.

¹⁶ Ann Oakley, *Sex, Gender, Society* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1972), 16.

differences between men and women. Moreover, gender is expressed as the social and psychological differentiation that dissociates and divisions based on the biological separation between men and women. Many thinkers treat the concepts of masculinity and femininity as social and cultural constructs. In contrast, some of them point out that the influence of biology has been dismissed. For them, there is evidence that indicates the predictability of male and female behaviors derived from genetics. For example, most women have a uterus. Thus, they are able to give birth. Because of that, women are seen as people who are responsible for family feeding and child-rearing, thus seen only in domestic realm, while men are generally seen as more responsible for works in the public realm. This division, although it is a social division, leads to the perception of men being "naturally" dominant and hierarchically oriented.¹⁷ Therefore, for Barker, one distinguishes between identity as a social construction, as a representation with which one identifies culturally, and behaviors that strongly correspond to specific biochemical structures of the brain.¹⁸

Sociological, cultural, and feminist texts attempt to question biological determinism through the conceptual distinction between sex and gender. Thus, according to these texts, femininity, and masculinity, as forms of gender, result from the cultural regulation of behaviors that are thought to be socially adapted to a particular gender, to a given gender. Since gender is seen as a matter of 'culture' rather than 'nature,' it is always related to how men and women are represented. In other words, sex is seen as the biology of the body, while gender refers to the cultural practices that govern the social construction of men and women. Instead, it is about the social, cultural, political gender discourses and practices that are supposed to underlie the subordination of women.¹⁹

While the concept of gender generally has a precise meaning in daily use, it also takes

¹⁷ Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Sage Publications, 2003), 287.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

on different meanings in feminist literature. In feminism, the word "gender" is used in two different meanings. First, gender refers to personal traits and behaviors that differ from biology and bodily traits. In this sense, gender is defined as socially constructed gender, as opposed to the concept of sex that refers to the biological. Second, in the feminist literature, gender refers to what is feminine or masculine and their social construction. Accordingly, society not only shapes the personality or behavior of individuals but also shapes the body. So, the body itself is not different from a social interpretation. Gender is not separate from sex. According to this view, sexual differences determine a person's knowledge of the body. In other words, we cannot consider sexual differences apart from our knowledge of the body. This knowledge cannot be isolated from discursive contexts and is therefore not pure knowledge.²⁰

In short, the notion of "gender" comes into play, distinguishing itself from the notion of "sex" while providing an indefinite conception of social relations. If "sex" connotes biological and social inequalities between women and men, "gender" makes it possible to grasp women's place in society and invoke history and not nature. This notion can be found in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Besides, in France, one of the sources of the second wave is the publication in 1949 of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. In this book, Beauvoir shows how society constructs the female gender with biological determinism and how women appear in the female imagination. Simone de Beauvoir had explored this distinction in *The Second Sex* with her statement:

One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine.²¹

²⁰ Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman, *Social Post-modernism: Beyond Identity Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 45.

²¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 687.

Beauvoir's discussion clarifies how the differences between the sexes are defined in a hierarchical opposition, where the masculine principle is always the privileged "norm," and the feminine is positioned as the "Other."²² In addition, she thinks about the situation of women from a historical point of view. According to Direk, *The Second Sex* as a revolutionary book emphasizes a "special feminine situation." This situation is a situation of being second sex. Beauvoir criticizes this situation which creates a specific female personality in everyday life. In the final analysis of Beauvoir, the identity of historical women has also established this personality. It is not nature, but civilization, which produces the creature called the woman.²³

While Beauvoir explains that there is a culturally and socially constructed hierarchy between men and women, she emphasizes that this distinction is both the source of the patriarchal order and that it stems from it. So, this is a hierarchy that favors the domination of the male gender and emerges in the socialization process. She declares:

Everything helps to confirm this hierarchy in the little girl's eyes. Her historical and literary culture, the songs and legends she is raised on, are an exaltation of the man. Men made Greece, the Roman Empire, France, and all countries, they discovered the earth and invented the tools to develop it, they governed it, peopled it with statues, paintings, and books. Children's literature, mythology, tales, and stories reflect the myths created by men's pride and desires: the little girl discovers the world and reads her destiny through the eyes of men.²⁴

The discovery of sexuality allows women to flourish. Simone de Beauvoir widely shares this thought in *The Second Sex*. She underlines the importance for the female sex in the sexual initiation part: "the way woman reacts to the experiences strongly affects her destiny."²⁵ In addition, the principal themes of *The Second Sex*—marriage, maternity, biology, and work—are intimately bound up with Beauvoir's existentialist

²² Pilcher and Whelehan, *50 Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, 56.

²³ Zeynep Direk, "Simone de Beauvoir Abjeksiyon ve Eros Etiği," in *Türkiye'de Toplumsal Cinsiyet Çalışmaları*, ed. Bertil Emrah Oder et al. (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2009), 35-36.

²⁴ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 730-731.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

concepts of freedom of choice, enslavement, or transcendence. Beauvoir's understanding of the causes of women's oppression appears to begin with an essentialist explanation for woman's physical differences. However, *The Second Sex* incorporates elements of social constructionist exploration as well.

1.2. Judith Butler's Discussion on Sex, Gender and Performativity

Many thinkers have emphasized, in the last 30 years of women's studies, that both sex and gender have reproduced inequality. Relevant studies reveal how the body, especially the women's body, turned into a sexual object, is subjected to the domination, surveillance, and control of power and knowledge of biology and law. Today, most recent theoretical studies try to deconstruct gender and sex rather than reproducing the expected results known as the cultural category.²⁶

Butler attempts to subvert the gender approach of the period by treating the concepts of sex and gender as interchangeable concepts. As mentioned before, Beauvoir's main contribution to the feminist approach is that women are not a natural reality but a cultural and historical construct. According to Butler, Beauvoir clearly distinguishes between sex, which is accepted as a natural reality, and gender, which is accepted as a culturally and socially interpreted version of that reality. According to this distinction, the female is a reality without any cultural and social meaning. However, to be a woman, the body must conform to the historical female thought and complete these conditions. "To be a woman," the body has to turn into a culturally established symbol. According to this idea, femininity is achieved through obedience to certain historically prevailing obligations and limits.

Butler argues that the idea of a 'subject' is vital to feminist politics. Moreover, 'woman' can be discussed.²⁷ Nevertheless, what Butler wants is a category of women freed from

²⁶ Alexander Riley, *Kültürel Kurama Giriş* (İstanbul: Dipnot Yayınları, 2016), 370.

²⁷ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 3.

fixed and concrete signs. Butler tries to deconstruct women's category and thus seeks to open up the exclusionary and limited category of women of feminists to criticism. Without this criticism, feminist thought will lose its democratizing potential.²⁸ Butler's following words are a clear sign of her desire to give feminism a new perspective:

It is not enough to inquire into how women might become more fully represented in language and politics. Feminist critique ought also to understand how the category of "women," the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought.²⁹

From a constructivist perspective, Judith Butler emphasizes that gender, sex, and sexuality are not natural or innate but are created by concepts of power, representations, and traditions. Based on the work of Michel Foucault and the postmodernists, Judith Butler shows up the linguistic and didactic barriers on the construction of self and of identity.

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body.³⁰

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler puts forward the idea that gender is 'performative'; it constitutes the identity that it is meant to be and is always a doing. For Butler, gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence.³¹

The concept of performativity was used originally at the beginning of the 1960s by John L. Austin. The philosopher uses the term performative to designate languages creating social facts and obligations by their simple enunciation. In *The Power of Words: Hate Discourse and the Politics of the Performative*, Butler takes up Austin's concept:

²⁸ Judith Butler, "Maddeleşen/Sorunlaşan Bedenler", *Cogito*, sayı: 65-66, (Bahar 2011): 54.

²⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, xv.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

If a word in this sense might be said to "do" a thing, then it appears that the word not only signifies a thing, but that this signification will also be an enactment of the thing. It seems here that the meaning of a performative act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting.³²

Representations in media, especially "in cinema," take part in this cycle, constructing the masculinity or femininity that they are supposed to represent. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler uses the concept of performativity to refer to the productive function of gender norms that naturalize and become characteristic of gender traits in people's minds. With Butler, the concept of performance refers to the repeated actions performed by social subjects, who play daily a role according to their gender since birth, thus copy a model of femininity or masculinity that has no origin in nature.

In other words, it is the bodily acts, words, attitudes, and other mimicry, often "involuntarily" and "unconsciously," which cause us to project a man's identity or a woman's identity. For Butler, gender is something we learn, each in our own way, by imitation. It, therefore, proposes to define gender identity:

Gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody the mechanism of that construction.³³

On the other hand, thinkers like Judith Butler have contributed to this argument by suggesting that the category of "sex" is a normative and regulatory discourse that produces the bodies it governs. There are no other discourses apart from the cultural discourses, and therefore there is no "sex" that is not already cultural, according to Butler, because all bodies are gendered from the start of their social existence. There is no existence that is not social. That is why there is also no "natural body" that existed

³² Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York & London: Routledge, 1997), 44.

³³ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 188.

above all its cultural inscription.³⁴ In this case, she declared: "The destiny is not biological but cultural."³⁵ Then, this cultural destiny obviously favors the superiority of the male gender. She further contends: "The distinction between sex and gender suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders."³⁶ Although sex is a social construct, it is essential to form subjects and govern bodies' materialization. It does not mean that "everything is discourse", but, as Butler asserts, discourse and the objectification of bodies are inseparable.³⁷ So, bodies are obtained their sex with the repeated performances of cultural and social norms. Social constraints, taboos, prohibitions, threats of sanction operate in the repetition of norms, and these norms constitute the construction and destabilization of sex. Gender performativity is not about choosing which sex to adopt; and it is about reiterating or repeating what norms constitute. So, sex and sexuality are shaped by the heteronormative discourses and practices of power.

Many feminist theories assume a notion of subject based on the basis that it is unquestionably a category of women. On the other hand, in *Gender Trouble*, Butler discusses the existence of this category in the context of the idea of performativity. Rather than claiming that the subject is a pre-existing "metaphysical journeyer," Butler defines the subject as "a subject-in-process constructed in discourse by the acts it performs."³⁸

Moreover, Butler's critique of the genealogy of subject categories is intertwined with the view suggesting that gendered identities are performative. According to Butler, gender performatives attempt to emphasize their genealogy. (Gender performatives

³⁴ Sara Salih, "On Judith Butler and Performativity Sexualities and Communication in Everyday Life," in *Sexualities and Communication in Everyday Life*, ed. Karen E. Lovaas and Mercilee M. Jenkins. (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 55.

³⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 72.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

³⁷ Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 286-287.

³⁸ Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (London & New York, Routledge, 2002), 45.

that do not try to conceal their genealogy, indeed, that go out of their way to accentuate it, displace hetero-centric assumptions by revealing that heterosexual identities areas constructed and 'unoriginal' as the imitations of them.) For Butler,

A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender.³⁹

With the concept of performativity, Butler indeed extends Simone De Beauvoir's notion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, woman." Butler wants to explain with this concept that the subject is an actor who forms its own identity by its own choices. Butler argues that gender identity is the result of actions. However, Butler does not admit that whatever does the actions in question pre-exists the performer. That is to say; there is no pre-existing agent behind the actions. Butler makes a distinction between the concepts of performance and performativity. According to this distinction, the concept of performance requires a subject behind the action, while performativity does not require a pre-existing subject before the action. Thus, Butler rejects the concept of action as it requires a subject before action. For Salih:

This does not mean that there is no subject, but that the subject is not exactly where we would expect to find it – i.e. 'behind' or 'before' its deeds – so that reading *Gender Trouble* will call for new and radical ways of looking at (or perhaps looking for) gender identity.⁴⁰

In this context, Butler argues that gender is a performative, that is, something performed. Butler does not distinguish between sex and gender because she thinks that what is called gender is nothing but gender. However, it draws attention to the historicity of what is called gender. What we call gender is performative. What makes gender performative is the constant repetition of norms due to the fear of exclusion and going beyond the normal and the inability to know how to live otherwise. According

³⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 33.

⁴⁰ Salih, *Judith Butler*, 45.

to Butler, both "subject" and "gender" are performative. When Butler says gender, she includes the concept of gender in this concept. In short, Butler's conception of gender is perhaps the most radical of all, asserting that all categories of identity "are in fact the effects of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple points of origin and diffuse."⁴¹ In this case, it can be said that Butler's work is emblematic of a more considerable thought produced by the feminists, who have been influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism.

For the poststructuralists, the cultural variations between women and men suggest that there is no single intercultural category of woman or man shared by all.⁴² On the contrary, there are multiple modes or forms of femininity and masculinity. Rather than a conflict between two opposing male and female groups, gender identity is about balancing masculinity and femininity in specific men and women. This argument emphasizes the singularity and multiplicity of people as well as the relativity of symbolic and biological existence.⁴³

It can be understood that the social practices are associated with this concept of gender. This practice, which Connell points out, is often shaped by the dominant ideologies. The functioning of capitalism, which is dominant in many countries today, forms states in the context of patriarchal and sexist views. Institutions like the family, which are the state's ideological apparatus, reveal the state's sexist ideology by shaping individuals. According to Althusser, these ideological apparatuses, most of which are defined in the private sphere, are religious, educational, legal, political, union, and cultural institutions.⁴⁴ According to Millet, who argues that gender is shaped by power, the apparatus ideological state, as Althusser's statement, has a masculine identity, and these

⁴¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 60.

⁴² Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 359.

⁴³ Chris Barker, *Dictionary of Cultural Studies* (London: Sage Publications: 2004), 73-74.

⁴⁴ Louis Althusser, *İdeoloji ve Devletin İdeolojik Aygıtları*, trans. Yusuf Alp and Mahmut Özışık (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989), 28.

identities form the basis of sexual politics.⁴⁵ These male-dominated spaces, coming from state institutions, also show their presence in the everyday life. So, it is clear that the way we organize privacy is full of male-dominated objects. For Connell, the street is also an institution that has a dichotomy between men and women. She declares:

The street is not often seen as an institution... The street is the setting for a lot of intimidation of women, from whistling to physical handling and rape. ... The street as an environment thus shows the same structures of gender relations as the family and the State. It is about a division of labor, a structure of power and a structure of cathexis in the streets.⁴⁶

Connell, who focuses on gender, which is structured in all areas, from all institutions of society to the everyday life, proposed the reestablishment of gender on a new basis. In this case, the need to restructure the basic concepts related to gender which can also be applied to cinema as it functions as a social and cultural institution, too. Thus, I will use Connell's concept of masculinities in this research.

2. MASCULINITY STUDIES

This chapter will reveal that masculinity is not a natural, fixed position of dominance but a changeable and repetitive and performative gender construction. In this direction, basic concepts such as gender, masculinities, hegemonic masculinity, the crisis of masculinity, and performative masculinity, which is included in critical masculinity studies, will be discussed. The purpose of addressing these concepts is to raise some new questions about the construction of masculinity and the implications of the crisis of masculinity. In this sense, the chapter leans towards discussing how cinema works, both narratively and technically, in the reproduction of performative masculinity according to the gender norms.

⁴⁵ Kate Millett, *Cinsel Politika*, trans. Seçkin Selvi (İstanbul: Payel Yayınevi, 1973), 50.

⁴⁶ R.W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 133-134.

2.1. Gender and Masculinity

At the turn of the 1980s, the first research on men and masculinity appeared among Anglophones, mainly in Australia, the United States, and Great Britain.⁴⁷ Masculinity, as a new research object, emerged indeed within the framework of gender studies. However, it has taken several years before the interest spread beyond the Anglo-Saxon World. Today, it captures the attention of researchers all around the World.

Nevertheless, masculinity studies are relatively new in the academic field, with diverse research topics such as identity, gender roles, sexuality, male-female relationships, workplace, and crime. A review of the scientific literature shows that the prominent representatives of men's studies are the Americans Michael Kimmel, Michael Messner and the Australian R.W. Connell.

R.W. Connell argues that gender definitions are based on the identity of individuals and open to direct intervention. He says that gender is not binary as it transcends the biological character and is produced by social practices.⁴⁸ On the one hand, the biological sex of each newborn child can be determined. On the other hand, gender is shaped according to society's culturally and socially established gender models.⁴⁹ Thus, gender includes all kinds of social distinctions, including structures that characterize the male and female body by adding biological sex. Attempts to explain masculinity as gender and as a construction process have brought different models with different perspectives.

According to Kimmel and Messner, the concept of masculinity, which has been researched indeed for a long time, is historically addressed through three basic models that bring limited explanations to the concept of gender. The first model emphasizes

⁴⁷ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 349.

⁴⁸ Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*, 76.

⁴⁹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 255.

that the innate biological distinctions between men and women cause different social behaviors. The second model is an anthropological model, which examines masculinity interculturally by emphasizing the diversity of behaviors and attitudes associated with men. The third model, which is a sociological model, emphasizes how girls and boys adapt to the gender roles specific to their biological gender through socialization.⁵⁰

According to Connell, Hearn, and Kimmel, the first steps of modern analysis of masculinity are taken with psychoanalysis. Later, anthropologists emphasize cultural differences and emphasize the importance of social structures and norms. Finally, in the masculinity studies, the concept of gender roles becomes more visible, therefore masculinity becomes to be addressed as an internalized identity.⁵¹ Following this, the perspective put forward by women's studies gets criticized for confining the gender role models and the facts of femininity and masculinity to stereotypes. The stereotyping point of view carries a dangerous risk of inference as if there is only one type of masculinity. This model is non-functional.⁵²

According to Sancar, masculinity is socially and culturally produced and formed just like femininity, which has been seen so with the critical perspective of feminist theories. For Sancar, “these debates made it possible to question different masculinities and their possible different positions of power.”⁵³ This approach emphasizes that masculinity is not transhistorical and universal. Masculinity is historical and relative, varying from culture to culture and from period to period. Even within the same culture, experiences of masculinity may differ from each other, and even the definitions of masculinity attributed to a single man throughout his life may differ.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Michael S. Kimmel and M. A. Messner, “Introduction,” in *Men's Lives* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001), xi-xii.

⁵¹ R.W. Connell, J. Hearn and Michael S. Kimmel, “Introduction,” in *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (California: SAGE Publications, 2005), 5.

⁵² Michael S. Kimmel, “Rethinking masculinity: New directions in research,” in *Changing men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* (California: SAGE focus editions, 1987), 12-13.

⁵³ Serpil Sancar, *Erkeklik: İmkânsız İktidar* (İstanbul: Metis, 2009), 25-26.

⁵⁴ Kimmel and Messner, “Introduction,” xvi.

According to Connell, Kimmel, and Hearn, men and masculinities are also shaped by differences of age, class, ethnicity, and race. The gendering of men exists at the intersection of these all these social differences. Postcolonial studies also reveal the importance of considering geographical differences in masculinity because the masculinity analyses from the West or the Middle East show us different results.⁵⁵ Moreover, Connell emphasized that:

In a recent international collection, argue for a continued focus on understanding masculinities regionally and comparatively. At the least, we must understand that regional and local constructions of hegemonic masculinity are shaped by the articulation of these gender systems with global processes.⁵⁶

In short, studies on masculinity have revealed that there is no single and consistent definition of masculinity by examining what is understood when the word masculinity is used, and which features are indicated. Thus, it has become essential to investigate the differences between masculinities. According to Sancar, talking about different masculinities brings up the concept of hegemonic masculinity by focusing on the relations between masculinities:

The discussions around the concept of hegemonic masculinity have been raised to claim that it makes it possible to understand how men who do not fit this definition are conducted and controlled. ... Connell clarifies the use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which says that what brings different masculinities to a common is the power over women.⁵⁷

2.2. Different Conceptions of Masculinities and Connell's Approach

Connell's understanding of masculinities highlights the relational character of masculinities, between both men and women. In her work, Connell identifies four main

⁵⁵ Connell, Hearn and Kimmel, "Introduction," 3-4.

⁵⁶ R.W. Connell and J.W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (December 2005): 849.

