

CINEMAGOING AS A HETEROGENEOUS AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL STRATEGY: NARRATIVES OF WOMAN SPECTATORS¹

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ABSTRACT

Even though cinema studies, usually focusing on films, the audience has been attracted to the attention of researchers since the beginning of these studies. However, in recent years the number of studies on the audience has been increasing steadily. While early cinema studies has focused on the influence of films on the audience, the experience of cinemagoing has recently become a focus. This article is based on oral history interviews conducted in Istanbul, Ankara, Antalya and Kocaeli within the scope of the TUBITAK Project entitled "Cinemagoing as a Cultural and Social Practice". In the article, through the fifty interviews with female spectators who went to cinema in Turkey in the 1960s and '70s, dynamics that played a role in the women's experience of cinemagoing and the narration styles of the experience of cinemagoing were analyzed thematically and discursively. The narratives of women spectators and their analyzes emphasize that women's understanding of cinema is heterogeneous and multidimensional and have shown that marriage is a significant threshold for women's experience in cinemagoing and is used as a strategy act of going to cinema against the reality of everyday life.

Keywords: cinemagoing, spectator, oral history, woman, narratives of cinemagoing

HETEROJEN VE ÇOK BOYUTLU BİR STRATEJİ OLARAK SİNEMAYA GİTMEK: KADINLARIN SEYİR ANLATILARI

ÖZ

Sinema arařtırmaları, genelde filmlere odaklansa da, bu arařtırmalarda seyirci bařından beri arařtırmacıların dikkatini çekmiştir. Ancak son yıllarda seyirci üzerine yapılan çalışmaların sayısı gittikçe artmaktadır. Erken dönemdeki arařtırmalar, filmlerin seyirci üzerindeki etkisini konu edinirken, son dönemlerde seyircinin sinemaya gitme deneyimi odak olmaya başlamıştır. Bu makale, Kültürel ve Toplumsal Bir Pratik Olarak Sinemaya Gitmek başlıklı TÜBİTAK Projesi kapsamında İstanbul, Ankara, Antalya ve Kocaeli’nde yapılan sözlü tarih görüşmelerine dayanmaktadır. Makalede, 1960’lı ve ‘70’li yıllarda Türkiye’de sinemaya gitmiş kadın seyircilerle yapılan elli görüşme üzerinden, kadınların sinemaya gitme deneyimlerinde rol oynayan dinamikler ile onların sinemaya gitme deneyimlerini hikâye ediş biçimleri, tematik ve söylemsel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Kadın seyircilerin anlatıları ve bu anlatıların analizleri, kadınların sinema kavrayışlarının heterojen ve çok boyutlu olduğunu vurgularken, kadınların sinemaya gitme deneyiminde evliliğin önemli bir eşik olduğunu ve gündelik hayatın gerçekliğine karşı sinemaya gitmenin bir strateji olarak kullanıldığını ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: sinemaya gitmek, seyirci, sözlü tarih, kadın, sinemaya gitme anlatıları

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INTRODUCTION

Spectators in Cinema Studies

Cinema comprises a multifaceted mental and cultural experience in which films are presented in selected places, films and other people are communicated in movie theaters, and thoughts and feelings about films, actors, directors and cinema are developed. As Jarvie emphasizes (1970: 97), the viewing experience is both a personal process in the sense that the spectator disappears in the darkness of the cinema in the course of the journey, does not enter into any social relationship with anyone around him, nor does he recognize (even know his name). “However, some element of socializing is present in cinemagoing. It is not necessarily a solitary activities. Families will go, or schools or groups of friends, or lovers; the cinema there is an activity all these groups of people like to do together.” (Jarvie, 1970: 99). In this respect, cinema forms the whole of the experience of cinemagoing, which changes according to time, space, socio-cultural and political context.

Francesco Casetti (2009), a cinema theorist, says that researching cinematic experience is important from three perspectives: First, researching the cinematic experience allows us to better understand the place of the cinema in 20th century culture. Cinema brought the world back to us and made us see it again. Cinematic experience, secondly, has allowed us to better discuss cinema history. It helped me to conceptualize the historical dimension of the film-watching action, as well as how the picture has historically been shaped. The third point is expanding the boundaries of cinema nowadays, but at the same time it faces the danger of losing its identity. When we watch something filmlike or a film on YouTube or on a mobile phone, can we still talk about it in cinema, or is there something else that is about it? (Casetti, 2009: 57).

