Chapter 9

Paris/Europe Image as a Modernization Place in Turkish Cinema

Yeliz Akın Okay
Independent Researcher, Turkey

ABSTRACT

The representation of women in cinema varies from time to time depending on the transformation of women in society. Turkish cinema has conveyed the transformations of women’s representation in Turkish films to the audience in accordance with the concepts of urbanization, migration, modernity, and Westernization in daily life. This chapter explores the imagery of Paris and Europe as modernizing places in Turkish cinema.

INTRODUCTION

Sociology of Cinema has shown methodological and conceptional similarities with Sociology of Literature by virtue of cultural, social and historical codes contained in both literature and editing depending upon the social structure and change of Turkish society since early periods. One of the main reasons of this is because early period film scenarios tackled by sociologist are novel based. From the beginning, Turkish novel has examined social dichotomies arising due to encountering with West and social problems. At times it has defended the society against these dichotomies and sometimes it has been fictionalized with the responsibility of explicating to public how modernization should be. The common point between literature and cinema is firstly unique freedom which artisans have to remold and reorganize the

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material (Tarkovsky, 1086:65). These two maintain their functions together which make a contribution to provide news and information in society, socialization, motivation, creation of discussion environment, education, entertaining, integration and development of culture, as communication instruments independent from each other (Sivas, 2005: 43).

Cinema which society has recognized later by comparison with literature, has turned people from reader to audience with the films which are produced from novels after novels dealing with problems of modernization and westernization and translated novels about western way of life. Cinema has more apparent influence on society in the formation of popular culture and changing of existing cultural codes of social structure. It is particularly known that popular novels had been adapted to scenarios to reach wide audience in the early times of our cinema history. From the perspective of Turkish society, this situation is related with representation of woman identity in literature and cinema and has some similarities with respects to examination of social problems and social change on the basis of traditional-modern, Turkish style- European style, villager-townsman duality. Yeşilçam’s films which were fictionalized on the basis of efforts of woman to become townswomen to have the ear of men she loves, had taken forms by inspiring from novels mentioning about social dualities because of modernization from Tanzimat reform era to early times of Republic period. Those scenarios mention about generally humiliation of woman by man she loves and his urban friends because of her identity, and unjust treatment against her. On the other hand, those films are ended with modernization of woman by going to Paris or another European city to take education in a sense and then woman gains the man she loves.

The codes of those films about woman could be interpreted as the reflection of the transformation of modernization from westernization on the axis of village-town duality to urbanization phenomenon. In this study, films are going to be analyzed in terms of social status of woman from this perspective. However, firstly the reason of why Paris as a fact taken part in films is a reference of modernization of individual in intellectual and cultural codes of Turkish society is going to be examined.

PARIS AS A WOMEN’S MODERNIZATION REFERENCE FROM OTTOMAN TO REPUBLIC PERIOD

Travel books of statesmen, missionaries, delegates, merchants and diplomats travelling from West to East, in which they mention about Orientalist ideas, are a subject of other disciplines to form an extensive literature in terms of İstanbul impressions. When the literature of travel books is examined, it is seen that the Western travelers’ observation about daily life fragments of East and East image in their mind intertwined
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