⁵⁷ Sancar, *Erkeklik: İmkânsız İktidar*, 27.

logics as a tool for analyzing men. These logics can be qualified: "essentialist", "positivist", "normative" and "semiotic". These four logics are rarely mobilized individually; their uses are based on their interweaving, even though they turn out to be insufficient or ineffective for precisely thinking about masculinities.⁵⁸

The first approach relates to a so-called essentialist conception: "Essentialist definitions usually pick a feature that defines the core of the masculine and hang an account of men's lives on that."⁵⁹ As the author points out, the weakness in the essentialist approach is apparent. The choice of essence is very arbitrary. Nothing can unite different essentialists. The ideas that argue that masculinity has a universal basis give information about nothing but the essentialists above all.⁶⁰

The second approach is associated with the "positivist social sciences," which use "masculinity/femininity" scales regulated by validation items. These items are criticized because they approve of a discriminating power since they attribute an individual to a group in a logic of distinction. The individual belonging to the "woman" group is different from the "men" group. Moreover, the criticism of the choice of items is closer to the essentialist vision: It is evident that the construction of a masculinity-femininity scale requires first having a particular idea of the types of items relevant to mobilization:

Positivist procedure thus rests on the very typifications that are supposedly under investigation in gender research. (...) The terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' point beyond categorical sex difference to the ways men differ among themselves, and women differ among themselves, in matters of gender.⁶¹

These differences are recognized in the normative approach. It offers a standard in this sense: masculinity is what a man should be. For Connell, normative definitions allow

⁵⁸ R.W. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," in *The Masculinity Reader*, ed. Frank Barrett and Stephen M. Whitehead (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 32.

⁵⁹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 68.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 69.

those different men approach the standards to different degrees. However, this soon produces paradoxes.⁶²

Finally, the last approach is linked to the semiotic approach. According to Connell, in the semiotic approach, thinkers stop thinking about personality level. Instead, they define masculinity through a symbolic system of difference in which masculine and feminine take places. Moreover, this masculinity is raised in a position of strength - it is "the place of symbolic authority."

In the semiotic opposition of masculinity and femininity, masculinity is the unmarked term, the place of symbolic authority. The phallus is master-signifier, and femininity is symbolically defined by lack.⁶³

Semiotic approach is rejected by this already mentioned characteristic of intersectionality or the interconnectivity inherent in masculinities. What the author recalls is essential: masculinities are to be understood in the form of a "process," "report," and "relationship" according to the social construct that is gender.

Through these critiques of deficient conceptions of masculinities, Connell introduces a new perspective that draws all its richness from its maneuverability. A significant number of scholars has undoubtedly adopted this logic. However, its popularity is not exempt from criticisms or improvements according to the appreciation of each and every one, which will be presented later.

2.3. Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is one of the essential conceptual resources that have contributed to the development of masculinity studies as part of critical thinking. With the questioning of hegemonic masculinity, new discussions in the field of masculinity

⁶² Ibid., 70.

⁶³ Ibid.

studies have come up. The emergence of hegemonic masculinity is based on the desire to formulate masculinity present in the Anglo-Saxon works of Men's Studies. The concept was put forward by a research group including Connell. She criticized the conceptualization of the role of masculinity and proposed a new model in this direction. She stated that the relationship between multiple masculinities and power is essential. Hegemonic masculinity is found anchored in their respective works. Hegemonic masculinity would function as a support for the legitimacy of the patriarchal model, the domination of men over women, and the hegemonic identity process between men.

Concretely, hegemonic masculinity could be defined as the idealized and imposed model of masculinity in a fixed place and at a specific time. However, the concept of hegemonic masculinity involves a constant struggle where a given definition of masculinity imposes itself as "superior" to others.⁶⁴ For Connell and Messerschmidt, whatever the empirical diversity of masculinities, the contestation for hegemony implies that gender hierarchy does not have multiple niches at the top.⁶⁵

Men's Studies are interested, among other things, in the way in which this struggle is produced socially. In this mechanism, repetition would be the key; identities, constructed in a fragile and provisional way, must be repeated in order to be reinforced.

Nevertheless, hegemony as domination in the theory of practice operates predominantly as authority through non-violent cultural institutions such as religion, politics, law, media, education and the marketplace where certain beliefs and values are packaged and disseminated.⁶⁶

As presented by Gramsci over seventy years ago, the concept of hegemony explains the process by which ruling classes legitimize and perpetuate their domination. The originality of Gramsci's thought would be his break with the traditional idea of

⁶⁴ Judith Newton, "White Guys," *Feminist Studies* vol. 24, no: 3 (Autumn, 1998): 586.

⁶⁵ Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," 845.

⁶⁶ Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity*, 43.

hegemony as domination linked to violence: The basic premise of Gramsci's theory of hegemony is one with which few would disagree: that man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas.⁶⁷ A class would therefore predominate by the ideas it conveys. It would be the leader of the allied classes as well as the dominant of the opposing classes.⁶⁸ Hegemony would act as a process of legitimizing a particular system of thought. Katz explains that this mechanism would operate in several spheres:

In hegemony, according to Gramscian thought, a certain way of life and thought is dominant, and is diffused throughout society to inform norms, values and tastes, political practices, and social relations.⁶⁹

Therefore, hegemonic masculinity would operate within the offer of representation of social norms and cultural practices. Still, it can be said that there is a conceptual difference between Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony and the way the concept is used in gender relations. Gramsci focuses on the dynamics of structural change within the framework of the mobility and immobility of all classes. Furthermore, in discussions on gender, the concept has been taken as a simple model of cultural control.⁷⁰

Connell's *Gender and Power*, published after the article "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity," is one of the primary sources that helps to formulate the concept. Connell develops the concept of hegemonic masculinity by using Gramsci's concept of hegemony precisely in this study. According to her, this concept is "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the

⁶⁷ Thomas R. Bates, "Gramsci and the Theory of Hegemony," *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 36, no. 2 (Apr. – Jun 1975): 351.

⁶⁸ Antonio Gramsci, "Political class leadership before and after assuming government power," in *Prison Notebooks Volume 1*, trans. J. Buttigieg and A. Callari (New York, Columbia University Press, 1928), 48.

⁶⁹ Hagai Katz, "Gramsci, Hegemony, and Global Civil Society Networks," *Voluntas*, no. 17 (2006): 335.

⁷⁰ Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," 831.

organization of private life and cultural processes.”⁷¹ Moreover, it is constructed concerning subordinated men and women.

Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole. It is an expression of the privilege men collectively have over women. The hierarchy of masculinities is an expression of the unequal shares in that privilege held by different groups of men.⁷²

In this context, hegemonic masculinity is not an absolute domination position in which all options disappear. In addition, it is a position of power, a state of play *in the balance of forces* achieved through consent.

According to Connell, the main reason for reproducing this position, which represents very few men, is the common interests and privileges men acquire by subjecting women to them. Thus, men who gather around a common interest cooperate to produce hegemonic masculinity. Stating that one of the main characteristics of hegemonic masculinity is a commitment to heterosexuality, that is, the institution of marriage, Connell says that the most fundamental aspect of subordinated masculinity is homosexuality:

The most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it **is** heterosexual, being closely connected to the institution of marriage; and a key form of subordinated masculinity is homosexual. This subordination involves both direct interactions and a kind of ideological warfare.⁷³

Despite its widespread use, hegemonic masculinity is also a criticized concept from different perspectives. Connell and Messerschmidt review the research and the criticism on the concept of hegemonic masculinity in their article "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept". They try to reformulate the concept in today's conditions, by determining the elements that need to be preserved and removed from

⁷¹ Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*, 184.

⁷² R.W. Connell, "Understanding Men: Gender Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities," *Social Thought & Research* 24, No. 1/2 (2001): 17.

⁷³ Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*, 186.

the first formulation. Thus, they review their work in the light of criticism of the concept. According to the first criticism, the definition of masculinity that underlies hegemonic masculinity is problematic. The definition and the meaning of masculinity are unclear. This state of uncertainty causes issues such as it ignores power and domination. Besides, hegemonic masculinity is criticized for reproducing a notion of heteronormative gender, based on essentialism, underlining the differences between men and women.

Another criticism questions whom hegemonic masculinity represent. The ambiguity and coincidence of the meanings in question and the definition of an ideal, fixed and transhistorical masculinity contradict the historicity of gender and the variability of definitions. The third criticism concerns the problem of reification. The reduction of hegemonic masculinity to the embodiment of power is problematic. Patriarchy and gender concepts should be separated from each other. The fourth criticism is that hegemonic masculinity is based on a flawed subject theory and oversimplifies the subject. For example, according to the psychoanalytic approach, hegemonic masculinity assumes an indivisible subject.

The last criticism that Connell and Messerschmidt mentioned is the pattern of gender relations. For them, ignoring the historicity of gender can create a problem in understanding the concept by creating a tendency to view gender relations as independent and automatic systems. According to them, the dominance of men and the subordination of women constitute a historical process, not a self-reproducing system. “Masculine domination” is open to challenge and requires considerable effort to maintain.⁷⁴

The writers state that explanations about the dominance of men over women and the attempt to treat masculinity as a set of behaviors should be overcome and developed.

⁷⁴ Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” 844.

In this context, Connell and Messerschmidt suggest that the concept of hegemonic masculinity should be reformulated in four different areas. The first one concerns the adoption of a more complex model of gender hierarchy. In other words, hegemonic masculinity includes a more unified understanding that recognizes the interaction between "gender dynamics" and "social dynamics" and the power of dominant groups as well as the agency of "subordinated groups".⁷⁵ The second one accepts the constructions of masculinities at local, regional and global levels and reveals the interrelationship between these levels. According to the writers:

Hegemonic masculinity at the regional level is symbolically represented through the interplay of specific local masculine practices that have regional significance, such as those constructed by feature film actors, professional athletes, and politicians.⁷⁶

The third one is the role of representation of men's bodies in the construction of hegemonic masculinity and the way men use their bodies. Thus, determining the reciprocal relationship between embodiment and hegemony provides the comprehension that bodies have dual functions; they are both subjects and objects of social practice. The last one is the determination of masculinity dynamics that recognize the inner complexity of masculinities.

Another author who contributed to the development of the hegemonic concept of masculinity is Jeff Hearn. Hearn pointed to some misuse of the concept, suggesting the notion of the hegemony of men:

The focus on masculinity is too narrow. Instead, it is time to go back from masculinity to men, to examine the hegemony of men and about men. The hegemony of men seeks to address the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Ibid., 848.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 849.

⁷⁷ Jeff Hearn, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," *Feminist Theory* 5, no.1 (2004): 59.

This context suggests focusing on men's categorizations established and naturalized concerning women, children, and other men rather than various forms of masculinity. Thus, he states that this is more closely linked to Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Moreover, he emphasizes that hegemony operates through a variable network of collective actors in which the state, law, capitalists, intellectuals take part.⁷⁸ For Hearn, there is no single point of view regarding male hegemony.

2.4. The Diversity of Masculinities

According to Connell, it should be clear to the reader that masculinity is not the same as a male individual. Masculinity can refer to a group of individuals contracting an identical masculine social practical configuration. In the opposite case, to speak of masculinity in the plural does not necessarily mean to echo a group of individuals because an individual alone can adopt several masculinities. The concept of hegemonic masculinity is a relational concept; it is not a form of identity or a psychological typology, although it is often the subject of such misuse.

Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition. This holds regardless of the changing content of the demarcation in different societies and periods of history. Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always masculinity-in-relation.⁷⁹

While this "relational concept" defines individuals, it should avoid essentializing them. In Connell's book "Masculinities," she quotes interviews; she quotes experiences and opens these experiences to the discussion. These different chapters reveal to readers that individuals (heterosexual or gay men) can unconsciously change their "masculine" state according to their experience. A man can adopt this relational concept of masculinity in a variety of ways throughout his life. In Connell's work, he tries to structure these forms in a hierarchical system to express power relations between men.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁷⁹ Connell, *Masculinities*, 43-44.

The manners of being masculine are seen as the adoption of certain qualities that classify themselves in a hierarchy. The main purpose is not to explain the entry to and the exit from this hierarchy of masculinities, but to explain that masculinity means the adoption of social form practices.

It is crucial to note how the authors differentiate the "social status" of masculinities (hegemonic, dominated, or inclusive, etc.) from socially constructed images of different types of men. This excerpt is even more worthy of interest as it portrays the link between the highly conceptual work in science and the genuine vision embedded in social practices of men daily.

Furthermore, as the authors suggest, differences in the "status" of masculinities have repercussions on the experience of individuals. The concepts of power relations or hierarchization, although theoretical, are indeed embodied in reality by a social process of "recognition." A value is attributed to masculinity, which can be appreciative or deprecating. Meeting a stranger and categorizing him according to his dress style or gesture is part of this recognition system, which everyone uses more or less consciously. That is why masculinities are not seen as socially equal, and this pressure plays a significant role in what is called the "costs and benefits" of various masculinities.

To sum up, the subjects of masculinities, therefore, represent all the individuals of a population. They have both a social and scientific reality. A person can adopt masculinity regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, skin color, etc.

2.5. Are Masculinities in Crisis?

The discussion of the concept of masculinities in the context of variability and instability brings up the concept of the crisis of masculinity, which has become another research topic in masculinity studies. The post-structuralist understanding, which

brings a critical perspective to the concept of masculinity, makes it questionable and creates a very reasonable ground for developing this field. The approach of the post-structuralist perspective and its criticisms reveal that a male identity, as a unified identity of men with common interests, is also questionable, similar to the demand for the rejection of the category of women as a unified identity.⁸⁰ Poststructuralism provides a suitable language and intellectual ground for critical masculinity studies. Most of the post-structuralists argue that masculinity has no natural, inner and given meaning. They think that meaning is shaped in a continuous movement, and that it is not based on an ontological basis or essence. For Reeser:

Masculinity is in fact connected with numerous other forms of identity or subjectivity, even if men claim or assume that it is not connected to or dependent on them for its definition. Masculinity is in dialogue; it is dependent on the very others that are defined as different from it.⁸¹

For the post-structuralist approach, identity is always understood in a process, as it is never completed or finalized. Because masculinity is something that an individual does not possess, men fulfill masculinity within the available resources, in different environments, and various ways.⁸² Masculinity does not have the privilege of "being"; because it always needs careful examination. Contrary to the biological or the essentialist tendencies, at the point where post-structuralist discussions of gender appear, the body as an inconsistent formation and as a subject in itself turns into an extension of social relations and social spaces through the practice of social rituals, actions, and memorized behaviors.

Nowadays, there are no lifelong careers left for men, women have begun to exist strongly in male-dominated industries, and women have come to make and implement

⁸⁰ Sancar, *Erkeklik: İmkansız İktidar*, 25.

⁸¹ Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11.

⁸² Frank J. Barret and Stephen M Whitehead, "The Sociology of Masculinity," in *The Masculinities Reader* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 18.

their decisions in relationships, divorce, child-care, and sexual expression.⁸³ Considering such changes in the traditional family structure and thus in society, it is not surprising to observe a crisis in gender relations.

The male crisis is called in various ways: the impossible power or the loss of masculinity. According to Beynon, this crisis has two sources. The first is the "men's rights" that are thought to have been lost through feminist criticism. This factor points to male privileges. The second factor that causes the masculinity crisis is the changes in men's work lives.⁸⁴ Economic crises, the replacement of the labor force by technology, short-term contracts, and flexible working are the most important reasons.

One of the main reasons for the alleged crisis in masculinity is undoubtedly the transformation that has taken place in the labour market throughout the western economies. (...) These changes have had a huge impact, given that work is central to masculinity, providing money, power, a job or career, as well as the opportunity to develop and exercise skills, expertise and authority.⁸⁵

In brief, the rapidly increasing consumption, the feminist struggle, which put male privileges to question, and the social change in the traditional view of masculinity made masculinity, especially the hegemonic masculinity, dysfunctional, weak, and insecure.⁸⁶ The necessity to construct new strategies arising from the inadequacy of explanations that base male superiority on biology and creation makes gender unstable and gender identities fragile. In this context, the inability to transform or to annihilate the male-specific privileges due to the impermanence of any strategy causes fear and anxiety.⁸⁷

⁸³ Barret and Whitehead, "The Sociology of Masculinity," 8-9.

⁸⁴ John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002). 83.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁸⁶ Barret and Whitehead, "The Sociology of Masculinity," 6.

⁸⁷ Sancar, *Erkeklik: İmkânsız İktidar*, 115.

According to Kimmel, manhood, which is the sum of constantly changing meanings, tends to seek an eternal definition in times of crisis where old definitions no longer work and new definitions are not yet firmly established:

The search for a transcendent, timeless definition of manhood is itself a sociological phenomenon—we tend to search for the timeless and eternal during moments of crisis, those points of transition when old definitions no longer work and new definitions are yet to be firmly established.⁸⁸

However, the crisis of masculinity, based on the premise that masculinities are not stable and vary according to time and place, underlines the assumption that single masculinity dominates the whole. Since masculinities change over time and there is no single fixed masculinity, the idea that there is a crisis involving all men confines masculinity into a single, unchangeable and rigid category. The existence of a single and unique dominant masculinity leads to the idea that masculinity is essential and natural. It includes the possibility that studies get stuck in the same cycle.

In addition, instead of treating the social construction and historical change of masculinities as the loss of men, it should be considered that this situation provides men with the capacity to act and agency. In other words, being aware of the historical possibilities allows replacing the despair of the crisis with new possibilities.⁸⁹ Thus, masculinities in crisis can also show us that adaptation and change will be possible.

Besides, Connell states that the crisis needs a system in which hegemonic masculinity is reproduced by repairing it through gender mechanisms. According to her, we can only talk about the transformation or fragmentation of masculinity, which can be described as the structuring of practices in gender relations. In short, Connell points out that even if this crisis involves masculinity, it does not mean the destruction or

⁸⁸ Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gender of Desire Essays on Male Sexuality* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005), 26.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

deconstruction of masculinity and that masculinity can reproduce itself again and again through the crisis.⁹⁰

2.6. Masculinity as Performativity

The hierarchy characterized by the hegemonic masculinity conceived and maintained in a performative manner also extends to men in cinema. Masculinity is seen as a structure of practices providing the resources necessary for the construction of identity. If masculinity is a reality that the subject constructs rather than something it possesses, this construction is achieved differently, depending on the contexts and resources at its disposal.⁹¹ When this observation of diversity is encountered, the notion of stable and unified identity is called into question, and masculinity escapes any empirical definition.⁹² Some represent by traits of masculinity refers to the possibilities to which individuals have access at different points in time and hardly coexist.⁹³ The multiplicity and disorder of everyday life would thus be difficult to tolerate. Some would risk undermining the feeling of ontological security, that is to say, the feeling of internal security or the intrinsic stability experienced by each individual concerning this environment. The dichotomous conceptions associated with modernity (sex-gender, nature-culture, masculinity-femininity, etc.) are contested; this dualistic approach to reality provides the illusion of a natural order of phenomena and some security as comfort zone.⁹⁴

From this perspective, masculinity as a practice is subject to how subjects perform it. Performativity is associated with linguistic writings to signify an expression simultaneously constituting the action it expresses. One example is the “I now

⁹⁰ Connell, *Masculinities*, 84.

⁹¹ Barret and Whitehead, “The Sociology of Masculinity,” 12.

⁹² Alan Petersen (2003). “Research on Men and Masculinities: Some Implications of Recent Theory for Future Work,” *Men and Masculinities Vol. 6*, No. 1 (July 2003): 58.

⁹³ John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), 47.

⁹⁴ Barret and Whitehead, “The Sociology of Masculinity,” 12.

pronounce you husband and wife” of marriage, this expression changes the status of the spouses within a specific symbolic community. Naming masculinity incidentally amounts to constructing it. It is not how gender influences the subject that matters but rather the dynamics by which discursive and bodily practices constitute gender. For example, it is not a stable identity that makes it possible to act daily but rather the reverse; through performativity, identity is constructed.