Number of the studies about the audience has increased in recent years, even though it is a fact that the spectator is often ignored on cinema studies. The spectator, with the emphasis of Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, has started to become the focus in the field of culture and communication. This approach, cited with the work of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which established in 1964 by Richard Hoggart, concentrates on the social conditioning of cultural production and symbolic forms; cultural experience and the formation of this experience considering class, age, gender, and ethnic relations, and relations between economic and political processes and cultural forms (Mutlu, 1995: 233-234). Cultural studies aim to peruse the media and the audience in a wider social and cultural practice array. In this approach, which examines daily routines such as reading novel, watching television in a social context, Ian Ang, John Fiske, Janice Radway, Martin Allor, David Morley, Henry Jenkins and Lawrence Grossberg investigate the spectator. In these studies, the spectator is examined ethnographically. With the return to qualitative research, the audience researches tried to explain the meanings produced by social subjects and their daily routines by positioning them in ruling structures with a wider framework of interpretation (Moore, 1995: 4-5).

A similar transformation takes place in the field of cinema research as well. Gledhill (1992; 2000), expressed in her studies that the interrelation and reconciliation between the audience, film text and the institution needs to be studied. The reception studies in cinema began in the 1980's. Judith Mayne (1993: 1), who accomplished one of these studies states that, spectatorship, cinemagoing, consuming films and film myths are important concepts in terms of symbolic activities and cultural aspects. Jackie Stacey, who used ethnographic approach in reception study in cinema, examines women spectators' practices and experiences while film watching, in her book *Star Gazing* (1994). After her, Janet Staiger, with *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (2000), and Annette Kuhn, with *An Everyday Magic*:

Cinema and Cultural Memory (2002) contributed to this field. Staiger (2000), to find out why certain products were presented to the spectators in certain periods, handles the text, that is to say the film, in historical, social and political context in which it was produced and got into circulation. Staiger's major emphasis is that the historical context, which enfolds the reception of film, is heterogenic and contradictory. Staiger's reception study, which refers to diaries, private conversations and letters to investigate the spectator responses, turned into examining the cultural meanings of a film in certain eras and the social standings of specific spectators. According to Kemper (2003), this dynamic approach, considers the relation between the film and the spectator as a transactional game, and it breaks fresh ground by emphasizing the factors of spectator's race, gender and social identities. On the other hand Annette Kuhn in her book *Cinema and Cultural Identity* (2002), examines the meaning of cinema according to the spectators, in a wider context. The book is an important example of ethno-history and psychological theory, combined with the interpretation of importance of cinema in life. Kuhn, who is interested in how the films affect the spectators, examines the experiences of people who went to the movies in 1930's by oral history interviews. She wants to explore how the cultural memory works to form the spectators, one's recollections and memories, and that cultural memory as a power that they share.

Despite the importance of spectatorship, there are few studies in Turkey focusing on the spectator. Kıvanc Esen (2012) points out that the judge modernist paradigm in the early Republican period directly influenced the cinema perception, and that the cinema was seen as a public entertainment, as it is one of these studies that examines *Perde* and *Stage* magazines, one of the most important cinema magazines of the 1940s. Arzu Ertaylan (2013: 1849) emphasized that in those days, going to cinema was never an instant and ordinary decision to experience, it was a planned cultural activity that was designed days before the event, even the details like deciding which film to go or what to wear. Perihan Taş Öz explores the viewing experience and the spectator's experience at the time of film production, distribution and demonstration practices (2012: 72) in her article (2012: 72) It is a collective viewing culture in the halls, in which the spectator observes as a part of the inner community, the experience of viewing and that this experience is more social than personal. Güliz Mugun Akıncı (2013: 93), on the other hand, stressed that going to cinemas is the second most effective factor in the consumption of shopping malls in her work on shopping malls. On the other hand, Serpil Kirel comes to the question of what factors play a role in the rise of Turkish cinema in the 1960s with such a spectacular rise. In her book *Yeşilçam: Öykü Sineması* (2005) she first looks at the 60's and the everyday life dynamics of that period, then examines the producers, screenwriters and "artists" who make up the building blocks of these dynamics. Kirel (2005) tries to describe this period in terms of the production conditions and economic context of the films, audience expectations, cultural dynamics and negotiations with screenwriters. The book makes *Yeşilçam* easier to understand in the conditions that make it. Dilek Kaya Mutlu (2010: 420) examines letters sent by audiences to *Cinema* and *Perde* magazines in *Yeşilçam*'s study of social construction of star images outside the curtains and the relationship established by spectators with star actors. Mutlu, states that the star image is not only the perpetrator of the actor, but also the outward appearance of the screen, in popular magazines and magazines, which are the prevalent media of the time. This work is important and valuable because it deals with the audience through the letters. Serdar Öztürk's article entitled "Türkiye'de Sinema Mekânlarını Sözlü Tarih Üzerinden Anlamak" attracts attention because it is one of the rare studies in which the oral history method is used. Öztürk (2013: 19) examines "how cinema spaces are used by people in Turkey from 1950 to 1980, how audiences interpret movies and characters in films, and how they transfer their filmic experiences to their daily life". According to the author, studying on cinema space in Turkey means contributing to bring out the characteristic structure of society, feelings, thoughts, cognitive and behavioral maps (Öztürk, 2013: 30). The last study that examined the experience of going to cinemas with oral history method was done by Hasan Akbulut with the title of "Sinemaya Gitmek ve Seyir: Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması". According to Akbulut, who has studied the experience of cinemagoing in the 1960s and '70s through 78 interviewers,