Performativity is understood as a theatrical performance in which the subject constantly returns to the stage. Butler wonders if it does not expect gender to function as an inner essence that reveals itself to the subject and ultimately brings about the expected phenomenon.⁹⁵ Gender and masculinity could be conceived from this angle as restorers of identity. This performativity process is intended to be a subversion of heteronormative conceptions of sexes and genders. The objective is to denaturalize the determinism between sex and gender. This unstable and fluid character of performativity implies the control of the subject by the blind repetition of discourse and acts and the possibilities of subversion. Thus, the language and the speeches maintained daily (discursive practices) are one of the keys to perform, label and interpret masculinities. They give meaning to the identities of subjects that cannot exist outside of discourse.⁹⁶ This feeling of existing is built through reflexivity during which the subject regularly questions itself, which implies possibilities for change in the latter.

Following criticisms their reproaching for being interested only in discursive dimensions, Butler⁹⁷ develops this theory by recognizing the materiality of the body and the possibilities of an inscription on its surface, notably in *Bodies That Matter*. The body is considered to be primarily constructed historically and socially through

⁹⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 35.

⁹⁶ Kenneth Clatterbaugh, “What Is Problematic about Masculinities?” *Men and Masculinities Vol. I*, No. I (July 1998): 36-37.

⁹⁷ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (Oxon: Routledge, 1993).

discourse.⁹⁸ It is the same with the construction of the difference between the bodies of men and those of women.

Rather than seeing bodies as biologically given, or prediscursive, bodies have come to be seen as fabricated through discourse as an effect of power/knowledge. Masculinity scholars could take their cue from this work to reveal the ways in which the male body has been posited as both object and site for the exercise of power and to explore the implications of this for the subjectivities of men.⁹⁹

Butler's performative gender theory provides the opportunity to deal with the phenomenon of masculinity within variable or fluid identities. According to Butler, who considers the repeatability and reiterating of performativity as an agency theory, the agency has no ontological priority. Contrary to the idea that identity should be discussed before gender identity, people also follow intelligible standards when they are gendered in accordance with gender norms. For Butler, intelligible genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire¹⁰⁰ According to Butler, instead of the requirement that there is a subject or an agent behind the one, who performs the action, it is constructed variably through the agency that does or acts.

This is not a return to an existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts, for the existential theory maintains a prediscursive structure for both the self and its acts. It is precisely the discursively variable construction of each in and through the other.¹⁰¹

According to Butler, a person is neither gender nor has gender. As a form of social power, the norm institutionalizes gender duality. It assumes a causality between sex, gender, and desire, naturalizing the institutional and hegemonic heterosexuality and gender delineations and functioning as a system.

⁹⁸ Petersen, "Research on Men and Masculinities: Some Implications of Recent Theory for Future Work," 65.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 64-65.

¹⁰⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 23.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 195.

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire.¹⁰²

For Butler, performative gender as an act of doing does not belong to a subject that precedes it. On the contrary, it constructs identity performatively through repetitions and practices of referentiality. The claim that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts, which constitute its reality.¹⁰³ Performance, which reveals the illusion of inner truth and self, reveals the imitation-based structure of gender and takes it out of the discourse of truth and falsehood.

If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity.¹⁰⁴

Besides, drag performance can either de-naturalize or idealize gender norms. With this ambivalent structure, it finds the opportunity to re-signify and subvert the contextualization, creating clarity. Nevertheless, the subjugated body conceals an essential power of subversion. Butler uses the example of drag (Drag Queen: a man dressing up as a woman; Drag King: a woman dressing up as a man) to explain its subversive power and the notion of performativity. By "imitating," Dragging reveals gender play or gender play in the same way as the man who overplays his masculinity or the woman who adds to his femininity. The example of drag should not be understood as the possibility for the subject to invent itself as one does in a role-playing game. To quote Butler, you do not change gender like you change your shirt, which would imply a background to the subject. Instead, the drag example serves to question

¹⁰² Ibid., 30-31.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 185.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 186.

the normality of the gender by relying on exceptions to think the rule. Butler states that drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality.¹⁰⁵

Butler's writings on gender, performativity, and subversion are also used in masculinity studies. According to Brickell, this subversion has the potential to challenge hegemonic forms of masculinity. Nevertheless, it is not sufficiently conceptualized. Developing Butler's theory, Brickell emphasizes the concept of performativity, which provides the discursive space that creates ontological effects. He questions what this concept can say for the socially positioned subject produced by discursive processes. He argues that Butler's answer to this question was not clear, and that Butler's writing was not consistent. Because the subject is temporary in some cases and appears in the form of fiction, in some cases, subjects claim a real existence with a limited capacity for social action.¹⁰⁶

The vexatious questions are those that address whether the effects of performativity might be subjects with a "real" existence and, if so, whether we can identify acts in which those subjects might engage. A number of unresolved tensions over subjectivity and agency remain, and these have significant implications for Butler's own theorizing as well as its adoption by other researchers and theorists.¹⁰⁷

In this sense, Brickell finds the concept of performativity valuable because he criticizes masculinity as a pre-social biological essence and argues that masculinity emerges in language and society as the effects of power relations and norms. Subversion may provide new possibilities for interpreting masculinity both individually and collectively.

¹⁰⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 85.

¹⁰⁶ Chris Brickell, "Masculinities, Performativity and Subversion: A Sociological Reappraisal," *Men and Masculinities* Vol.8, No:1 (July 2005): 26.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

It is at the macrolevel that subversion is likely to prove more of a challenge. Hegemonic masculinities, male dominance, and the possibilities for their displacement are not conditioned by the availability of cultural resources alone. While subjectivity is informed by symbolic resources, it is also conditioned by power and social structures.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, reorganizing private and public spaces presents contrasting information and can turn into a potential productive effect by challenging past forms of gender performance.¹⁰⁹ Brickell completes what he finds missing in Butler with Goffman's works. By combining Butler and Goffman's theories, Brickell seeks to reveal a performance-based explanation of masculinity that is both interactional and performative. In terms of gender specifically, Goffman suggests that one might just as well say there is no gender identity. There is only a schedule for the portrayal of gender. According to him, Butler discusses that power is both productive and restrictive. However, they ignore the importance of social institutions and structures. In their study, the lack of social structure analysis likely makes the debate about the displacement of dominant regulation optimistic. Goffman can be criticized for ignoring the concept of power and systematic inequalities. Nevertheless, Goffman considers the inherent organizational structures of a particular social order and the mechanisms mediated by these structures and individual selves. Goffman's approach is functional here because subversion can provide opportunities to understand masculinity both individually and collectively. For Brickell, "if gender is best understood as a schedule for gendered enactments or performances, then subversive attempts to add to and subtract from the schedules may be possible."¹¹⁰

Another person who developed Butler's performative concept is Reeser. By discussing masculinity as performative, he points out that no essential or original masculinity can be directly referenced. According to him, when performing masculinity, an original

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 37.

and cultural scenario is not used; on the contrary, a reference is made to a mass of practices. According to Reeser, Butler's concept of gender as corporeal is helpful in gendered performance in order to develop masculinity studies.

Butler's answer would be that a man has no inner core, no essence, no nature underneath his gender, and that he needs to keep repeating gendered acts to show that masculinity does in fact exist in the face of a gender emptiness or a threat of emptiness. By tackling football players every day, our player is trying to convince us and himself that masculinity is natural and essential.¹¹¹

Thus, masculinity, which looks natural due to its constantly repeating and creates the illusion that it has an essence, can also be discussed as a stereotype. In this sense, masculinity, which is considered to be a stereotype, is not limited to a specific period and its structure emerges open to change appears. Thus, old and new forms can coexist; by going beyond stereotypes, inconsistency can be made visible due to individual variations and performance breaking down at certain moments.¹¹²

Besides, Connell emphasizes that masculinity must be considered in multiple social contexts and according to gender inequalities. Production, consumption, economy, and institutions like the state are examples of the contexts in which a discursive approach seems to offer little input.¹¹³ For Clatterbaugh, the premise of discourse is the main problem with the performative paradigm. If one asserts that discourse produces masculinities, it is necessary to have an independent description of these masculinities. If one advances the argument that masculinities are nothing without discourses, this amounts to denying the causal argument of discourses on gender. Insofar as discourses are identified with masculinities, they cannot at the same time be the cause. If

¹¹¹ Todd W. Reeser, "Sexing Masculinity," in *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 83.

¹¹² Reeser, "Sexing Masculinity," 84-85.

¹¹³ R.W. Connell, "Masculinities, Change, and Conflict in Global Society: Thinking about the Future of Men's Studies," *Journal of Men's Studies* 11, no. 3 (June 2003): 257.

individuals are the subjects of multiple discourses, this situation amounts to considering that there are as many masculinities as there are individuals.¹¹⁴

3. GENDER, MASCULINITY AND FILM STUDIES

Connell proposed the reestablishment of gender on a new basis. In this case, the need to restructure the basic concepts of gender can also be applied to cinema as it functions as a social and cultural institution, too. Thus, I will use Connell's concept of masculinities in this connection between cinema and gender. In order to analyze the reproduction of masculinity and performativity in cinema, the concepts of discourse and gaze in cinema will be examined in relation to gender.

3.1. Cinema, Society and Sociology

Cinema has an inevitable place in our daily life; it is like a part of our life. Our acquaintance with cinema starts at a very early age and continues uninterrupted. That's why cinema has spread to the farthest corners of the world.¹¹⁵ In today's world, where accessibility is so easy, cinema is, of course, socially significant. Cinema is a product of the society and culture to which it belongs. Changes in cinema happens also along with the changes in society. In this sense, films are essential social documents that we can observe and analyze a particular culture. In this case, cinema not only offers an idea about society, but it is also an integral part of the society it represents.¹¹⁶ While cinema reflects reality, it also emphasizes the diversity of social life and shows changing social and cultural forms. In other words, cinema not only reflects society but also constructs it. With this point, cinema has the characteristic of presenting the data to be used while analyzing society. Due to these connections, cinema, sociology, gender, and masculinity studies inevitably intersect.

¹¹⁴ Clatterbaugh, "What Is Problematic about Masculinities?" 40.

¹¹⁵ Nijat Özön, *Sinema Sanatına Giriş* (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2008), 6.

¹¹⁶ Bülent Diken and Carten B: Laustsen, *Filmlerle Sosyoloji* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2010), 24.

In addition, sociology and cinema have links that often cover the relations between image and text. So, we can say that Sociology and Cinema deal with very similar subjects. They often deal with the same objects or at least close objects, but with different points of view, methods, and objectives.

Films reflect the society around them; they reflect its themes better than other types of text because of their characteristics of group work intended for mass consumption; they bring to light its underground and hidden aspects, to the point of illustrating in some way the unconscious; they punctuate its historical development, revealing the underlying dynamics. In short, the cinema is a perfect testimony: in this sense, it is a precious source of work, for the historian as well as for sociology.¹¹⁷

Sociology does not consider cinema as a simple artistic and aesthetic instrument but as a means of communication and cultural reflection. To speak of cinema as an institution means to take it as a social organization: while giving people a sense of belonging, it also dictates standards of conduct.

Films are never 'just films', lightweight fiction destined to amuse us and thus to distract us from the core problems and struggles of our social reality. Even when films lie, they tell the lie which dwells in the very heart of our social edifice.¹¹⁸

Finally, we can say that sociology tries to understand how the image and the sound of social realities are reflected in films. The sociology of cinema also examines the relationship between audience and cinema; it discusses cinema as a mass communication tool; it explores cinema as a reflective and shaping tool, and finally provides appropriate methods in analyzing the relations between cinema and society.

¹¹⁷ Francesco Casetti, *Les théories du cinéma depuis 1945* (Paris: Nathan, 1993), 143.

¹¹⁸ Slavoj Žižek, "Foreward by Slavoj Žižek," in *Sociology through the Projector*, ed. Bülent Diken and Carten B. Lausten (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), xi.

3.2. Gender Studies in Cinema: A Historical Overview

The studies of film, culture, and society date back to the 1920s and 1930s. These researches attracted the attention of the public, especially in the late 1920s in USA. According to Dudrah, studies in this direction are primarily concerned with the impact of films on audiences. It becomes the dominant paradigm of mass communication research on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1940s and 1950s. Popular culture becomes a topic of discussion for sociological approaches, which begin to be applied to cinema. During this period, thinkers are mainly concerned with the effects of the media on modern society. The concept of mass society emerges. However, according to Dudrah, this has failed to examine the polymorphism of most popular culture texts and the different variations among audiences.¹¹⁹

In the 1960s, the mass society and culture thesis was criticized by the film critics rethinking Hollywood movies. Dudrah mentions that with aesthetical, theoretical, and methodological approaches, film studies and sociology gain the possibility of sharing the analysis of cinema.

This alliance, however, was not taken up seriously as sociology and film studies began to diverge by the late sixties due to intellectual differences around the perceived lack of a reflective empiricism in sociology by film theorists.¹²⁰

By the 1970s, the trend towards analyzing the film language increases. While the semiotic dimension of cinema is discussed mostly, there has not been much work on social structures and audiences. In the theoretical analysis of films, help is taken mostly from the concepts of Lacan and Althusser, instead of referring to sociological theories or method. This approach focuses on a method of the structuralist psychoanalysis, as it focuses on the film's text. Dudrah states that film theory focused on the textual construction of issues in the 1970s and promoted a method based on a structural

¹¹⁹ Rajinder Kumar Dudrah, *Bollywood: Sociology Goes to the Movies* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2006), 22.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

psychoanalysis rather than emphasizing positioning on contextual social issues that are more suitable for the sociological approach.¹²¹

Meanwhile, gender and media studies began to develop in academia among others within the Anglo-Saxon Film Studies, together with the development of Women's Studies at the end of the 80s. Authors such as Claire Johnston compare female and male characters in Hollywood films to conclude that women generally occupy passive positions and do little to advance the plots, while men advance the action. In 1975, Laura Mulvey published the essential article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema".¹²² Similarly, to Johnston, she claimed that female characters' bodies become the object of the gaze exerted by the active male character. Various cinematographic techniques (POV-shot, framing, pan, zoom in, etc.) also serve for the spectatorial gaze. However, Johnston writes that "in order to counter our objectification in the cinema, our collective fantasies must be released: women's cinema must embody the working through of desire: such an objective" demands the use of the entertainment film."¹²³ Yet, Mulvey emphasizes the dominant cinema and the "rejection of pleasure as a radical weapon."¹²⁴

These founding texts opened the way for a series of books and articles on the passivity of female characters and gaze control in cinema. In her article, Linda Williams also puts forward the idea that female subjects in horror films are punished for adopting a curious gaze, which is usually reserved for men.

The woman's gaze is punished, in other words, by narrative processes that transform curiosity and desire into masochistic fantasy. The horror film offers a particularly

¹²¹ Ibid., 23.

¹²² Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Reading*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford UP, 1999).

¹²³ Claire Johnston, "Women's Cinema as Countercinema," in *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures*, ed. Scott MacKenzie (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), 355.

¹²⁴ Patricia White, "Feminism and Film," in *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. J. Hill and P. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 119.

interesting example of this punishment in the woman's terrified look at the horrible body of the monster.¹²⁵

Mary Ann Doane disputes the reading of the slasher, indicating more like a sadistic reaction to the anxiety aroused by the rise of feminism during the 1970s. In the film noir, Doane also deals with the figure of "*femme fatale*" women, who use their own body as a disguise and as a masquerade, while the film noir stages excessive femininity to escape the constraints of a patriarchal society. Because the *femme fatale* possesses characteristics generally associated with male characters such as strength, cunning, independence, she reverses the traditional balance of power between men and women.

The transvestite adopts the sexuality of the other—the woman becomes a man in order to attain the necessary distance from the image. Masquerade, on the other hand, involves a realignment of femininity, the recovery, or more accurately, simulation, of the missing gap or distance. To masquerade is to manufacture a lack in the form of a certain distance between oneself and one's image¹²⁶

However, most writers who study this stereotype recognize that film noir does not entirely subvert the patriarchal scheme, as it associates female sexuality and power with something dangerous and dreadful. To calm the suffering aroused by female power and restore patriarchal order, the male character almost always neutralizes or kills the *femme fatale*.¹²⁷

A significant number of books and articles have also been written on the Disney Princesses. In general, these texts criticize the passivity of the main female character with a skinny body waiting to be saved by her charming prince. However, several studies note the evolution of the character of the princess over time: she increasingly challenges paternal authority, as she becomes more active, autonomous, and

¹²⁵ Linda Williams, "When the Women Look," in *Horror, The Film Reader*, ed. Mark Jancovich (London: Routledge, 2001), 61-62.

¹²⁶ Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales* (London: Routledge, 1991), 70.

¹²⁷ Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," *Screen* 23, (1982): 82.

independent. Some female Disney characters even question the binary division of the roles between men and women. For example, Mulan, who dresses and acts like a man to be able to access a social position formerly reserved for men and to become an army soldier. As it is the case with many Disney films, the subversive aspects of the female character are offset by more conservative aspects. At the end of the film, Mulan refuses a prestigious government, returns to her family and gets married.¹²⁸

Although many studies on Disney films focus more on the character of the princess, some texts provide a cursory analysis of the male characters and their relationship to manhood. Usually, kings are short, rather plump, and exhibit "soft" facial features to be portrayed as harmless and kind, for example, the Princess Jasmine's father in *Aladdin*.¹²⁹ On the other hand, the suitors who court the princesses have typically masculine characteristics: they are brave, handsome, tall, and courageous. In *The Beauty and the Beast* (1991), Gaston's character embodies the stereotype of the masculine man, but the female character still refuses to marry him. The film *Beauty and the Beast* illustrates the evolution of masculinity under the influence of the feminist movement of the 1980s; the Beast, initially rough and aggressive, gradually becomes sensitive, tender, gallant, and delicate, which allows him to win Belle's affection and break her bad luck.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, numerous analyses from feminist film studies to cultural studies have shown that Hollywood cinema nevertheless allowed a specific diversity in terms of the representation of women and gender relations. The portrayal of female characters created by female directors allowed us to explore female subjectivity. In this period, constructions of gender norms, masculinity, and femininity have been the subject of some crucial analyses.

¹²⁸ Henry A. Giroux, *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), 100-107.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

As it is understood, the image in cinema, could not escape from being a tool for gender studies, which is also the analysis of cultural representations. As an important form of cultural self-definition or a powerful tool of social and cultural domination in contemporary Western societies, especially in the neoliberal era, popular culture, artistic representations, and advertising become the new outlet for the production of subjectivity and for the construction and the subversion of gender norms and sexuality. Women studies have questioned the ways of seeing (the gaze) inherited from the patriarchal tradition by analyzing these cultural productions as discourses resulting from power relations. The notions of gaze and discourse, which have fundamental places in cinema, are the most important concepts studied through the studies of gender. As Berger said: “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak.”¹³⁰

The gaze is the condition of the visibility of the other. According to Berger, distinguishing oneself from others is a matter of seeing and looking. Seeing is needed to find and to understand one's place. Because, immediately after seeing and realizing an object or the other, the person also understands that he/she is visible because someone can see him/her. The eyes that meet with the eyes of the other prove that one is part of the world of the visible, just as one thinks that one is an extension of his/her mother until he/she sees himself/herself in front of a mirror. Berger gives a proper example:

If we accept that we can see that hill over there, we propose that from that hill we can be seen. The reciprocal nature of vision is more fundamental than that of spoken dialogue. And often dialogue is an attempt to verbalize this - an attempt to explain how, either metaphorically or literally, ‘you see things’, and a attempt to discover how ‘he sees things’.¹³¹

¹³⁰ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972), 7.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

Indeed, to question the gaze from a feminist perspective is also to question the dilemma of the spectators. This dilemma is referred to representations being cultural practices that produce meaning and construct "the woman" as a set of meanings.

Laura Mulvey develops the concept of the "Male Gaze," which helped crystallizing the representation of women in classic Hollywood cinema. She analyzes Hollywood cinema as a device, constructed through and for the male gaze. Mulvey places the notion of "*scopophilia*" (pleasure of watching) and how it is articulated within the narrative process at the center of the first analysis of cinema from a gender conscious point of view.

Mulvey, in her most important work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," shows how the female character is subjected to the triple male gaze: that of the male character, the camera (and therefore of the director), and that of the presumed male spectator. This triple masculine gaze implies an impossibility of identification, yet an obligation in a cinematographic visual process, for the viewer and spectator.

There are three different looks associated with cinema: that of the camera as first records the pro-film event that of the audience as it watches the final product, and that of the characters at each other within the screen illusion. (...) the structure of looking in narrative fiction film contains a contradiction in its own premises: the female image as a castration threat constantly endangers the unity of the diegesis and bursts through the world of illusion as an intrusive, static, one-dimensional fetish.¹³²

To sum up, Mulvey's article also shows that the gaze is far from being just an aesthetic issue; it is rather a political issue. The gaze is a crucial element for symbolism that structures the power relations between men and women, and among the masculine, the feminine and the entire spectrum. Since then, this founding text has been questioned and analyzed by many studies on gaze. These two notions will acquire fundamental

¹³² Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 834.

importance in this study to analyze how cinema structures masculinity and power relations with a heteronormative perspective.

3.3. Cinematic Narrative and Its Tools

In its unique way, cinema presents stories, creates meanings, asks questions, and conveys emotions to the audience. Indeed, there are some rules in the art of cinema as in all arts. Each narrative consists of a unique set of rules and creates a flow. A good narrative is intertwined with this flow, and it often does not let the audience realize that it consists of a set of rules. However, the narrative directs the audience; it is not as innocent as it seems while creating a new universe. Therefore, the narrative has and does not have a relation to reality. In this regard, the cinema with the narrative is an exceptional document that provides information about many elements that make it up.

In addition, a film, as a narrative, emerges in challenging conditions. These conditions may prevent the artist from revealing the art of cinema in the way the artist wants. This situation is precisely why cinema is social and political because it goes through some censorship practices, i.e., some laws that determine what can be shown and what cannot be shown. Such censorship is another factor that directs the audience. According to Oğuz Adanır:

Although cinema has endless possibilities in terms of richness of the narrative, it appears to be a crippled art branch due to the obstacles it encounters at the level of economic and political censorship. Therefore, cinematographic production is an art that has difficult creation conditions due to its economic dimensions, artistic and ideological structure.¹³³

Therefore, cinema can be used as an ideological device with its content and specific concepts and techniques that make up the cinematic language. Moreover, cinema can direct the masses through the language it uses and the discourse it creates. Films do

¹³³ Oğuz Adanır, *Sinemada Anlam ve Anlatım* (İstanbul: Alfa, 2003), 29. (my translation)

not just reflect meanings; and they build them. Thus, cinema is a cultural practice that constantly produces meanings about femininity and masculinity and reproduces myths about sexual differences.¹³⁴

Furthermore, the gaze and the discourse in cinema are conveyed to the spectator through narration. Some techniques are used while constructing the narrative. This study will briefly discuss these techniques that make the concept of gaze and discourse functional. Thus, it will discuss the firm links among gender, masculinity, and the cinematic narrative.

3.3.1. The Spectator and Identification

Identification, in simple terms, is someone putting him/herself in a character's shoes and feeling like that character. In this way, the person can experience the experiences and feelings of that character similarly. In the dictionary of film studies, Annette Kuhn defines identification as follows:

A merging of identities in the imagination. 2. That aspect of the experience of consuming a fictional work whereby the reader becomes caught up with the actions and motivations of a character or characters.¹³⁵

Edward Branigan explains the concept of identification as follows:

Popular usage of the term identification refers vaguely to a process whereby the beholder recognizes some 'similarity' between himself/herself and a character or situation in a film. Identification, here, is not an attitude but a process of forming and reforming one's identity in comparison with or against something else.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Anneke Smelik, *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), 7-10.

¹³⁵ Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1028.

¹³⁶ Edward Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984), 9-10.

Moreover, this experience of identification often begins with the consent of the spectator. Chatman defines the “illusion” that the spectator gets a feeling as if what is presented to her/ him through the narrator is happening in front of her/him:

Whether the narrative is experienced through a performance or through a text, the members of the audience must respond with an interpretation: they cannot avoid participating in the transaction. They must fill in gaps with essential or likely events, traits and objects which for various reasons have gone unmentioned.¹³⁷

Thus, by choosing to watch that film, the spectator is making an internal decision because the spectator, who is motivated enough to enter the universe of narrative is ready for the experience of identification.¹³⁸ In this context, some auteur directors, who use identification as a technique, form male and female characters in their films. This study will discuss how and where they direct the spectator's gaze.

The mirror is the place of primary identification.¹³⁹ For Branigan, thus, the spectator finds other identifications than her/his own body, for example, the fictional characters.¹⁴⁰ According to Mulvey, who explains the narcissistic pleasurable desire, there is a similarity between identifying the child with the perfect mirror image and the narcissistic pleasure of the spectator by identifying with the perfected human figure on the screen. Mulvey goes a step further in this theory and tries to establish a link between cinematic identifications and sexual differences.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 28.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ The theory of identification with the concept of mirror can be discussed further also in reference to the Lacanian theory, according to which the child sees herself/himself in the mirror as another person before identifying with her/his own gaze. This last identification, secondary for the child, is foundational for the cinema: the spectator must be reduced to a pure gaze for the illusion to occur. Although the Lacanian roots of the mirror-identification theory needs more attention, it goes beyond the scope of my thesis, hence I will be confining this part mostly to the references to Mulvey's theory of identification in cinema.

¹⁴⁰ Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema: A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*, 127.

¹⁴¹ Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” 836.

Mulvey, who regards identification with the camera as identification with the masculine character in mainstream Hollywood narratives, claims that the viewer is in the control of the masculine domination in this way. Mulvey discusses the woman's position both on the screen and as a spectator.

Thus both in *Only Angels Have Wings* and in *To Have and Have Not*, the film opens with the woman as object of the combined gaze of spectator and all the male protagonists in the film. She is isolated, glamorous, on display, sexualized. But as the narrative progresses she falls in love with the main male protagonist and becomes his property, losing her outward glamorous characteristics, her generalized sexuality, her show-girl connotations~ her eroticism is subjected to the male star alone. By means of identification with him, through participation in his power, the spectator can indirectly possess her too.¹⁴²

According to Arslan, one of the main concerns of the person, the spectator, is that she/he cannot see and express herself/himself in completion. Therefore, the audience needs the gaze and the voice of others. So, the source of this alienation is the look and the sound. Therefore, according to Arslan, cinema is not just a mirror in which the desired image the self, and others appears. In order to identify, it is necessary to accept the distance between the self and the desired image of the self. Identification in cinema is to know that you can never be someone else but to desire to be someone else. Just like the mirror, cinema has its limits.¹⁴³

While a film or a narrative is produced, often screenwriters or directors shape how the audience will perceive this narrative. However, the narrative is not just a script. A competent cinematographer, an editor, or an art assistant can have magical touches to enhance a film's narrative. When all these components are combined, the narrative emerges. Thus, the audience is directed throughout the cinematic discourse. For this study, it is critical to discuss how a narrative conducts the audience. Thus, I will discuss some techniques used in the narratives for the direction of the audience. To that

¹⁴² Ibid., 840.

¹⁴³ Umut Tümay Arslan, *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları: Türklük, Melankoli ve Sinema* (İstanbul: Metis, 2010), 13.

purpose, the following sections will examine in detail how point of view, subjective camera and the male gaze are used as techniques to direct the audience.

3.3.2. Point-of-View

Point of view is usually associated with the perception, and the view the narrative presents to the spectator. Before discussing the concept of perspective in-depth, it is helpful to underline that this concept is used in cinema studies in two ways. The first one is a point from which things are viewed, and the second one is the viewer's a mental position or the viewpoint.¹⁴⁴ These two meanings are intertwined. The first meaning is explained with a more technical approach, and it relates to camera movements. It is referred to as POV-shot. In the second sense, it refers to what is mental or metaphorical. The second meaning coincides with the concept of perspective in literature.

The point of view is used primarily as the narrator's voice in literature and then becomes important in cinema studies. The narration is conveyed to the spectator by the film characters through the point of view, focalization, and subjective camera. Such techniques have provided the opportunity for the development of entirely new narrative forms. In *A Dictionary of Film Studies*, Annette Kuhn writes:

Optical point of view or subjective camera, whereby a camera setup approximates the visual perspective of a protagonist or protagonists, creating a point-of-view (POV) shot. Optical point of view is embedded in cinematic narration through framing and editing, and especially via the eyeline match.¹⁴⁵

When we start with the technical meaning of the concept of perspective, one of the most common uses is “Point of View Shot.” The Point-of-view shot involves the spectator in cinema in the flow of the event. It determines their gaze. This shooting

¹⁴⁴ Seymour Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Cornell University Press: London, 1990), 139.

¹⁴⁵ Kuhn and Westwell, *A Dictionary of Film Studies*, 1281.

technique often limits the perspective of the story being told to them. This concept is explained in *Film Art: An Introduction*, an entire reference book for cinema studies:

A shot taken with the camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be, showing what the character would see; usually cut in before or after a shot of the character looking.¹⁴⁶

On the other hand, according to Chatman, it does not matter to say that a narrative is about the perception of its narrator. Narration is more of a presentation or a representation than an act of perception. It refers to conveying events and beings through words or images.¹⁴⁷ Edward Branigan also emphasizes that POV shoot is treated as a formal parameter that controls the use of images and words in the narrative.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, he defines the term point-of-view shot as “a shot in which the camera assumes the position of a subject in order to show us what the subject sees.”¹⁴⁹ According to this definition, the camera lens becomes the character’s eye. In other words, what the audience sees is the character’s approach to events and what they see. Because the spectator is placed in the spatial position of the character due to the point-of-view technique, and as a result, the spectator's approach becomes limited by the emotional capacity of this character. This is one of the ways, in which the narrative manipulates the spectator. For him,

The perception of space involves many complex issues in sensory psychology, bearing not only on the spatial perception of real viewers but also, by extension, on the construction of space and the potential construction of space by narrators/ observers 'in' the picture; that is, our perceptual abilities dictate what may be constructed for us.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004), 580.

¹⁴⁷ Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Coming to Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Cornell University Press: London, 1990), 142.

¹⁴⁸ Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema- A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

In short, POV is not just a technical issue that concerns cinema. Because what the spectator sees in the POV-shot is limited to what the character sees. So, it can be said that POV plays a critical role on its own in structuring the narrative.

Why is it important to think through whose eyes the narrative is followed? There are two answers to this question. First of all, the perspective of film aesthetics needs to be structured correctly. The phenomenon that the narrative wants to convey is given to the audience with this technique. A failure caused by the misuse of this technique is directly related to the effect of the film on the spectator. For Adanır:

The film is often unsuccessful in cases where the narrative style does not coincide with the perspective. In a sense, the works in which the POV-shot format overlaps the subject, and the maximum level are the most successful ones.¹⁵¹

The second is the privileged side of point of view-shot as a crucial technical language that plays a role in constructing subjectivity. As mentioned before, subjectivity, conveyed through a gaze, has an essential effect on identifying the spectator with the character. In *Film Art*, Bordwell and Thompson say that “the most straightforward way in which the film's narration controls our knowledge is through the numerous optical point-of-view (POV) shots employs.”¹⁵² So, examining the elements that dominate the identification process in the unique experience of cinema for the spectator is very important. Thus, we can discuss the performativity of masculinity in cinema and with which repetitions subjectivity is constructed.

3.3.3. Subjective Camera

Another essential technical tool used by the cinematic language is the subjective camera. David Bordwell sees this technique as one of the methods of adding a psychological depth to the information given during the transmission of the story.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Adanır, *Sinemada Anlam ve Anlatım*, 56. (my translation)

¹⁵² Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 389.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 214-215.

He describes using the subjective camera as the director's inviting the character to see what she/he sees through the character's eyes. For him, sometimes the camera, through its positioning and movements, invites us to see events through the eyes of a character.¹⁵⁴

With the subjective camera technique, the camera replaces the character and the spectator's eyes, so that it reflects the situation and emotion of the character to the spectator. In addition to this explanation, according to what Chatman wrote:

But if he (director) wishes, the director of the film can completely identify our vision with the character's, positioning his camera's lens not only alongside the character, but inside, literally behind his eyes. This is the so-called subjective camera technique, employed intermittently in many films.¹⁵⁵

Edward Branigan emphasizes that there are many layers of the narrative in a text. He defines the narrative of a character as *subjectivity*. This concept refers to the narrative laid out by the character in a narrative. The point-of-view shooting also helps to establish this narrative.

In the narrow sense, subjectivity will refer to the narration given by a character in the narrative, but it should be remembered that, in actuality, each successive level of narration implicates a new subject — a fictional or hypothetical perceiver — in an activity of seeing (e.g., listening, telling, displaying) an object (i.e., what is seen, heard, displayed). 'Subject' and 'object' are not fixed terms but indicative of a relationship between two elements.¹⁵⁶

The subjective camera is ultimately an illusion of subjectivity. While the spectator looks through the eyes of a character in the film, this further strengthens their participation in the story. With the subjective camera technique, the spectator can feel the experience of the actor's drunken or sick attitudes through her/his gaze.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 216.

¹⁵⁵ Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, 160.

¹⁵⁶ Branigan, *Point of View in the Cinema- A Theory of Narration and Subjectivity in Classical Film*, 2.

In short, with the appropriate camera angles, the audience can participate in emotion or in event, while a feeling of indifference to some events and emotions can be created.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, watching a film in the movie theatre can be defined as a common form of action and that this act brings sharing common feelings and beliefs. Identification through subjectivity has a social, not a personal, side. From this point of view, the experience the cinema audience provides through identification can turn into a common social behavior. This experience points out that with techniques such as the POV-shot and subjectivity, cinema can turn into a social habit that reproduces hegemonic masculinity, legitimizes masculine domination, and reproduces performative masculinities internalized by repetition.

3.3.4. Male Gaze and Mulvey's Account

The act of seeing, which is the nature of the eye, is as simple as it is innocent. However, looking has an intention. It is an eye movement directed towards a goal. Indeed, in her book *Cultural Studies and Cinema*, Kirel marks the distinction between seeing and looking, and between looking and gaze. Any act of looking that involves curiosity, pleasure, or purpose can regulate power relations. As a matter of fact, according to Orr, gaze, as a common model of seeing, functions as a cinematic form of will-to-power and a constant struggle for spiritual domination.¹⁵⁸ Here, the gaze is not a temporary substitute for power; it does not use violence on its object, that is, cinema. It creates a power domain in the face of regulations regarding cinema. In brief, when talking about power patterns, the act of looking and seeing turns into gaze. Now there is a purposeful situation in the act of looking. The gaze organizes the relationship between the person looking at and the thing being looked at.¹⁵⁹ According to Umut Tümay Arslan:

According to Umut Tümay Arslan:

¹⁵⁷ Mustafa Sözen, "Anlatı Mesafesi-Anlatı Perspektifi Kavramları, Sinematografik Anlatı ve Örnek Çözümlenmeler," *ZKÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 4, Sayı 8 (Bahar 2008): 133.

¹⁵⁸ John Orr, *Cinema and Modernity* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993), 89.

¹⁵⁹ Serpil Kirel, *Kültürel Çalışmalar ve Sinema* (İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2010), 123.

The gaze talks about the element that makes cinema cinema, the power of the film form. However, this dialogue between cinema and psychoanalysis connects cinema, which is the stage of the modern subject, to modern political thought and philosophy as much. In this sense, the discussion of view makes visible the power of the film form and the permeability between cinematic thinking and the design and concept world of modern thought. The gaze debate is not just a matter of film form but a matter of modern subjectivity.¹⁶⁰

Cinema satisfies the essential desire to look, which gives pleasure. Due to its structure, cinema prepares a suitable ground for experiencing this pleasure and the development of surveillance and voyeurism. According to Mulvey, this ground prepared by the cinema allows the sense of surveillance to turn into a narcissistic state. Mulvey relates this approach to Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. Mulvey says that the relationship the audience establishes with the image on the screen in cinema is similar to the relationship established with the ego in the mirror phase. According to her, cinema produces a power similar to a child, who has not yet acquired the sense of reality. The spatial arrangement of the cinema hall and the spectator's position in front of the screen are similar to the child's position in front of the mirror.

Nevertheless, it is crucial here that the fascination in looking is based on being separate/different from what is seen, i.e., on distance, and therefore the field of seeing is also the field of desire, which also requires a distance between the one who desires and what one desires. In other words, although looking at the screen and looking at the mirror is similar in one way, the identification provided by the cinema allows a temporary loss of the self for the spectator, albeit momentarily. Thus, it places the audience in a central and imaginary, transcendent position. In short, the feeling of forgetting experienced with the loss of the self is similar to the moment of recognizing the pre-subjectivity imagery. At the same time, cinema has the capacity to strengthen

¹⁶⁰ Umut Tümay Arslan, "Aynanın Sırları: Psikanalitik Film Kuramı," *Kültür ve İletişim • Culture & Communication* 12, no:1 (2009):16. (my translation)

the self through this identification. For Arslan, cinema makes the subject master of the gaze and produces the illusion of reality through the continuity of the image.¹⁶¹

While questioning why voyeurism in cinema is structured by men, Mulvey focuses on the cinematic and narrative techniques that provide this. According to her, the camera captures the masculine character from the optical and libidinal point of view. Thus, the spectator in cinema is directly and unconsciously identified with the masculine gaze and assumes a masculine identity as the spectator.¹⁶² Mulvey points out that this identification has always been about the hero, the man, who is at the center of the film, and that the woman is often seen as a passive threat, therefore, she is only watched.

Mulvey also discusses the relationship of film with society and says that film reflects society. Therefore, the male gaze in cinema proves the influence of the male-dominated society on cinema. This point of view also relates to psychoanalysis. Because woman has no phallus, Mulvey claims that the heroine's look is seen as incomplete and worthless. According to this Freudian theory, the woman is seen as castrated because she does not have a penis:

Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. She turns her child into the signifier of her own desire to possess a penis (the condition, she imagines, of entry into the symbolic). Either she must gracefully give way to the word, the Name of the Father and the Law, or else struggle to keep her child down with her in the half-light of the imaginary.¹⁶³

Cinema offers the perfect space for the forbidden voyeuristic gaze because the viewer is in a dark place like the mother's womb, almost alone. In the Freudian theory, woman represents desire and castration. Therefore, there is a tension in her presence and her

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 17-19.

¹⁶² Smelik, *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*, 10.

¹⁶³ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 834.

'gaze' can be threatening. While man has control and an active role, woman is reduced to an icon and to an erotic object, because she is a threat due to her difference.¹⁶⁴

According to Mulvey, a woman is an erotic object in cinema both for the characters in the story and for the audience. According to her, the techniques used in classic Hollywood movies put women in a passive position. Mulvey criticizes the shallowness of the female roles in these narratives. In order to change the position of women in the cinema, she advocates the necessity of cinema to avoid being a voyeur. Thus, women are not established as an object of pleasure. Thus, the woman can be emancipated from the limited role assigned to her in the cinema.

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can ~ said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.¹⁶⁵

Hollywood has positioned women as the object of male desires, as Mulvey emphasizes. In Hollywood cinema, a woman is often portrayed as a passive character, who cannot make rational decisions. In addition, women are also portrayed as rule-breakers, who violate the boundaries of legitimacy, as the fetish of male desires and the passive verifier of male power.¹⁶⁶ Smelik also states that the male gaze can only function at the expense of the representation of the female character being the image, which is objectified and fetishized. Because of this link between erotic pleasure and sexual violence, the cinematic nature of the male gaze can be disturbing. In this sense, the film studies can provide insight into the cinematic representation of those, who cannot be represented, such as the ones who are exposed to the traumatic experience of rape. For

¹⁶⁴ Jill Neldes, "Representation of Gender and Sexuality," in *An Introduction to Film Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), 273.