studying on experiences of spectator is guiding not only in the history of cinema but also in understanding how subjects have reconstructed subject identities in social, political, economic and cultural contexts (2014: 14).

This study within the Tubitak Project titled, "Cinemagoing as a Social and Cultural Practice: An Oral History Study About Spectator Experiences in Turkey" ("Kültürel ve Toplumsal Bir Pratik Olarak Sinemaya Gitmek: Türkiye'de Seyirci Deneyimleri Üzerine Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması") relies on the oral history interviews made in İstanbul, Ankara, Antalya and Kocaeli. Turkish cinema in the 1960s is called as Yeşilçam in cinema history, during which, the audience went to those movies in mass, and hundreds of films were produced and released each year. When it is viewed as a singular phenomenon or period, Yeşilçam, in which melodrama is dominant, started in the 1960s, and since 1975 it has entered in the process of crisis due to the sex films capturing the market as well as economic depression. After military coup d'état of 1980, it ended because of the political climate of that period. In his article titled "Three Spectators: Notes on the Reception of Popular Entertainment Forms", Nezih Erdogan (2001: 219) defines this period as "Yeşilçam spectator" because of the intense requests of the audience. The period of 1960-1980 was important in that it witnessed the appearance of new directors and an increase in the number of spectators. Therefore, this period needs to be analysed from the perspective of the audience. Such a study might also contribute to the rewriting of the history of Turkish cinema from the point of audience. In addition, a melodrama with a certain place in Yeşilçam is often regarded as genre unique to women. So it is worth investigating how the women went to the cinema during the period of Yeşilçam and how they relate to the cinema. The objective of this study, the starting point of which is the relation that the audience established with the cinema in the Yeşilçam period (1960-1980), is to examine how the women audience experienced the cinema and how they narrated their cinema experience.

Oral history was selected as the data collection technique in the study. Oral history interviews are quite important not only because they reveal the cinemagoing experience of the spectator but also because such interviews make it possible to understand the strategies that the audience developed to give meaning to the films they watched as well as the psychological and social phenomena of the time that shaped these strategies. As a matter of fact, cinemagoing experience and the experience of giving meaning to films are both based on rather complex imaginary and contextual information. Therefore, the oral narratives / texts produced by interviewees about their cinematic experiences have been analyzed thematically and discursively. In study, oral history is regarded not only as a method of documentation but also as an approach to producing narratives and evaluating and reading these narratives. Through the analysis of interview data, it has been attempted to reveal the meaning of going to cinema for women.

Cinemagoing for Women: Being in Social and Cultural Life

Oral history interviews reveal that women are going to cinema for related and nested causes and it has complex and heterogeneous meanings for them. We can sort the meaning of cinema going for women like this:

1. Spending time, having fun
2. Getting away from difficult living conditions and dreaming
3. To learn, to learn the modernization and to perform
4. Being involved in the cultural activities and attending to urban life
5. Experiencing the architecture and aesthetics of movie theatres.
6. Become a member of social structure, develop sense of belonging
7. Offering a feminine socialization tool and relax

These factors or meanings are mostly seen intertwined and it is stated in interviewees narration directly. Firstly, the interviews, as pointed out in another work by Kuhn (2011: 85), made it clear that women's cinematic memories are built on the social action of cinemagoing rather than the films they see. In other words, it has been seen that women's cinematic

memories are built through the action of going to cinema rather than films. The vast majority of interviewed women referred to it as cinematic, cultural and social practice. Cinemagoing is the only entertainment in that time, for the most of the participants. Because cinema was the only entertainment in the 1960s and 1970s Turkey that was effused everywhere, from big cities to towns. In residential areas where there are no theaters, concert halls and similar cultural activities or are relatively few, cinema was a cheap entertainment for women to let them to go out, interact with other people, and teach them the outside world and life with tales.