¹⁶⁵ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 837.

¹⁶⁶ Douglas Kellner and Michael Ryan, *Politik Kamera*, trans. Elif Özsayar (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 1997), 219.

Smelik, the vicissitudes of desire and fantasy can be traced through the workings of the cinematic point of view, both literally and metaphorically.¹⁶⁷

Doane states that cinema gives the female spectator a position relatively far from a distance necessary to interpret images and narratives. Cinema offers the female spectator two options beyond accepting the male position. The first is “the masochism of over-identification,” and the second is “the narcissism entailed in becoming one’s own object of desire.”¹⁶⁸ She adds that:

The emphasis on procedures of masquerade and veiling is an attempt to analyze the extent to which these discourses ally women with deception, secretiveness, a kind of anti-knowledge or, on the other hand, situate them as privileged conduits to a—necessarily complex and even devious—truth.¹⁶⁹

For Doane, femininity is a mask that can be worn or removed. Therefore, the masquerade's resistance to patriarchal positioning lies in its rejection of the production of femininity.¹⁷⁰ Dealing with the female spectatorship in terms of masking, Doane states that woman can never be a subject by using femininity as a mask and that she can make a difference between the subject and the represented femininity thanks to the mask. Doane argues that for the female audience, masking is not enough to disrupt the masculine structure of the gaze and emphasizes that in some cases, woman cannot go beyond a transvestite position.

The transvestite adopts the sexuality of the other—the woman becomes a man in order to attain the necessary distance from the image. Masquerade, on the other hand, involves a realignment of femininity, the recovery, or more accurately, simulation, of the missing gap or distance. To masquerade is to manufacture a lack in the form of a certain distance between oneself and one’s image.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ Smelik, *And the Mirror Cracked: Feminist Cinema and Film Theory*, 83-84.

¹⁶⁸ Doane, *Femmes Fatales*, 71.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

However, Tania Modleski criticizes Mulvey's ideas on male gaze for being monolithic. In the introduction of her book, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*,¹⁷² Modleski makes a critical comment on theories about the position of female spectators. The theory of feminist cinema offers very limited positions for the viewer, but according to her, identifying women in cinema is much more complicated. Throughout her work, Modleski is looking for an expression of a uniquely female desire or a better understanding of the victimization of women. For her:

Hitchcock reveals a fascinated and fascinating tension, an oscillation, between attraction to the feminine—his identification with women [...] and a corresponding need to erect, sometimes brutally, a barrier to the femininity which is perceived as all-absorbing.¹⁷³

According to her, the viewer is always brought into question to date with a double desire: on the one hand, far from being masochistic, cinema identifies the passive object with the woman, and on the other hand the active subject with the man. That is to say, on the one hand, the male gaze makes the woman an object of desire by defending patriarchal values to the extreme, but at the same time, its presence is fascinating, although it disturbs her. In this case, these films always risk being unsettled by women whose power is fascinating as well as seemingly limitless. The intense fascination and identification with femininity thus indicate a deep ambivalence face to face femininity. This approach is where Modleski points out a third possibility. Viewers can learn about men's "secrets", the "dead ends" of the patriarchal regime, and they can come to know the impact of female victimization in films. Despite this, what is surprising is that women treated with considerable violence do not show some resistance to patriarchal assimilation. So, for Modleski, the real danger is not to undergo the violence resulting from the unbearable fear of otherness but rather to lose this otherness which is precisely the basis of her feminine character. In short, as Modleski concludes:

¹⁷² Modleski, *Hitchcock and Feminist Theory: The Women Who Knew Too Much*, 1-15.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 39.

Moreover, I believe we do need to destroy “man-centered vision” by beginning to see with our own eyes—because for so long we have been not only fixed in its sights, but also forced to view the world through its lens.¹⁷⁴

3.4. Masculinity, Crisis and Cinema

Over the time, the representation of different masculinities and the construction of masculinity have become significant topics in film studies. Following Mulvey's work, studies on the representations of masculinity or masculinities in cinema take more place. Indeed, most of these studies attempt to apply some of the leading feminist theories to cinema studies, especially in the analyses of representation, and to masculinity studies more in detail. Rather than focusing solely on gender-based debates, many authors apply such theoretical tools more specifically on the problem of masculinity in film and media studies.¹⁷⁵

Neale states in his article “Masculinity as Spectacle” that Mulvey's theory and many discussions on gender and cinema focus on the representation of women. For Neale, both in women's movement and in LGBTI's movement, there is an essential area in popular cinema where the images and functions of heterosexual masculinity are left unquestioned and undiscussed. Until the 1980s, heterosexual masculinity has been discussed seldom in this way.¹⁷⁶ However, he admits that Mulvey's theory opened a door for discussion of masculinity in cinema.

Neale emphasizes that the debates that argue that mainstream cinema represents women and creates the image of women through the male perspective must be carried forward. Yet, men and the male images have been rarely studied in the same way.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷⁵ Tim Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 107.

¹⁷⁶ Steve Neale, “Prologue: Masculinity as Spectacle,” in *Screening the Male Exploring the Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), 9.

Woman are seen as a problem, a source of tension, a lack, and another; men are not seen like that:

Where women are investigated, men are tested. Masculinity, as an ideal, at least, is implicitly known. Femininity is, by contrast, a mystery. This is one of the reasons why the representation of masculinity, both inside and outside the cinema, has been so rarely discussed. Hopefully, this article will contribute toward such a discussion.¹⁷⁷

As Mulvey emphasized in his article, femininity in cinema is identified with passivity and masculinity with activity. This situation reproduces the binary opposition between men and women in gender discourse by naturalizing it. Masculinity is associated with activity, surveillance, sadism, fetishism, and narrative. On the contrary, femininity is defined as passivity, exhibitionism, narcissism, and spectacle. Thus, the integrity and the stability of the male subjectivity become an indisputable fact. Cinema reinforces the illusion that masculinity is destiny that comes from creation. It contributes to preserving the idea that masculinity is not a social or cultural construct.¹⁷⁸

*Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.*¹⁷⁹

Cohan and Hark also underline that film theory often demonstrates men as active. On the one hand, regards with action, voyeurism, sadism, fetishism, and story, on the other hand, woman is passive. Cinema theory associates women with exhibitionism, masochism, narcissism, and image.¹⁸⁰ For Cohan and Hark, however, the image of the man on the screen is at least as dangerous as the image of the woman in terms of representation. For, cinema also places the men on the screen, hides them behind the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁷⁹ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 47.

¹⁸⁰ Neale, "Prologue: Masculinity as Spectacle," 2.

curtain, uses it as a screen to ensure gender ideology, and checks the appropriateness of the socially unacceptable cultural constructions of masculinity.

The male image on the cinema screen is therefore as significant a representational stake as the female; and the essays we have collected for this volume examine that imagery from a variety of perspectives to look at its complexity, its historicity, and (as our subtitle recognizes) its multiplicity.¹⁸¹

Moreover, studies have increased rapidly since the 1980s focus on the relationship between masculinity and cinema from different angles. As Edwards states, studies on the cinematic representation of masculinity discuss representation analysis and the political dimension of representation in identity politics, question representation and reality, text and context. It tries to reveal the contradictory and constructed features of the representation of masculinity in mainstream cinema. It aims to focus on the relationship between certain forms of masculinity by discussing the link between gender and cinema genres.¹⁸² Thus, cinema and masculinity studies reveal the various representations of men and masculinities and their meanings put forward by these representations.

I think, still clear that the questions raised remain entirely relevant to social science and sociological discussions of identity. Consequently, this separation of issues and perspectives on the question of masculinity is ultimately as false as it is unhelpful and it is time for social scientists to take the subject of masculinity, not only in its institutional and practiced forms but in terms of its media representations and consumption, seriously.¹⁸³

According to Nelmes, masculinity in our society may seem natural, ordinary, and universal. The state of masculinity is in the nature of man. This belief is constantly repeated in the media, especially in Hollywood movies' narratives, through stories, sounds, and images. However, beyond the authentic image and certainty of masculinity

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁸² Edwards, *Culture of Masculinity*, 121-122.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 122.

portrayed in all these films, masculinity is more fragile, less stable, and easier than previously thought.¹⁸⁴

On the other hand, as Beshoff and Griffin expressed, the representation of ideal masculinity, that is, hegemonic masculinity changes over time. As the hegemonic standards of gender change, the images of men in cinema, also change. Thus, the image of masculinity varies throughout the history of cinema. The political, social, and economic situation of a country impacts that country's cinema. Hence different representations of masculinity emerge in the history of cinema.

Although patriarchal dominance has been maintained throughout the history of American cinema, the masculine ideal has shifted over time. What constitutes a “real man” has varied throughout film history, as hegemonic standards of gender have evolved and been renegotiated.¹⁸⁵

The Hollywood studio system, which worries only about financial concerns, is famous for working with the star actors, who are associated known with the characters they play. Following this, stronger images of masculinity are created with the crisis of masculinity in the Depression years. Then, cinema raises topics such as military service, leadership, military training and veterans of World War II or the Vietnam War. On the one hand, the male characters take place in the melodramatic narratives as the narrative structure changes due to the female movements. On the other hand, hyper-masculine and violent men emerge as a reaction to this movement. In short, as the meanings attributed to masculinity change, the cinematic equivalents of masculinity representations also change.

As hard as Hollywood films and the rest of American culture at that time tried to resolve these problems, the tensions increased, heralding a larger crisis that would necessitate yet another hegemonic renegotiation of gender roles.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Nelmes, *An Introduction to Film Studies*, 285.

¹⁸⁵ Henry M. Beshoff and Sean Griffin, *America on Film Representing Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality at the Movies* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 543-544.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 577.

According to Arslan, male-oriented films offer the audience fantasies in which masculine anxiety is relieved. There is an excess of representation of masculinity and male violence in these films. This excess shows the desire of the man to break the bond with the mother, the woman.¹⁸⁷

In the following period, studies focus on the fact that masculinity is drifting into a crisis. Militarism fails, and women become much more visible in the public sphere. After this hegemonic myth of the male warrior was shaken, and feminism started to be associated with sexual liberation, a new image of the father character appeared in cinema. Now cinema supports the view that men are responsible for domestic work at home.

Studies claim that masculinity was assumed to be on that was complete before is only in the process of transformation and is now in crisis.¹⁸⁸ For Donna Phill Powrie, Ann Davies, and Bruce Babington analyze the transformation of the male characters in cinema. They talk about how the behavior of male characters has changed along with the development of technology. They discuss the representation of the new male characters, who are parents and take care of their children, or even parents who cannot have children. According to their writings, all these transformations, from the periods when the dominant and hegemonic male representation of Hollywood cinema to queer and alternative representations of masculinity, are essential for masculinity studies.¹⁸⁹

In film studies, the concept of masculinity crisis is discussed from two different perspectives. With the first perspective, some researchers say that the assumption of the crisis of masculinity refers to a moment when masculinity was previously

¹⁸⁷ Umut Tümay Arslan, *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil? Yeşilçam'da Erkelik ve Mazlumluk* (İstanbul: Metis, 2005), 62.

¹⁸⁸ Ryan and Kellner, *Politik Kamera*, 227-229.

¹⁸⁹ Bruce Babington, Ann Davies and Phill Powrie, "Introduction," in *The Trouble with Men: Masculinities in European and Hollywood Cinema* (London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2004), 2-5.

"complete." According to this perspective, the impact of recent social changes on male identity has no meaningful significance.

The second perspective looks at why the values, the behaviors, and the rules grounding a hegemonic position for the dominant heterosexual male subject to be in begin to be questioned. They find the cause of the crisis of masculinity in economic depression, technological development, feminist and LGBTI movements. The crisis of masculinity can be addressed in this context. However, it should not be forgotten that this crisis is limited. It points to the loss of privileges. For example, Cook and Bernink, in their articles discussing male studies in cinema, say that these studies generally focus on male identity as a crisis narrative.¹⁹⁰ According to Chantal Chaudhuri, in the past masculinity was perceived to be in balance, today it is seen as something lost. Yet, they also emphasize that this state of crisis is not linked to current social changes.¹⁹¹

Solomon Godeau, one of these theorists, states that, like capitalism, masculinity is always in a crisis. According to him, what needs to be questioned must be whether hegemonic masculinity has succeeded in reproducing itself in the historical process or not. Another critical point for him is the transformations in male fantasies that occur in different historical periods, and the situations that cause one of these fantasies to become more privileged than the other.¹⁹² For Calvin Thomas:

To leave masculinity unstudied, to proceed as if masculinity were somehow not a contingent form of gender/sexuation, would be to leave it naturalized, and thus to make it necessary, to reproduce contingency as necessity, to protect masculinity from change.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Mieke Bernink and Pam Cook, *The Cinema Book* (London: BFI, 2005), 362.

¹⁹¹ Shohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 105.

¹⁹² Solomon Godeau, "Male Trouble," in *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), 70-74.

¹⁹³ Calvin Thomas, *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan2008), 20.

Likewise, Tania Modleski argues that male power operates through cycles of crisis and solutions. She criticizes feminist theorists for their optimistic approach in ignoring the reproduction mechanisms provided by the cycles of crisis. For her:

We need to consider the extent to which male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it.¹⁹⁴

Another study aimed at understanding the crisis of masculinity is in Jill Nelmes' article. In this article, he discusses gender relations in cinema and analysis methods. Nelmes sees the crisis of masculinity as an anxiety of masculinity. Nelmes makes a comparison between 1980 and 1990. According to this comparison, the crisis of masculinity indicates concepts such as social and cultural uncertainty experienced in the transition between these periods.¹⁹⁵

... in some senses critical of the white middle class masculinity which has occupied the default position in mainstream US culture, they reinforce the primacy of white males in making sense of, and responding to, a perceived crisis. Here when white masculinity seems most under fire it hogs the ground.¹⁹⁶

As a result, many debates on the concept of the crisis of masculinity benefit from various cinematic and social codes. The common idea in these debates is that the crisis of masculinity poses both progressive and reactionary identification objects in terms of the transformation of gender relations. Regardless of the crisis being destructive or constructive for the possibility of a non-hegemonic masculinity, it nevertheless presupposes that, from the very start, there was an ideal of masculinity, which failed due to the crisis. This presupposition risks putting the research on masculinity into a vicious circle: “men hold primary power because of their instincts,” and “if this power

¹⁹⁴ Tania Modleski, *Feminism without Women: Culture and Criticism in a 'Postfeminist Age'*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 7.

¹⁹⁵ Jill Nelmes “Gender and Film” in *An Introduction to Film Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 288-289.

¹⁹⁶ Jude Davis and Carol R. Smith, *Ethnicity and Sexuality in Contemporary American Film* (Edinburgh: BAAS Paperback Series, 1997), 229.

is taken away from them, they will go into crises”. Even the term crisis can be deceptive, as if we are supposed to think that masculinity should be hegemonic in its “previous” and “normal” situation. In addition, we should not ignore that masculinity is indeed produced as a crisis and that external conditions affect the visibility of this crisis. In this context, we can say that the masculinity crisis reproduces masculinity as a repetitive and performative act.

3.5. Performativity, Performance and Cinema

Walsh sees the discourse of the masculinity crisis as a kind of cultural performance. He emphasizes that the performative masculinity crisis functions to reproduce male dominance. He carries on the discussion of feminist theorists on this issue. Walsh's goal is to bring together the basic concepts of psychoanalytic theory, queer theory, and Butler's views on the performativity of gender, for the interpretation of masculinity crisis as a performative situation. For him, the crisis is not an end in itself. It is a transitional period that allows the temporarily dissolution norm to be reproduced and re-established.¹⁹⁷ In Walsh's words:

To think of masculinity as an embodied, social, and political domain in which crisis might be performed is to conceive of gender and sexuality as a performative arena of sorts, where ostensible disorder does not simply signal the radical dissolution of form but rather its reorganization.¹⁹⁸

Walsh analyzes some examples of the problematic representations of masculinity in various media, such as films, theaters, or public performances. Walsh states that masculinity is constantly articulated with problematic positions, such as bearing on nationality, and underlines that this should be interpreted as an effort to secure identity. In a sense, this points to the comfort zone of masculinities. He examines that how the

¹⁹⁷ Fintan Walsh, *Male Trouble: Masculinity and the Performance of Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 8.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

heteronormative white masculinity is disturbed by its inherited claims of authenticity and naturalness, repeatedly compelled to recuperate and reassert its terms.¹⁹⁹

According to Walsh, some crises like the masculinity crises, which constitute the building elements of social, economic, and political systems, constitute also subjectivity.²⁰⁰ Walsh points out that the identity of male gender is never stable; concepts associated with gendered manners are continuously redefined and negotiated. It indicates that the processes of reproducing masculinity follow the traumas of national crises or male subjectivity. Masculinity is reproduced through the performative masculinity. According to Walsh, this crisis generates, produces and conducts masculinity. Walsh adds that there is nothing new in the masculinity crisis at the turn of the 21st-century.

However, at the turn of the twenty-first century, this trouble has been foregrounded and congealed in a proliferation of performative practices that might be seen to signal if not an ontological crisis, then something of a creative impasse.²⁰¹

According to Butler, gender's being performativity causes the illusion that there is an inner essence of gender, and performativity reproduces backwards gender patterns. It does this through the ritualized repetitions which impose the cultural heterosexuality. On the other hand, Butler emphasizes that it is not enough to say that gender is performed or that the meaning of gender can be derived from its performance. It would be a mistake to reduce the psychic workings of gender to the concrete performance of gender. Indeed, what is performed can be understood by a reference to what cannot be performed or to the one whose performance is ignored. Here they give the example of the drag queen.²⁰²

What drag does expose, however, is that in the "normal" constitution of gender presentation, the gender that is performed is constituted by a set of disavowed

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 10.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 8.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 9.

²⁰² Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 144.

attachments, identifications which constitute a different domain of the "unperformable." Indeed, what constitutes the sexually unperformable may—but need not—be performed as gender identification. ... It is in this sense, then, that what is most apparently performed as gender is the sign and symptom of a pervasive disavowal.²⁰³

Butler states that performativity should not be confused with performance. Performativity is neither a play nor theatrical self-presentation nor is simply performance. Performativity can be understood through a process of repetition, the regulated and limited reiteration of norms.

This iterability implies that “performance” is not a singular “act” or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance.²⁰⁴

According to Reeser, the repetition of masculinity makes no sense because it is precisely this repetition that reveals the hollowness of masculinity. In this context, Reeser questions why masculinity should be practiced and be performed again and again. According to him, Butler's answer to this question would be that there is no inner essence behind a man's sexuality, that there is no nature of masculinity. Masculinity needs to keep repeating gendered acts to hide threats that might appear due to gender absence or emptiness. Reeser sets up a hypothetical football player character and gives an example of this character's struggle with other football players throughout the film to convince the audience and himself that masculinity is natural and necessary.²⁰⁵ Reeser adds that:

Masculine performativity might function in a seemingly coherent way as it is what Butler calls a "reiteration of a norm or set of norms" that "conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. While a performative act reiterates gender norms, a performance in this sense resists them. Texts with images related to

²⁰³ Ibid., 147.

²⁰⁴ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 59-60.

²⁰⁵ Reeser, “Sexing Masculinity,” 83-84.

theatricality or clothing might be revelatory of how gender is performed, and theatrical or clothing metaphors might serve as symbols of gender performativity.²⁰⁶

Peberdy, who wrote on concepts of masculinity, performativity, and cinema, thinks in continuity with Butler. Just like Butler's thoughts, according to Peberdy, performance depends on the control and manipulation of the performer. However, performativity begins and ends outside the performer. Therefore, gender is a social construction. Gender is a series of repetitive actions that are continuously performed until it is perceived to be constructed. However, according to Donna, the performance of characters in cinema or on screen blurs the distinction between performance and performativity. For her, the performance in film involves the presentation of actions, made up of specific gestures and mannerisms, but also involves the presentation of identity and social roles themselves informed by cultural expectations.²⁰⁷ So, the performance of sexuality in cinema is more than the role of the character. It includes more than actions and signs.

According to Peberdy, the absence of a true gender is fundamental to evaluating masculinity as performative. Because gender images, which are claimed to be true or normative, are constructed and disseminated through the media. Moreover, the construction process of these gender images is masked by words such as “traditional,” “natural,” and “instinctive,” creating the perception that it is an innate reality. On the other hand, Peberdy says to consider the distinction between performances that reveal the construction of masculinity and performances that mask them and spread true masculinity. For her:

Images of masculinity that go against the idea of a masculine norm thus become all the more intriguing. Butler's theory of performativity is useful to the extent that it considers all masculinity to be a performance and yet there is a problem in seeing each

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 88.

²⁰⁷ Donna Peberdy, “Politics Is Theater: Performance, Sexuality and Milk,” in *Millennial Masculinity Men in Contemporary American Cinema*, ed. Timothy Shary (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2013), 54.

and every performance of masculinity as an attempt to reinforce patriarchal dominance.²⁰⁸

Reeser says that when the techniques or mechanisms of masculinity emerge with over-determination, gender is exposed as performativity. In other words, if a man behaves more masculine than expected, or if the masculinity is shown too much or too well, the gender performativity becomes clarified to the spectator. For Reeser, in order to hide masculinity's performativity, a man may have to limit his performance and contain it as non-excessive. I might say the same about the over-repetition of masculinity. In addition, masculinity performance can emerge the anxiety of realizing ideal masculinity and reproduce the masculinity challenge.²⁰⁹ It is also possible to talk about a masculinity performance in the opposite direction of the extreme masculinity performance. According to Peberdy, doing nothing creates contrast in film performance. In the absence of action, it takes a specific skill and effort to convey the situation's effect and show the state of "being" instead of "doing." In this sense, the acting performance of the actor gains importance as the signifier of masculinity.²¹⁰

Performance is at the center of film studies in terms of both acting and off-screen performances.²¹¹ It can be said that the performance refers to the actors, and the gender performativity refers to the film characters. The masculinity's performativity of male characters who meet the spectator in cinema, as mentioned before, vary according to the film's genre, its ideological background, its historical period, and the actors' performance. For example, male characters in action films or comedy films are expected to show different performances of masculinity. Peberdy says that in any performance, the meaning changes according to the performer, to the agency. In this case, it is crucial that the actor whose male performance is watched is a star player or

²⁰⁸ Peberdy, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema*, 28-29.

²⁰⁹ Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*, 89.

²¹⁰ Peberdy, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema*, 53-54.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

not, as it may change the meaning. Because a famous actor often takes part in similar narratives as the carrier of a particular masculinity performance.

Crucially, the identity of the performer is even more distinct when the actor playing the historical figure is a star. In any performance, the meanings change according to who is performing. For example, Richard Nixon has been played by five different actors and each bringing different meanings to the role via performance style, idiosyncrasies, and their reading of the character and context. At the same time, the performance is read differently depending on the actor or star; the more knowledge we have about an actor, whether textual or extratextual, the more such knowledge informs out interpretation and reading of the screen performance.²¹²

For Reeser, the term performance indicates that there is no fixed and original form behind gender. Even while performative action repeats gender norms, the performance can resist them. The male actor playing another man can make the arbitrary nature of masculinity visible by changing masculinities; it can prove that masculinity is performative.²¹³

By virtue of performing as another kind of man, he may be showing that masculinity is literally performative or, alternately, his ability to perform in different ways may be part of his overall performance and give the sense that his ability to adapt is part of his gender subjectivity.²¹⁴

As mentioned in the previous section, one of the important points that brings the gendered performances of male characters together in film studies is the crisis of masculinity. The question of crisis has taken an important place in cinema since the 90's. The masculinity crisis, which has become an often-repeated concept, emerges whenever the definition of masculinity is tested and discussed.²¹⁵ Moreover, gender performativity is imitative. With its relation to power and norms, gender is not fixed or given; on the contrary, it reveals that it is fluid and can potentially change and transform. According to Peberdy, the term "crisis" usually refers to moments of

²¹² Peberdy, "Politics Is Theater," 61.

²¹³ Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*, 88.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Peberdy, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema*, 4-5.

masculine insecurity, instability, and uncertainty, while "anxiety" refers to specific manifestations, performances, and representations of masculinity. Also, the crisis has a stereotypical meaning; *angst* is a more constructive term, making it possible to explore the details of performance rather than just discussing the concept:

Angst is clearly distinguished from both fear and crisis in referring to human emotion; while fear and crisis are predominantly defined by external factors, and crisis is a collectively received moment, angst is internal and individual.²¹⁶

Scholars like Peberdy and Tasker²¹⁷ examine the crisis and the anxiety among different male bodies. What brings these differences together at a common point is the masculinity performance. The Masculinity performance, according to Peberdy, refers to men, who perform the codes of masculinity. On the one hand, it shows the performative nature of normative masculinity. On the other hand, it reveals the inability to present normative masculinity convincingly.²¹⁸ In other words, performing the codes of masculinity reveals the performative construction of masculinity and shows that gender can be considered in the context of success and failure.

4. MASCULINTY CRISIS AND TURKISH CINEMA

4.1. Towards a New Cinema of Turkey: An Overview of Turkish Cinema after 1990

To have a better understanding of the place of men in Turkish cinema we need to look at its evolving history in Turkish cinema. Hence, in the following section, I will summarize the history of Turkish cinema with the direction of focusing on the representations of male identities and masculinity in Turkish cinema.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

²¹⁷ Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993).

²¹⁸ Peberdy, *Masculinity and Film Performance: Male Angst in Contemporary American Cinema*, 9.

The earliest examples of cinema in Turkey appear in Pera, which was almost home exclusively to foreigners and minorities of the country, at the time, i.e., towards the second half of the 19th century. However, the official birth of Turkish cinema counts as 1923, with the proclamation of the Republic, which opts for a deep modernization and generously encourages a favorable cultural policy for creativity and artistic expression.²¹⁹ In the 1930s, cinema continues to develop in parallel with theater. In the 1940s, a conflict emerges between actors in the theatre and filmmakers who want to make cinema an autonomous art. Little by little, cinema distances itself from theater to secure a style of its own, by being inspired by different movements in the European aesthetics.

In the 1950s, the film production had significantly increased. In the 1960s, the filmmaking volume expands due to the increase in filmmakers, producers, and audience members in parallel. For these reasons, the sixties are considered to be the golden age of Turkish cinema. In addition, the 1961 pulse helped to revive the artistic creation. Thus, the commercialization process of Turkish films starts with the period of the Yeşilçam. According to Arslan, the term Yeşilçam cinema describes a form that emerged during the popularization process of cinema in Turkey that started in the 1950s.²²⁰ Many of these films lack artistic values, do not give new experiences or different excitement to the spectators, and do not offer new ideas. The spectator remains usually in a vicious cycle of similar stories.

Turkey becomes one of the three countries producing the most films globally, with approximately three hundred films per year. According to Arslan, popular cinema is always full of images containing collective concerns, for example Yeşilçam of the 1970s. Images in the narratives of this period also often refer to such desires and

²¹⁹ Aliénor Ballangé, “Une histoire du cinéma turc,” *Séquences*, 267 (Summer 2010): 32.

²²⁰ Arslan, *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil? Yeşilçam'da Erkelik ve Mazlumluk*, 29.

concerns, moments of collective unrest, anxiety, and desires about the consequences of modernization and capitalism.²²¹

In short, the rapid growth of cinema is strongly connected to the social phenomena and changes of the time. In particular, migration to big cities and urbanization explain the enormous increase and success in cinema. Thus, people watch these films that refer to their own lives through cinema, which also becomes a means for escaping from the worries of the daily life. In addition, the films of the period focus on the social class conflict that created the opposition between the East and the West. In this context, the directors describe conflicts in their films such as migration from the rural to urban, tell the stories of those who stay in the countryside trying to keep up with the city, the tradition and modernity. Most narratives in this period are based on conflicts, from migration, family relationships to romantic relationships.

In the seventies, we observe a decline in the production of films. The economic crisis, the oppressive atmosphere just before and after the coup (September 12, 1980), as well as the emergence of television become factors that drive the public away from the movie theaters. Thus, erotic films began to be shown in the cinema with the hope of attracting especially male audiences to the movie theaters. These films are an important part of Turkish cinematographic history. However, the films produced also in the successful period from 1978 to 1982 have political concerns. For example, Yılmaz Güney's films, described as highly realistic and political, are highly accepted as people's voices.²²²

Overall, after 80's, cinema no longer focuses on social problems and injustices. Indeed, the "offshore media project" and the Foreign Investment Law give rise to significant movie companies, major American distributors such as Warner Bros and UIP in

²²¹ Ibid., 10.

²²² Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 116-117.

Turkey. Obviously, the audience was fascinated by the Hollywood films that later led to a decline in Turkey's film production. It is a decline of the national cinema facing American pressure and limited budgets.

In the second half of the 1990s, the new wave of directors and a new era emerged. In this period, cinema presents an entirely different narrative, i.e., aesthetically, technically, and politically different in terms of reflecting the society. The cinema of this period seeks new economic, aesthetic, and thematic models in the interpretation of Turkey's national and personal identity in the modern world. Thus, this new cinema focuses on the common theme: survival in the chaos of the city and issues of national, social, religious, political, and sexual identity. According to Asuman Suner, this thematic fixation can be interpreted as a response to the growing concern in Turkish society about the identity question arising from the neoliberal policies of the 1980s, which at the same time contribute to technological reforms, particularly in intelligence and communication sectors.²²³

With this new era, while cinema becomes more creative, personal and relevant to the realities of the day, in Turkish cinema we see two different currents: i) purely commercial productions, that is, popular cinema aiming to please the audience and earn money, and ii) the cinema of auteur directors who are also known world-wide. The first current is dominated by populist comedies rather than the famous melodrama of the past. The second current is dominated by filmmakers and directors, such as Yeşim Ustaoglu, Zeki Demirkubuz, Derviş Zaim, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Serdar Akar, and Reis Çelik who try to overcome the limits of mainstream cinema economically, ideologically, and aesthetically. With them, we see the re-birth of a political cinema, which no longer hesitates to tackle many discordant subjects head-on.²²⁴ In this context, films from this period such as *Bekleme Odası* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2003), *İz*

²²³ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 180.

²²⁴ Aliénor Ballangé, "Une histoire du cinéma turc," *Séquences*, 33.

(Yeşim Ustaoglu, 1994) and *Uzak* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 2002) are some examples of "New Turkish Cinema" or "Independent Cinema" or even "Post-Yeşilçam Cinema".

According to Dönmez:

Film-school graduates or products of the traditional apprentice master system, the filmmakers of this new vitality are familiar with the national cinematic tradition, but they have also had the opportunity to study the cinema of the West, not only the theory and the aesthetics, but also alternative modes of production and exhibition.²²⁵

Their low-budget films generally appear like a silent rebellion against the hegemony of Hollywood Cinema. These auteurs, whose works are diverse in form, still converge at a fundamental point: searching for authenticity and sincerity in reflecting their society.

The new Turkish independent cinema, created by the independent directors or auteurs, is different from the classical popular cinema. It is not shaped according to the audience's expectations; it has no purpose of being popular. These films examine the problems of the individual, who is a part of society. These individuals are ordinary. Therefore, these films, in a sense, reproduce the reality; they deal with the lives of ordinary people, and remind us that these people also exist in society. In addition, these independent directors shoot the film with a minimalist approach. The cast consists of unknowns and amateurs. The films' budgets are low, and therefore some disruptions are observed in the films from time to time.²²⁶

According to Ulusay, in the 1990s, in many films men were at the center of the narratives. This cinema, dominated by men from its producers to its directors, comes right after the "women's films" of the previous period and points to a new gender crisis regarding male identity and masculinity.²²⁷ According to Kabadayı, these films discuss

²²⁵ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 180.

²²⁶ Nigar Pösterki, *1990 Sonrası Türk Sineması 1990-2005* (İstanbul: Es Yayınları, 2005), 50.

²²⁷ Nejat Ulusay, "Erkek Filmleri"nin Yükselişi ve Erkeklik Krizi," *Toplum ve Bilim Dergisi*, Sayı:101, 148.

İstanbul, 2004, s. 144

the personal problems of male characters more. Indeed, these male characters reflect the insecurity in society, the inability to feel belonging, and the inadequacy of the laws. They are the products of an era in which the strong put pressure on the weak one.²²⁸ In short, the male characters in Turkish cinema, especially in the independent cinema from the 1990s until today, point to problematic and sickly men, who do not belong anywhere. For Kabadayı, male characters, male characters, who represent cultural image of the uncertainty of the future and do not have their own lives, are also symbols of the country that cannot protect its future.²²⁹

4.2. Intellectuals in Masculinity Crisis: Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz's Cinema

As mentioned in the previous section, masculinity and the construction of male identity in Turkish cinema after 1990 are very important in the narratives of both popular and independent films. This construction process allows the reproduction of the values of hegemonic masculinity as well as masculinity. It also shows itself in a crisis with the social, economic, and cultural conditions of the period. In this sense, masculinity becomes debatable and questionable.

According to Oktan, these films often feature the irreplaceable loss of masculinity, unproven masculinities, and men who cannot overcome these losses. These characters in loss of power, on the one hand, try to hide their situation and they perform, on the other hand a rude and hegemonic masculinity to compensate for this loss.²³⁰

²²⁸ Lale Kabadayı, "İyi Adam-Kötü Adam: Son dönem Türk Sinemasında Erkek Karakter ve Stereotipleşme," in *Erkek Kimliğinin Değişemeyen Halleri*, ed. Huriye Kuruoğlu (İstanbul: Nobel Yaşam, 2016), 175.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

²³⁰ Ahmet Oktan, "Türk Sinemasında Hegemonik Erkeklikten Erkeklik Krizine," *Selçuk İletişim* 5, 2 (2008): 159.

In this sense, male narratives are dominant in independent cinema after the 90s. According to Kellner, in cinema, male characters are usually at the center of the narrative.²³¹ The dominance of male characters can also be seen in Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz's films. The melodramatic imagery in Ceylan's and Demirkubuz's cinema draws attention to a break in the modernization process in Turkey. According to Akbulut, the poor of the provincial town, who faces the troubles and problems of modernization, are primarily men.²³² In these directors' films, the male characters are also represented as weak, inactive, and passive. They are in crisis.

The male characters in the films analyzed in this study are similar to the other films in the New Turkish Cinema. However, these films emphasize another type of masculinity: the intellectuals.

The male intellectuals, who are the main male characters at the center of the story of these films, belong to upper-middle classes. They are economically powerful. They have a socially and culturally high status and are well-educated. They are individualistic, selfish, and obsessive. They have a unique depression. They are depicted with nausea, with the pains of existence. In addition, they have domination over women, and they have problems with life, with women, and with even themselves. These melodramatic narratives show the alienation of the intellectuals, their loneliness, and their life experience.²³³

In this case, Gönül Dönmez-Collin points out that social and economic changes created new intellectuals at the end of 1980s, and she adds:

The 'new' intellectuals – journalists, propagandists, advertisers, company executives, public relations experts are some of the typical professions – felt autonomous from the society, and in practical life gave all their creativity to the service of capitalism.²³⁴

²³¹ Kellner and Ryan, *Politik Kamera*, 18.

²³² Hasan Akbulut, *Melodramik İmgelem* (İstanbul: Hayaperest, 2012), 162.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 165.

²³⁴ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 200.

In *Uzak*, one of Nuri Bilge Ceylan's essential films, the main male character, Mahmut, is one of these intellectuals. Ceylan tells the story of two cousins who live in two separate worlds and are strangers to each other. In this sense, Ceylan aims to reflect the conflict between the urban and the rural environment in Turkey through the relationship between Mahmut and Yusuf. Mahmut represents the city in this narrative. He left the province many years ago to be a successful art photographer. However, he has chosen to serve the system and he works for an advertising company, has lost his ideal about art and his enthusiasm and pleasure in life. He tries to hide all his emotional deprivations throughout the film. He is trapped in the city's dead end. Yusuf, on the other hand, is a rural man, he is an unemployed, abandoned and oppressed character. For Gönül, the lifestyle of Mahmut has been approved and exalted, whereas the 'other', represented by Yusuf has been humiliated.²³⁵

In *İklimler*, one of Nuri Bilge Ceylan's other films, another male intellectual character is represented. Unlike other Ceylan's films, this film focuses solely on the relationship of the main male character with women. The film's subject is based on the relationship between İsa, who is the university lecturer trying to finish his thesis on Roman ruins history, and his girlfriend/partner Bahar who is an artistic director of a minor TV series.

The same things can be said about the character İsa in *İklimler*, as much as what can be said about the character Mahmut in *Uzak*. Both are seen as traumatic characters from a certain angle. They share some common features: aggrieved and inoffensive, , distancing people from their private life, and not achieving the desired success. There is no sign of happiness in their life.

Mahmut's silence is against life, while İsa's silence is against women. According to Dönmez, *İklimler* is about escaping the feeling of establishing roots and belonging to

²³⁵ Ibid.

someone. İsa is a kind of lost person. In this sense, İsa is like Mahmut, who does not have a warm relationship with his close family. Nevertheless, the men in *İklimler* try to reduce these losses by coming together against the women. However, in *Uzak*, the conflicts among the men are resolved by the loss of masculinity or the crisis. Besides, there is also similarity between these two characters in terms of their relationship with women. It will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter. For Dönmez:

Both Mahmut of Distant and İsa of Climates are better off when they have sex without attachments. Although Mahmut feels the emptiness that comes after the impersonal act, İsa is not even privy to such feelings.²³⁶

Like Nuri Bilge Ceylan's films, Zeki Demirkubuz's films are shot from the point of view of the male main character. In this sense, another similar intellectual male character is seen in Zeki Demirkubuz's film, *Bekleme Odası*. This film tells the story of the famous director Ahmet, who wants to turn Dostoyevsky's famous novel, *Crime and Punishment*, into a script and make a film.

There is no information about Ahmet's level of education. However, writing scripts, making the film, reading philosophical books give information about his education and culture. Although these characteristics are not a criterion for educational level, the desire to make *Crime and Punishment* film shows that he is culturally and socially sophisticated, hence privileged.

Ahmet is also an artist and an intellectual, who has chosen filmmaking as a profession. However, Ahmet is different from Mahmut because he has chosen to continue his art. Ahmet feels indifferent to life. He is unresponsive and dissatisfied. His writings and scripts do never satisfy him. He constantly changes the script and then loses his self-confidence. Ahmet also has difficulty in finding someone who can play Raskolnikov.

A particular group appreciates Ahmet's cinema. Nevertheless, while he does not like

²³⁶ Ibid., 201.

his job, he has followers who admire his cinema, and they see him as an idealist. This situation still does not please him because he is selfish, disrespectful, and incredibly proud of his inner world. He is also someone who blames others for his fears, his sorrows, and his problems. For this reason, he is a lonely person; there is no friend around him. Like Mahmut in *Uzak*, he rarely leaves his home; he spends his life watching television at home and smoking. Unlike Ahmet, Mahmut does not accept that he is alone. He does not accept that he is alienated and that he needs people in his life. There is a wall of indifference between Ahmet's script as he tries to write and the people around him. This wall indicates that some obstacles have appeared for him. Thus, Ahmet has relationships with the people around him, sometimes in a negotiation, sometimes in the form of a struggle, to remove these obstacles.