We would be washed-up if there were no cinemas. There was no other entertainment... We used to watch from the balcony, there was a cinema right across; there was no other entertainment. There wasn't any other amusement. It was both cheap, at least for us, and close to us (Yasemin Yalın, 1957, İstanbul). Sebahat Adalar's narrative below reveals that cinema was to spend time, to have fun and to learn by amusing.

Spending time while having fun, having fun while learning something. Maybe it was a trend. I mean, it wouldn't be right to answer why we did that with current mind. With my childish mind at that time, I thought we were being happy, enjoying. I, for myself, was enjoying going to cinema. There, inside in that curtain, watching different lives of others, seeing different cases, seeing something we read before both lively and enlivened, that's why we were going (Sebahat Adalar, 1954, Adana).

In 1960s and 70s, cinema gives women the pleasure of watching lives of others, learning by watching from a sheltering distance. Thereby cinema also functions for women as a public education tool to learn about society, life and world. Going to cinema for women narrators, means to have fun, learn, become modern, practice the modernity and become socialized. For the most of the narrators cinema was one of the main entertainments that break the daily life's routine. Hatice Erdoğan's narration, states that cinema was being perceived as a learning environment:

At that time something was being learned. We were seeing how it was when we first go there. "Oh, how well it was", or "he did this" or we were getting information as well. People were learning as well, we were learning too. We went there, we cared about it, we observed how there were dressed, what they did. To their clothes... So to learn, we were spending our time. We spent our time like that (Hatice Erdoğan, 1951, Sivas).

Erdoğan's narration points out that the functions of going to cinema, especially for women are, getting dressed, learning the rules of behavior in society therefore learning the modernity. Going to cinema, is a tool for modernization, which is an official government project, on the other hand it gives the pleasure to perform the modernity. Gönül Hatay Eren's language when she describes the beauty of Kızılay that used to be people's meeting point back in the 1960s, relates with the modernization. "It was crowded, everybody was well dressed. People were trying to dress very elegant and chic even though they were going to the cinema or theatre. In the gala nights of opera women were wearing formal dresses. That's why I sewed one formal dress for myself" (Gönül Hatay Eren, 1937, Konya). Going to cinema was an experience that taught to be modern and performing that modernity by wearing chic clothes and behaving elegantly. Ayfer Çekiç (Eskişehir) also emphasizes on modernity via the modern image of Büyük Sinema (Great Cinema) in Ankara when she recalls the adornments on the ceiling there like this:

It was nice to see them. It was a modern image as it is. I wanted those kinds of things so much. Such things were very important for us in our lives. We weren't a wealthy family but we were one of the middle-income families. We generally used to visit the places that was suitable for us... Back then, going to Çankaya was something that we desired a little bit more. I was raised in Ankara, but there was always an expectation

of a clean and organized modern image in my life... In that sense Büyük Sinema used to give me a lot of energy. It was like going to west. It was like when you go to a restaurant in Turkey but you say, "I felt like I went abroad", it was such a longing to wit, when they say, "Like I saw Europe" (Ayfer Çekiç, 1950, Eskişehir).

The learning that the films provide is likened to the learning function of the tales. Sebahat Karaboğa, who feels unlucky for not being sent to school, likens the cinema directly to a pedagogical experience in her narration below. Cinema presents a safe way of learning the world through fiction for those who were deprived of educational and social rights and opportunities.

Every single movie gives a lesson to a person. Even still, I take lessons from the movies. The things we shouldn't do, the wrong things we do, most of the movies teach us that. Back then, there were tales. Our elderly used to tell us tales. Now these movies are like tales and they are examples for us (Sebahat Karaboğa, 1931, Çanakkale).

Despite that, this only entertainment was considered as a luxury by some people such as Hacer Çelik (1932, İstanbul) as understood from her saying, "I guess it was a luxurious thing; we used to go there and appreciate it". Behind this discourse, there are inadequate economic conditions. Şehriban Özdemir (1953, Antalya) also emphasizes the same thing when she states that cinema is both a social domain and a luxury. Cinema is a collective socialization area for the spectators, however the going frequency is related with the financial possibilities of the family.