Bekleme Odası also continues through a limited closure so that the character does not change. Ahmet pauses in the script he is trying to write, breaks up with his girlfriend, starts new relationships, does not shoot the movie, and ends new relationships. Although Ahmet does not change morally and intellectually at the end of the movie, he writes the scenario of *Bekleme Odası*, which the audience is watching, instead of the adaptation of *Crime and Punishment*.²³⁷

On the one hand, Ahmet, who has good communication with society, has a credible identity, and can convince and influence people. He persuades the thief who has entered his house, to be the main character in his film. On the other hand, he has problems with women especially in his private life. Ahmet, when the women start to dominate him and to ask him for an account, he pulls away from them. At first, Ahmet is eager, but he puts his distance if women expect something from him. So, sometimes Ahmet returns to his past relationships like İsa in *İklimler*. Like the examples of Ahmet and İsa, the past is reflected in the present as the form of internal turmoil in all cases. The memory of the past is denied or hidden through various “traces.”²³⁸

²³⁷ Mikail Boz and Dilek Takımcı, “Zeki Demirkubuz Filmlerinin Ortak Anlatı Yapısı: Tema, Zaman, Mekan, Karakter,” *Doğu Batı Düşünce Dergisi* 18, no: 72 (2015): 267. (my translation)

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 272.

In short, Ahmet, who has some issues in his private life like Mahmut and İsa, is stuck all over the place. Then he has an existential crisis. On the one hand, he tries to resolve this existential masculinity crisis by seeing himself as superior to the other male characters. On the other hand, his relationship with women is also problematic, like İsa. He transfers all his breakdowns and losses to women.

Another film by Zeki Demirkubuz called *Bulantı* tells the story of an arrogant man who keeps his life from where he left after losing his wife and son. The circular and closed narration seen in Demirkubuz's other films also shows itself in this film. In the film, the stuckness and sameness of the characters are given to the spectator through the camera.

Bulantı can be seen as a part of Ahmet's later life, left behind while writing the screenplay in *Bekleme Odası*. It is no coincidence that Ahmet is the name of the main character in these two films. This film can be considered as a second film of *Bekleme Odası*. Ahmet is an arrogant man.²³⁹ Ahmet in *Bulantı* is introduced not as a film director but as an intellectual who is a professor philosophy and literature.

Ahmet humiliates everything around himself with meanness and it does not bother him. That is why, his work loses its value. He eliminates others around from his life. After all, he experiences the discredit that he thinks he deserves in one way or another.²⁴⁰

Therefore, Ahmet, who teaches "philosophy of emotions" at the university, is an intellectual with a dull and cold look as well as a representative of the modern figure frequently encountered in Istanbul. For Demirkubuz, the cause of this opacity is a lack of love and loneliness. Ahmet does not even care about the death of his wife and child. Because Ahmet has a broken marriage like İsa in *İklimler*. He is represented as being in depression and crisis. He cannot commit or attach to relationships. Yet, he is also

²³⁹ Abbas Bozkurt, "Eşikte Cereyan," *Altyazı Aylık Sinema Dergisi*, 154, (2015): 43.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

afraid of being alone. He lives with all these issues.

In addition, Mevlut, who comes from a traditional province to visit his brother, reminds us of Yusuf in *Uzak*. Mevlut reflects similar dualities. This film is also based on the tensions between well-educated, middle-class men and uneducated provincial men. Ahmet is indifferent to his brother, who says, “*Neden mevlit okutmuyoruz?*”²⁴¹ for his child and wife.

Zeki Demirkubuz's Ahmets are selfish and proud. These male characters are represented as people who have problems with life, do not value anyone, and see women from their own perspective only. Nuri Bilge Ceylan's male characters also have very similar characteristics. In short, these four intellectual male characters are depicted as depressed, anxious, and in crisis with psychological problems. These characters are far from the traditional male identity and the modern male identity in the classical cinema narrative. As Connell points out, there are many masculinities, and these masculinities try to achieve hegemonic masculinity in one way or another. While they reproduce their hegemonic masculinity through the crisis, they do this through the repetitions they establish culturally and socially. The performative masculinity normalizes these repetitions.

4.2.1. Conflicting Masculinities

In *Uzak*, “the rupture between modern man and the world” is represented by Mahmut. Loneliness is essential to modernism, and it is the fate of the modern man. Mahmut is living in the modern city, in İstanbul as an alone man, so he suffers from loneliness. The spectators witness distress, including all the dilemmas of the notion of “modernism” during the film.

Mahmut (and also Ahmet’s and Isa) with his reaction to events and attitudes, is a

²⁴¹ “Why don’t we organize a prayer night?”

member of the middle class; he moved away from beliefs, from people, from love. He let himself be in the flow of life. In this sense, Mahmut has anti-heroic characteristics in the new Turkish cinema. Orr asserts that the modernist hero as an anti-heroic, is a warrior beset with problems, often privileged in the material world but impoverished in the depths of his soul.²⁴² Mahmut is aware of his weaknesses in the depths of the soul, but he is an anti-hero who takes no stand to fight against them. He is an anti-hero who spends all of his time at home and in front of the television. He rarely goes to the bars with his friends. According to Akbulut, Ceylan's characters Mahmut and Isa chose silence in addition to their inaction and their loneliness.²⁴³ The house represents the shelter of the self against the outside world. Mahmut is in silence beyond his loneliness. His house is a haven of silence. According to Akbulut:

Silence, familiar from Yeşilçam melodramas, is also a modernist practice. Because silence here circulates the self-reflexive practice of art cinema, independent cinema tells that the characters are aware of their situation but do not try to change it.²⁴⁴

Mahmut's one-person "freedom and silence" is disrupted by the arrival of Yusuf, who comes to find a job on ships and wants to travel around the world. Mahmut's crisis is reinforced after his encounter with Yusuf. During the conversation between Ahmet and his cousin Yusuf, his guest, Mahmut asks him: "*Dayanabilecek misin yalnızlığa? Hiç bunu hesapladın mı*"²⁴⁵ On the one hand, there is an intellectual man aware of his loneliness in front of the spectators. On the other hand, Yusuf's response is quite significant: "*Bunu hesapladım tabi ya canım... Ama ben biliyorsun gezmeyi seviyorum, para kazanmak da zaten en önemli. Bunu için geldik, e yani gezmek istiyorum. Hep siz mi gezeceksiniz bu dünyayı ya, biraz da bi gezelim ne olacak.*"²⁴⁶ This answer from Yusuf takes side with being "provincial, poor and deprived" against being "urban and

²⁴² Orr, *Sinema ve Modernlik*, 28.

²⁴³ Akbulut, *Meladromik İmgelem*, 116.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ "Can you take that kind of loneliness? Have you thought about that?"

²⁴⁶ "Sure, it was all sudden. . . However, you know I like to travel. But the main thing is to earn money. That's why I'm here. I also want to travel! You've been everywhere, so why not me?"

rich.” So, his response hints at an implicit rebellion.

Mahmut and Yusuf are characters representing two symbolic universes. They stay in the middle of these two universes. Therefore, the difficulty of establishing a good relationship for them is a dominant theme in this film. Living together is complicated for them because of their differences.²⁴⁷ Gönül points out the character of Yusuf as the unemployed provincial, abandoned and aggrieved, is presented with empathy, whereas Mahmut’s character is selfish and opportunistic.²⁴⁸

Psychological pain from the inevitable transformation of provincial to urban life is the source of the perceptible deep tension between the protagonists, two cousins, Mahmut and Yusuf in *Uzak*. Played out in an apartment in the centre of the city, this tension transforms into the conflict between urban and rural morality. Ceylan’s own flat becomes a metaphor of privacy in anonymous urban society.²⁴⁹

In one scene, Yusuf offers Mahmut a cigarette: “*Yak bir gemici sigarası şuradan.*”²⁵⁰ These cigarettes are the “*Samsun*” brand, a lower-class cigarette brand. Mahmut does not find its quality sufficient. That is why he rejects this cigarette, which he hates, and says to Yusuf: “*Git lan bu içilir mi?*”²⁵¹ However, in the last scene, the spectator sees Ahmet while smoking this “*Samsun*” cigarette. Ahmet encounters something he forgot, or maybe even confronts it.

Mahmut’s silence, his state of emptiness, his apathy and his distance create a contradiction with Yusuf’s curious attitude. Mahmut is far from people, relationships, emotions, excitement, and life. In contrast, Yusuf is excited, friendly, and emotional. Yusuf is as clumsy and excessive as a child. This state of incompetence leaves him defenseless in the face of Mahmut’s silence. As a result, both characters experience a

²⁴⁷ Xavier Lardoux, “Uzak de Nuri Bilge CEYLAN,” *Cinéma – Études*, 400 (2004): 108.

²⁴⁸ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 198.

²⁴⁹ Ayşen Kaim Agnieszka, “New Turkish Cinema – Some Remarks on The Homesickness,” *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, Special Issue: 1 (2011): 102.

²⁵⁰ “Have one of these sailor cigarettes.”

²⁵¹ “How can you smoke that shit?”

crisis.²⁵²

For Gönül, while Mahmut is "distant," Yusuf is "distanced."²⁵³ The characters who are distant from each other in the house watch the same television channel while in different places. The places where they live in the house are isolated from each other. Mahmut continues to close the door to protect his space and the identity he chooses for himself. The other must be left outside. Therefore, the conflict between Mahmut and Yusuf is not just an urban-rural conflict. Mahmut is the one who lives in the city, has experienced alienation, desperately trying to keep his life, full of disappointments. He chooses this life himself and does not want to lose it.

In another scene, Mahmut watches the famous director Andrei Tarkovsky's 1979 film *Stalker* while Yusuf is with him. When Yusuf goes outside, Mahmut opens the porn movie and watches it secretly. It is not a coincidence that Mahmut, who considers himself superior to his cousin, prefers to watch Tarkovsky next to Ahmet. Indeed, he is an intellectual urban and his cousin is ignorant and rural for him. So, the fact that Yusuf will get bored of this movie will satisfy Mahmut. We can understand his crisis state.

In this film, hegemonic masculinity in the classical sense does not appear. Spectators watch performances of left-out masculinities. However, the character who experiences a masculinity crisis tries to hide this crisis by dominating the other men. This film reveals that masculinities conflict, as in Connell's theory of masculinities. This state of conflict recreates the hegemonic masculinity rather than subverting it. Different masculinities are constantly repeated and reinforce this conflict.

²⁵² Hasan Akbulut, *Nuri Bilge Ceylan Sinemasını Okumak* (Ankara: Bağlam, 2005), 31.

²⁵³ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 198.

4.2.2. Women On the Verge of Nervous Breakdown

The previous chapter pointed out that the characters in the foreground in these films are male. These films tell the stories of the intellectual men in different ways but with common issues such as inactivity alienation, estrangement, exclusion, loss, and lack of communication. This chapter will focus on how gender issues are presented in these films.

It will be significant to determine how the male-dominated structure is established in the films in this context. As mentioned before, Mulvey uses the psychoanalytic theory to show how the consciousness of the patriarchal society influences the form and the structure of the film. First, Mulvey interprets cinema as a cultural text. According to her, cinema is built by the patriarchal order, and it contains several codes and structures of this order in the film's narrative. According to Mulvey, in a world organized by sexual order, the pleasure of watching has been divided between active/masculine and passive/feminine. The cinematic point of view emphasizes three dimensions of the gaze as "camera, character, and audience. According to Mulvey, the woman is transformed into an audiovisual object by these three dimensions. Women are viewed and displayed both in traditional and in exhibitionist roles.²⁵⁴

Mulvey defines the concept of "pleasure in looking." For her, there are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at.²⁵⁵ This concept is taking other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze. She claims that the female characters are represented as erotic objects and that spectators perceive them as passive, and that they subconsciously think that the active characters are the male characters. Thus, the heterosexual point of view on active/passive division controls the structure of the

²⁵⁴ Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Palgrave, 1989) 19.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

narrative. Moreover, the division between the spectacle and the narrative underlines man's role as the performance in the unfolding of the story. She adds:

The man controls the film fantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralize the extradiegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle. This is made possible through the processes set in motion by structuring the film around a main controlling figure with whom the spectator can identify.²⁵⁶

John Berger also discussed this distinction between men and women through the theory of gaze. For him, to be born as a woman is to be born in an allocated and limited space dominated by men. Indeed, this is not an innate destiny.

One might simplify this by saying: men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.²⁵⁷

In these films, we can find the traces of Berger and Mulvey's analysis. The women in these films are portrayed as wives, mistresses, sisters, and mothers; as the traditional roles that Turkish cinema has assigned to women.²⁵⁸

In the film *Uzak*, a male gaze is needed for all female characters to exist. We watch almost the entire narrative through the eyes of these two male characters. In the film, there is hardly any room for the female characters' gaze or focus. The first woman to appear is the person with whom Mahmut has sex. This woman appears as a blurry image of Mahmut's gaze, and she appears several times in the same situation. Throughout the scene, this woman is portrayed as an object that satisfies Mahmut's sexual desires. We watch one scene where the woman leaves the house without Mahmut's gaze. However, even there another male gaze is leading our view; we see her departure from the point

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 20.

²⁵⁷ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 46.

²⁵⁸ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 196.

of view of the doorman. She has no name, and there is no information about her. This woman's point of view is never given during this film. Another character featured in the film from Mahmut's Gaze is his ex-wife Nazan.

In another scene, we see Mahmut watching the models' bodies. The camera follows Mahmut's gaze. This gaze is on female bodies. On another television, we watch the same female bodies from Yusuf's gaze.

In *Uzak*, all these women are represented in the crisis. They are entirely silent. For their presence and existence, women need Mahmut's gaze. The story is indifferent to the aspects that do not directly concern Mahmut. Regarding his ex-wife, we are aware of an event in his life spent together: his abortion. Even on that topic, she says the words he would like to hear: "*Ben seni suçlamıyorum. Gerçekten, merak etme.*"²⁵⁹ Here, we can see that Nazan does not care about his own wishes or desires. She tries to make him feel good again. Even when she says she cannot have children, she tries to convince him that she is not sad. She feels sad because her new husband cannot be a father. She says he is a lovely person. Thus, she feels guilty. Instead of leaving her husband, she waits for her husband to leave her. She says: "*Aslında, ben kendimi alıştırdım da Orhan için kötü oldu. O çocukları çok seviyor. İstiyorsan bırak beni dedim, bırakmıyor da...*"²⁶⁰ Nazan is presented as an object that lives only to satisfy her man. These examples show the place where she positions herself in the face of the dominant male mentality. In this film, the spectators identified with the male character evaluate Nazan through Mahmut's eyes and gaze. Nazan is presented in a position-dependent on men. She is generally silent. She does not talk about herself and empathizes with men. She identified even with them, just like the spectators. This scene is given from Mahmut's point of view.

²⁵⁹ "I'm not blaming you. Really, don't worry."

²⁶⁰ "I got used to it actually, but it's hard for Orhan. He really likes children. I told him he could separate from me if he wants to. Yet, he doesn't leave either."

Thus, the spectator identifies only with Mahmut. Therefore, the emphasis is on Mahmut's reaction and feelings. It does not matter what Nazan feels.

Moreover, Mahmut's mother, who is one of the other female characters, is seen in a small part of the story. It represents the role of traditional motherhood.

In addition to his loneliness in the city, Yusuf's desire to be close to women in the subway, in the park, and in the bookstore points to his sexual loneliness. Yusuf's gaze explains this desire on women.

The most obvious example of the relationship between the male gaze and gender stereotypes in this film is that two men look at the same women similarly from different televisions. Therefore, the women in this film are presented as erotic objects to the spectator, identified with the male characters. Through the point of view and camera movements, the desire of the man and the way of looking at these women are portrayed.

Demirbilek makes the following comment for *Distant*: "Again, a group of male artists discussing film and photography."²⁶¹ Demirbilek makes a critical analysis with this interpretation: even in independent cinema, women are excluded. In Ceylan's film, women do not have a place in this conversation of men, and women can exist through the eyes of men. During the conversation they had together, Mahmut asked one of the people at the table, "where are the women's (*karılar*)?" he asks. He gets the answer, "I phoned, and they all gave rain-checks (*yan çizdi*)."²⁶²

The similar analysis can be made for another film by Nuri Bilge Ceylan: *İklimler*. Both Mahmut from *Uzak* and Isa from *İklimler* have sex without desires and attachments. For Dönmez:

²⁶¹ Toygun Demirbilek, "Elektrikli Süpürge Kullanmasını Bilmeyen Ev Kadınları," *Sinefil*, (Ocak 2003). http://www.nbcfilm.com/uzak/press_sinefil.php

²⁶² Ibid.

Although Mahmut feels the emptiness that comes after the impersonal act, İsa is not even privy to such feelings. Dishonesty and cheating are parts of the narrative in all films of Ceylan and perhaps serve as a metaphor for the art of cinema.²⁶³

In *İklimler*, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and his wife Ebru Ceylan play the main characters. İsa, one of the lonely characters of modernization, alienated from himself and others, says it would be better for them to leave for Bahar on their vacation. Bahar is younger than him and generally a simple, faithful, and trusty partner. Later, he gets together with his ex. The other woman, Serap, is more mature, more "feminine" than Bahar. She is an entirely different character from Bahar. She is with two men at the same time. She is sexy, willful, dangerous, and uncanny like femme fatal characters in melodramas.

Ceylan begins to present the story from İsa's point of view. His girlfriend, Bahar, is portrayed as a neurotic character in the first part of the film. We see her when she is nervous and when she cries. She is always thoughtful and sad. It is not clear what Bahar will do during the film. She is unstable, emotional, and sensitive. Bahar and İsa fight at the start of the film. Then they go to a friend's dinner invitation. We saw the two men talking. Women have no place in this conversation. When they work in the kitchen, they are full of silence and can listen to men. When they speak, they are humiliated in a way. İsa said to Bahar: "Üşümüyor musun sen?"²⁶⁴ Bahar answers: "Yok üşümüyorum."²⁶⁵ İsa insists: "Ceketini giy istersen."²⁶⁶ However, she responds unexpectedly and loudly: "Üşümüyorum"²⁶⁷ Besides, İsa complains about Bahar with her facial expressions to his friend around the table. His friend says, "do not take seriously" "aldırma be, ne olacak". Soon after, Bahar suddenly begins to laugh. It could be said that the director aims to represent Bahar like a neurotic character. In another scene, when they are on the motorbikes, she closes İsa's eyes riding the motorbike. The motorcycle is therefore

²⁶³ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 201.

²⁶⁴ "Aren't you cold?"

²⁶⁵ "No, I'm fine."

²⁶⁶ "Why don't you put your jacket on?"

²⁶⁷ "I told you, I'm fine."

overturned. It can be interpreted as a situation that reinforces the “neurotic” point of view.

After İsa breaks up with Bahar, he returns to Istanbul. The film continues with İsa's life at the university as a lecturer. In the university scene, the camera focuses on İsa and his colleague's gaze at women. In the conversations of these two friends, Mehmet talks about her lover named Pınar. He explains that they are about to get married. When Mehmet talks about Pınar, he uses patriarchal discourse. The first time he mentions Pınar, he says he does not want to be late: “*Abi gerçekten vaktim yok. Samimi söylüyorum bak. Şimdi mır mır eder, dır dır eder.*”²⁶⁸ On another day, when he talks to İsa, he said: “*Valla abi ya sen şimdi gör bir de Pınar'ı. Süt dökmüş kedi gibi artık. Yani sallayacak parmak marmak kalmadı öyle yemezler. Bırakacağım diye artık... Anyayı konyayı anladı. Geçen günkü tavrımdan sonra, gerçekten bırakıp gideceğimi zannediyor. Artık biraz zor.*”²⁶⁹ During these conversations, the attitude of İsa supports him. This interaction between two men highlights intense relationships between masculinities. Men thus reproduce the hegemonic masculinity because they try to maintain their privileged male position in the hierarchy of masculinities. All these scenes underline the fact that Pınar is a character subjected to Mehmet's hegemonic attitude. Another critical point here is that these male characters are well-educated and intertwined with art. They define themselves as intellectuals and despise the other. While this situation gives a chance to question the hegemonic masculinity, their privileged position against women is still reproduced.

Aus mentioned before, dishonesty and cheating are part of the narrative in all Ceylan films. In this film, İsa also has a relationship with another woman, Serap. Nevertheless, unlike Bahar, she is presented as attractive yet dangerous. Another example of the fact

²⁶⁸ “I don't have time, honestly. She'll start complaining and bitching if I am late.”

²⁶⁹ “Well, you should see Pınar now. She's meek as a lamb. There are no more wagging fingers. Believe me. After I walked out that evening, she got really scared. It's the truth, honestly. She knows where she stands now.”

that women are the object of the male gaze in the film is İsa's gaze on Serap. She reminds the viewers of the "femme fatale" characters with her ambitious and provocative stance. When the spectators watch, they lose their desire for her, like İsa. Finally, the film brings Bahar closer to melodramatic women. She appears to be an uncertain person about what to do, not thriving mental health. In the film, other women are also presented as dangerous and nervous, like Pınar. Serap is like blonde women who freely express their sexuality in Yeşilçam melodramas.²⁷⁰ In this case:

Although the thrust of the film is the disintegration of a relationship, the structure of the narrative sides with the male character. The point of view of the female partner, her feelings and her dilemmas, are felt through her silences (the traditional attribute of women in society and in cinema).²⁷¹

Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz's cinema is similar in representing gender issues. Women are not depicted as an agent in these films. Like *İklimler*, in *Bekleme Odası*, Zeki Demirkubuz and his ex-wife Nurhayat Kavrak play the main characters. There is also a male character in the center. The position of this man shapes the perception of women. Ahmet in *Bekleme Odası* only wants a woman at home to meet her physical and psychological needs. The woman in the house should not bother him. Besides, she should be happy with what he gives. For him, women come, they stay, they go, and they come back. Women are not important to him. In short, these women live on the borders he draws. They appear as female characters who have no personal desires and demands. In Ahmet's life, women are the ones who listen to him, bring him tea, make food for him, have sex with him whenever he wants during his depression, and when he tries to write a script. However, they cannot stand it and abandon him because of its indifference, insensitivity, and passivity. This point of view also shows us the desire of the director.

²⁷⁰ Akbulut, *Meladromik İmgelem*, 121-124.

²⁷¹ Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*, 166.

The women who left Ahmet's life did not leave him with their own decisions but with Ahmet's decision. All the women leave from Ahmet with his indifferent and silent state. There is no mutual talk and no decision-making together. Ahmet does not explain, and he does not care whether the other person wants to continue or not. This unconcern is the most distinctive feature of the circular narrative in the film. Ahmet and his house remain fixed and the same throughout the film. The only thing that changes in Ahmet's life is the name of the woman. However, according to Ahmet, every woman is the same. Therefore, these women do not change. This narrative shows us how the man's depression, his state of silence, is exalted in *Bekleme Odası*. What matters is man's artistic creation process. Women are only there to support the man's production process.

Also, in *Bekleme Odası*, all the women are nervous. He tells his girlfriend, Serap, who complains about his indifference, that he cheated on her. She goes through a nervous breakdown, cries and leaves the house. He is actually lying to her. He humiliates her psychologically. He commits a kind of psychological violence to her. Later, he gets attracted to his assistant. However, his indifference to women and to life continues. Ahmet is not any more interested in the ideas of his assistant, either. For Ahmet, his artistic creation process is always the priority. As Mulvey and Berger already marked, the creator is the man, and the woman is lost among the creator's troubles.

In this film, too, women are represented by the male gaze. For example, the camera focus is on between the legs of his assistant. The young girl's face does not appear. From this cinematographic point of view, the woman is the object of his sexual desire. This film tells the story of a character, who kicks her pregnant cat out of the house and says that she's a bitch.

In *Bekleme Odası*, Ahmet explains to his assistant that his ex-girlfriend cheated on him. He said that when he heard that she was cheating on him, he beat her. But this is not true. He lies to Elif, his assistant. In the context of traditional values, men are expected

to be violent. Ahmet responds to this expectation in his imaginary scenario. This scene emphasizes that the masculine power that society expects is accepted by Ahmet. In *Bulanti*, the director realizes this fictional scenario, as well. One of Ahmet's students in *Bulanti*, who cheated on her boyfriend with Ahmet, is beaten by her boyfriend. In the following scene, we see her in the hospital. According to the traditional values, women should be victims of violence when they cheat. When a man cheats, it is considered as a habit by this society. This coding, this performative act is reinforced in these "independent" films, too.

When we examine the female characters in *Bulanti*, we see that the opposition between good women and bad women is imposed by the dominant ideology. Just as in *İklimler*, the distinction between innocent women and seductive women is also present in this film. This duality is built on contrasts such as traditional-modern, devoted-selfish, urban-rural. In the film, different women from different layers of society are represented to the spectator through Ahmet's eyes.

The melodrama tradition in Yeşilçam cinema revolves around innocent girls (Virgin Mary), *femme fatale* women (Mary Magdalene) characters, just like in the classical Hollywood narratives. These women are at the center of the heteronormative desires expected from men. These characters are set up according to these desires. As I mentioned before, this melodramatic imagery is also seen in the directors of the New Turkish Cinema called the "auteur generation." In Demirkubuz cinema, women are used both as visual objects established by a male gaze and as supporting objects that complete the narrative. The patriarchal gaze also shapes this film. Women are shown to the spectator as 'mother', 'virgin' or '*femme fatale*.'

The director reshapes the contrasting female characters according to the point of view taken from melodrama and patriarchal traditions in *Bulanti*. Thus, he establishes a reward-punishment system in the film. For example, the violence of her lover punishes the woman (Özge) who cheated on him with her professor. Moreover, Ahmet's wife

(Elif), who goes away with her child after arguing with her husband, is punished as a victim in a traffic accident. Ahmet's lover Aslı, represented by the image of a successful free woman, is punished by Ahmet's indifferent and unconcern attitudes. The only female character who is not punished throughout the movie is the young woman who comes to Ahmet's house to clean. This woman (Neriman) appears as an innocent woman. The film is constructed from the male point-of-view regarding the relations between men and women.

Ahmet repeats the patriarchal traditions. He yearns for the traditional female character; he sees all women as inferior to him and takes a careless attitude towards them. Finally, Ahmet gets rid of his arrogance through a provincial, uneducated, disabled, and quite traditional woman in the last scene. Indeed, he tries to ignore the crisis by repeating the behaviors and acts expected of a man. Even in the final scene, the purification scene, Ahmet confronts his depression and anxiety on the skirts of an innocent young mother.

In her work, Burçin Kızıldaş points out that male characters are losing their masculinity in the new Turkish cinema. The men who have lost their power in society make the woman victim. Thus, they save their masculinity against the threat of the crisis:

After 1990, a new Turkish cinema, which can be read as the answer of Turkish cinema to the social crisis, developments, and the emergence of the feminist movement, appear. This answer reflects the helplessness and desperation of men in the face of all this social transformation. It also includes an attempt that shows an escape from it. Many examples of the new Turkish cinema convey the tragedies, strengths, or weaknesses of men, their desperation in the face of "hegemonic" masculinity, and their tendency to violence through a male perspective.²⁷²

In his work *Masculinity in Crisis*, Horrocks relates the male violence to the fear of castration. The genuine fear of castration is used as a weapon against others. The male characters often punish their partners with their mood, unwillingness to help, and incompetence. In this case, he explains that Castration means being emotionally dead,

²⁷² Burçin Kızıldaş, "Taşrada Kalan Erkeklikler," *Sinecine*, 7(2), (2016): 72

not responding to others, not being open to life. The castrated man has no joy in nature, in his body, nor does he have joy for children.

He is terrified of his own feelings, his own possible 'weakness' as he sees it. He might feel afraid, or panicky, or he might want to collapse - but all these possibilities are ruled out, as he keeps up the fierce disguise of unbending strength. Thus, in this case, castration means being deprived of the more 'feminine' feelings. (...) Castration means that something has been cut off, literally the male genitals. But we also talk about men 'cut off' from their feelings, or simply that someone seems very cut off. So, this is a kind of emotional castration: an inability to be present with others, a state of being withdrawn or remote. This is the true castration of modern men.²⁷³

As mentioned before, these new intellectual men are in *nausea*, in depression; they suffer from their *Angst* in all these four films. They are cut off from their feelings. However, the presence of the woman is recognized by the presence of these male characters, of the male gaze. There is one more thing in these films in common: violence against women. The main characters in the film do not show violence directed against women. Through dreams or through discourse this violence is shown to the spectators. We can say that a metaphorical imagery is used during these films.

In *İklimler*, there is a tough scene to analyze. In this scene, the camera movements and angles follow the male gaze. Spectators watch this scene from a male point of view. Serap, who is the lover of a friend of İsa's, has a relationship with İsa. The film has a controversial sex scene. This sex scene has a problem because it serves the male pleasure by using the male gaze. İsa goes to Serap's house. She is presented as a woman who is full of her sexuality. They flirt with each other. When İsa eats some nuts, he throws one of the nuts to Sera. Then he tries to convince her to eat these nuts. However, she does not eat them. He again forces her to eat these nuts. So, a violent sex scene begins. On the one hand, she tries to resist him. On the other hand, she responds positively to his kisses. These behaviors are unstable. It is impossible to understand what she wants and how she feels because this scene is conveyed from İsa's point of

²⁷³ Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis*, 105.

view. At the end of sex, he forcefully puts these nuts in her mouth, and he is finally successful. The nuts appear as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity that the man has lost. By forcing her to eat the nuts, he reproduces the hegemonic masculinity he has been losing. In other words, the "man" has not lost his "masculinity" by forcing her to do what he wants as Horrocks analyzes.

In addition, in *Bekleme Odası*, Elif's boyfriend, Kerem, says to Ahmet: "*Elif son bir yıl içinde sizinle çalışmaya başladığından beri çok değişti, saygısız, bencil, herkesi küçümseyen biri olup çıktı.*"²⁷⁴ Women empowerment is not accepted by men. He beats Elif in an argument. Then Elif leaves and disappears. Afterwards, she begins to live with Ahmet. After a short affair with Ahmet, she returns to her ex. We can say the violence against women takes place both in the film and in the fantasy of the male character.

Finally, we can say that these films tell the story of men who cannot overcome their impotence, their loss of masculinity and their unproven masculinity.²⁷⁵ This is the reason why such helpless male characters tend to embody a vulgar masculine image against women in order to conceal the loss of their masculinity and overcome the crisis of masculinity.

²⁷⁴ "*Elif changed a lot, in the last year, since she started to work with you, she became such a disrespectful, selfish person, looking down upon everyone.*"

²⁷⁵ Ahmet Oktan, "Türk Sinemasında Hegemonik Erkeklikten Erkeklik Krizine," 216.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I tried to show how gender is connected to performativity and how this connection shapes the formation of masculinity as well as femininity. First, I argued how hegemonic masculinity as a mode of gender is not a naturally fixed situation but develops via performative acts, as especially seen in the examples of masculinities in the mainstream cinemas of Hollywood and Yeşilçam. However, I also examined some examples of Independent Cinema, especially the new Turkish cinema, such as the films of the independent directors like Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkbuz, in which we do not see male characters with hegemonic masculinity but rather with masculinity crisis. I discussed if we might expect from this crisis also a liberation from the hegemonic masculinity. I argued that, especially in the narratives of four films, namely *Bekleme Odası* and *Bulantı* by Zeki Demirkbuz and *İklimler* and *Uzak* by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, the cinematic performances of the masculinity crisis, perhaps this time as in non-performances of hegemonic masculinity, such as in the performances of silence, inaction, sitting and waiting, etc., still show us the performative rather than natural ground of masculinity, and that they do not liberate us from hegemonic masculinity but makes us stuck with it in the form or performance of crisis. Therefore, it reproduces the hegemonic masculinity as an ideal reality of which loss is performed as a crisis for men, yet also as a crisis for women as it does not open ways of appearance and action for women characters with full representation either.

To explain hegemonic masculinity, I referred mostly to gender and film studies. Hegemonic masculinity is when a minority male group has a say and opinion about all the rest. It is in a position of power is seen as a structure that sets a standard for other definitions of masculinity. Accordingly, masculinity is portrayed as successful, reliable, strong, and controlling. Only a man with these characteristics can be seen as a real man. As discussed throughout the research, hegemonic masculinity as a phenomenon of gender phenomena, is ensured with continuity by being constantly

repeated and reproduced through some social institutions. Cinema is one of the institutions that ensures the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity. Cinema, while reflecting the values and cultures of societies on the big screen, also has the capacity to cause the reproduction of these values and representations back to society. This is why, I chose to discuss the concept of masculinity through the venue of cinema.

Overall, this thesis discussed the connection between performativity and the reproduction of masculinity in four main chapters. The first chapter focused on the connection between gender and performativity. In this chapter, the essentialist approach, which claims that masculinity is the definitive and unchanging essence, has been criticized. For this critique, I benefited from gender studies. I referred first to Beauvoir's idea of becoming a gender. In her work *The Second Sex*²⁷⁶, Beauvoir says that masculinity is constantly talking about the other instead of talking about its own kind, thus establishing itself as power. According to this idea, men begin to learn to be men with their existence beyond biological men. On the one hand, their behaviors, lifestyles, and judgments are shaped by this cultural teaching. On the other hand, they live by internalizing this cultural learning due to their biological nature. To radicalize this anti-essentialist position, I referred to Judith Butler's idea of performativity as a ground for gender. Butler's performative gender theory makes masculinity further controversial and problematizes the male identity as a natural being. Indeed, Butler does not separate identity from gender identity and considers the performative as a theory of agency. For this reason, individuals make sense of their identities through repetition.

Contemporary critical masculinity studies also discuss the concept of masculinity by freeing it from an unchanging fixed position. Hence, the second chapter discusses more in depth the concepts of masculinity and performative masculinity. Both gender studies and masculinity studies reveal that masculinity is open to re-signification and

²⁷⁶ Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 65-70.

interpretation, and therefore cannot be reduced to a fixed essence. Moreover, these studies reveal the dynamics of gender and make masculinity visible as gender. In this respect, it is crucial to examine the concept of masculinity with different interdisciplinary studies critically. Thus, it becomes possible to change the acceptance of the traditional and hegemonic state of masculinity as a norm.

In the third chapter, I examined some film studies focusing on gender and the concepts of the male gaze and point-of-view in cinema. I discussed the cinematic discourse and narrative through the concepts of masculinity and performativity. In the popular cinema of Hollywood and Yeşilçam, the desires of female protagonists are often not shown. The women are not agents or individuals. Women are only represented as supporting characters that put men into action. Instead, we see the dominance of male desires and actions in the front. The exaggerated heroic activity performed by male characters in these films shape the standards of the ideal masculinity, hence the hegemonic masculinity.

Yet, I also focused on some male characters of independent cinema, which is usually positioned against popular cinema and is expected to produce more progressive, alternative and oppositional discourses to popular cinema. In the fourth and last chapter, I discussed mostly the films of Nuri Bilge Ceylan (*Uzak* and *İklimler*) and Zeki Demirkubuz (*Bekleme Odası* and *Bulantı*), who are essential directors in the Independent Turkish Cinema. In these films, I analyzed the roles of the male gaze and point of view as well as the role performative crisis of masculinity in the reproduction of the hegemonic masculinity. In these films, urban intellectual male characters are at the forefront. These men, who have a specific socio-cultural capital, do not fully perform the behaviors expected from men in the traditional societies. They do not perform the behaviors expected from the hegemonic masculinity, either. Therefore, these men are represented in these films as in danger of losing their masculinity. The repetitive state of nothingness, depression, and nausea are the building blocks of the

male characters in these films. Unlike the male characters in popular Turkish cinema, these characters perform the masculinity crisis. Yet, these films turn this crisis into a space for the hegemonic performance of masculinity rather than opening a space for opposition and critique of the hegemonic masculinity. One could expect an attitude of opposition from an “artistic” or “independent” cinema to break from the reproduction of the hegemonic gender norms of the popular capitalist cinema. Yet, this study reveals that these films in independent cinema reproduces hegemonic gender norms by repetitions as well.

With the political, economic, and social transformations in Turkey since 1990, the dominant position of men was shaken. The portrayal of these men, whose dominant position is upside down, as pessimistic and depressive subjects, causes the loss of masculinity to be perceived as an injustice. For, this state of crisis repeats itself in almost every film as a performative act. Thus, this crisis of performative masculinity, built on repetition in these films, creates an acknowledgment for these men to regain their domination and hegemony. In this direction, the male becomes the victim. Therefore, we can say that these films have the function of re-dominating the man in crisis. Because, according to Connell, even if the crisis affects men, this does not mean that hegemonic masculinity disappears. Therefore, we can say that hegemonic masculinity is usually repaired with the crisis.

Therefore, we can say that masculinity, which is presented as a crisis in these films, chooses to repeat the hegemonic masculinity patterns as a new performative act. Thus, hegemonic masculinity is reconstructed and reproduced. As mentioned earlier in the study, the "crisis state" in these films is reflected from the male gaze. In order to resolve the crisis of loss of power and masculinity, this gaze again turns women into a desirable and undecided object. In these films, which are important examples of the independent cinema, this reproduction process occurs through the repetition of silence, nausea, and depression in the male intellectual characters. Indeed, the masculinity crisis is resolved

when men become insensitive and indifferent to all other people in their lives. While women are a neurotic threat that cannot go beyond being a mother or *femme fatale*, other men are presented to the spectator as a threat to be humiliated. These threats lead to anxiety about the loss of masculinity and thus the anxiety legitimizes, naturalizes and reproduces the hegemonic masculinity as a dominant position through the continuous performance of silence and depression. Otherwise, why would/should we feel anxiety rather than feeling relief with the loss of hegemonic masculinity?

However, these characters, who show very similar and limited performances, hide the construction of gender by performing quiet, depressed, and unhappy behaviors. Presenting the performance of depression or masculinity crisis associated with emotional silence, male characters use performative gender as a silent act. According to this expectation, male characters perpetuate certain forms of repeatable masculinity, free from excess. Yet, in times of crisis, these men become open to reproduction by taking shelter in the image of hegemonic masculinity that they know its code very well. Therefore, in these films, the crisis moves away from making masculinity liberated. It traps us in the same vicious circle. The very title of the movie *Bekleme Odası/Waiting Room* put us in the very space of being stuck or trapped.

Besides, these films are critical in presenting us a *sequence* of the moment of change in masculinities. Although this change causes a repetitive and non-progressive crisis, it is essential to express the anxiety and uncertainty it has created on some masculinities. Although the characters and perhaps the directors in these examples do not reveal the construction of gender by performing similar performances, their use of a silence, anxiety, and depressive acts show that there is a new "silent" performance related to the state of the masculinity crisis. Indeed, their identities are fluid, not grounded with a natural essence, yet this fluidity is disguised under the crisis. According to Reeser, performativity can be disguised by limiting performances and controlling excess, too. "For in order to hide masculinity's performativity, a man may have to limit his

performance and contain it as non-excessive.”²⁷⁷ Moments of *waiting*, watching, and thinking based on the absence of action or expression create the impression that the character is doing nothing. In all four films, depressed men are in similar inaction and silence. Men are quiet. They watch TV and do not talk. It is not easy to understand the true intention of these men who speak so little. Yet, like with the excessive performative acts, with the effect of this silence and anxious performativity, too, we can understand that the so-called natural masculinity patterns are not fixed and essential. Thus, masculinities and hegemonic masculinity become open to question again.

Finally, we can indeed hope for liberation from hegemonic masculinity as well as for its critique coming from its crisis only when the performative, hence the non-essentialist ground of masculinity is made visible in the masculinity crisis, too. As expressed throughout this study, it is important to consider gender as performativity. This aspect indicates that there is no original masculinity as unchanging and fixed. In this way, it reveals that masculinity is not destiny. As we have seen in the sample films in this study, although repetitive performances create the illusion that masculinity has either a fixed essence or we are stuck at the nothingness and anxiety in the case of its crisis, various film studies like gender and masculinity studies can reveal these illusions and hence can open ways for subverting the hegemonic gender stereotypes.

²⁷⁷ Reeser, “Sexing Masculinity,” 89.

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