Cinema also offers women to get away from the difficulty of daily life. Suna Yılmaz (1957, Antalya) exemplifies this situation by stating, "When I went to cinema, when I watched that films, I was getting away from my daily things for a bit, that two hours were like a therapy for me". The difficulties that the narrators were getting away were the tense political atmosphere of the 1970s and the economic troubles like the basic needs such as oil, sugar etc. being on the black market or given with ration card. Besides, the same interviewer's narration of looking at the wealthier families and their daughters with admiration, expresses that the cinema also functioned as a strategy to get through the poverty because of the economic and class differences. Thereby going to cinema is both an escape from the economical and social inequalities as well as being a fantastic escape area in order to encounter with the different layers of spectators and satisfying their desires. Cinema, in this situation, is conceptualized as a field by turning the poverty into a desire by observing. The movie theatre, cinemagoing experience through films about different and appealing worlds, triggers various desires in spectators. One of these desires is alluring cities like İstanbul where the colorful life exists.

City and Cinema: İstanbul and Cinemas as a Passion

Cinema is seen as a symbol of life full of cultural activities united with the city. For women to go to cinema, taking part in the social and cultural life means to exist. A woman goes to cinema not only for wondering the subject or the content of the film that is being showed in the cinema, but primarily to be a member of the social environment she lives in, to be a member of a community, a neighborhood and a city. Going to cinema, provides to be a part of the practices and values of a discursive community. Not going to cinema, on the other hand, almost means to get isolated from the social relationship that determines the social rules and status between the members. The narration of a woman, who chose to go to cinema with neighbors instead of getting placed on her first moving day in that neighborhood, reveals the truth. Therefore the practice of going to the cinema is an urban practice, which brings the privilege to be included in the social relations. According to Ellis (1992: 26), the cinema is an experience of watching a film with an unknown group of people. For these group of people the only common point needed to get together is to be attracted to a certain place and a certain film. From this point of view, cinema becomes a clear urban experience of the crowd who need belonging and loneliness (Ellis, 1992: 26). In this regard İstanbul has a special

importance in women's experiences. Especially for some women participants, to get away from the smallness and vapidness of where they live, İstanbul attracts them with its charm and becomes a dream for them. For instance Hacer Çelik, even decides to choose her match not from Silivri, where she lives, but from İstanbul that she loves very much. She says, "I, in any case, wanted İstanbul, not a person from Silivri. I didn't like Silivri, it's a small place; I wanted to broaden my horizons. To visit to wander... Silivri had nothing special to live, nothing to emulate..." (Çelik, 1932). As sketched in Yeşilçam movies, İstanbul is perceived as a place to visit and wonder that offers special experiences, that is bilaterally and dreamy and a place where the streets are paved with gold.

Hacer Çelik, who attained her desire, maintains her adventure of cinemagoing that started in a church-like building in Silivri in 1950s and continued in İstanbul after she got married and gave birth. Despite she was going to parks at Sultanahmet with her baby, she got kept away from cinema for a while. When her son turned three, she moved to Laleli and went to Bulvar Cinema and Azak Cinema by entrusting her child to the doorman.

My aunt's daughter was newly married as well. Her husband brought and dropped her off at my place in the mornings. Together two sisters, two nieces, we were going to cinema. Morning cinemas after 10 a.m. the children grew up, I started to go everywhere. Morning matinee was cheap. I went to Azak Cinema for morning matinee the most. I lived in Kumkapı back then. I was climbing uphill and going. That's why my knees ache; I probably wandered too much (Çelik, 1932).

Hacer Çelik's narration shows that despite the childcare, the housework, spatial distance and the ramp, she establishes herself as a strong and sociable self for going to cinema no matter what. She relates the knee pain she has now with the ramp she used to climb in her youth; therefore she accepts this as a result of her cinema desire. However this acceptance rather than regret means to accept the truth, to adopt it and to be proud of it.

Breathing the showy and charming atmosphere of the movie theatres

Movie theatres were decisive for the cinema spectator with their architectural style, decoration and aesthetic details for long years. To see the ornaments and the refurbishment of gigantic dream palaces, which could contain hundreds, even thousands of people, were one of the reasons alongside with the concept of film watching for the spectator to go to the movie theatres. The research with the support of Glasgow University, "Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain", revealed that even sixty years later the spectators still preserve the details of the movie theatres in their memories (Sorlin, 2004). Just like in Gönül Hatay Eren's statement below.

I used to go to Büyük Sinema [at Ankara]. Because Büyük Sinema had a different characteristic. Red carpeted floors, well-kept and comfortable seats, nice coolness when you enter and the romantic songs were playing of the 60s. It gives the feeling of entering to a temple. Such a beautiful place. Besides Büyük Sinema didn't only function as a movie theatre. There were activities, theatres, concerts... Büyük Sinema was the place that my husband and I go the most often. It was romantic to watch a movie together, hand to hand with my head on his shoulder (Eren, 1937).

With architectural style, velvet curtains and ornaments, the magnificent movie theatres offer the women spectator a romantic and magical experience. This experience gives the women the privilege of both being a member of the elite citizen crowd that consumes and place and to be the unique romantic self of that magical atmosphere. Thus, through the movie theatre, while the self is being unique, cinemagoing becomes a supreme activity in everyday life practices and it reminds of a temple. Temple describing encountered in many narratives, shows the power of cinema's comprehension on the spectator, and causes the spectators to give themselves up to the film, which they will start watching soon. Going to cinema and

watching a film turns into a collective experience that exceeds the practices of everyday life, where everybody feels unique.

Social affiliation and cinema as a socialization environment between women

Going to the cinema is a compound experience that contains a special film, a unique personality, a particular social situation and a special time and atmosphere (Cressey 1938: 518 as cited in Gripsrud, 2011: 315). This experience lets the spectators to have a sense of belonging. "People who go to cinema, become a part of 'us' by sharing a common moment, experience and culture" (Akbulut, 2016: 238). This illusion, as seen in the narratives below, in the axis of a common "us" identity, braces the spectator to establish belonging to a community and society.

People were interested in cinema. Firstly the subject we talked about at school on Mondays were "which movie you've seen on Saturday, which one did you go?" back then there were no mini movie theatres, the films were playing in big movie theatres. Despite the big movie theatres, it used to get full (Özgür, 1955).

So there were open-air cinemas at summer nights. Everybody was running there to get chairs towards evenings after their work was done (Yılmaz, 1957).

As seen in the narrations, going to cinema creates social relations and through that, belonging sense gets strengthened. This experience has more genuine meanings for women. Women's narration indicates that at that time the cinema offered socialization similar to meeting friends and going to the neighbor. Sebahat Karaboğa's (1931), narration of telling the women who didn't attend the cinemagoing, the day after the screening at the women's meeting exultingly, reveals that cinemagoing both provides an area of socialization and encourages other women to go to the cinema by attributing them new social roles and statutes by constituting a social need. "Oh the film was really nice, we went last evening and loved it, they were telling. Then they were trying to come and they did." (1931). Yet, like Jarvie emphasizes, watching a film is a way to enrich and share the experiences, besides it is a socializing action in a society to talk about what was seen in the film together (Jarvie, 1970: 99).

Cinemagoing, as Hatice Erdoğan (1951, Sivas) said, was considered like "Being at home to guests, playing rummikub or a card game, attending to a wedding or going to a Turkish bath". Also in a large part of the interviews, it is emphasized that cinemagoing is not a singular action, it is a plural action. Cinema offers a feminine socialization possibility through crowded watching experience instead of singular.

There was socialness; we were having a group naturally. We were going there was concurring friends, not alone. There was socialness. Besides there was experiencing a different activity. It was good for us; in a word we were being discharged (Tezel, 1947).

The thing that was good for the women and discharging them, was especially offering them a special watching environment like women's matinee and to let them experience the comparative freedom, away from the domination of men such as father, brother or husband.

Meryem Oksay's (1950) narration of "Back then there was women's matinee. Women could only go on Saturdays; we were gathering together with the female neighbors and going to the cinema together. Other than we had no entertainment, no social life", reveals two facts: the first of these is cinemagoing for women in that period's socio-cultural context, was a necessity because of having no other choice, that was caused by limited opportunities. The other fact is, this situation of women because of necessities and no alternatives, turns into a privileged opportunity between them. As a matter of fact, like in Sebahat Karaboğa's narration, cinemagoing gives the women spectator the key of a strong female identity. Karaboğa (1931) tells that in the past, in where she used to live, women's cinemagoing was

not very well received; even though her religionist mother-in-law was against it, she used to take her daughters and go to cinema; and that she was seen as a movie theatre owner and the seal of the cinema. Her narration reveals that she established herself as a modern, brave and a pioneer person in a narrow social environment. In this identity building process, cinemagoing has a decisive role. The key factors for women to have emotional discharge are touching and dramatic films. Sevinç Tunalı (1944), states this situation by this means, “We were going to touching films, we would always cry and come back”, while Necla Oktay explains:

We went to Turkish films a lot. My sister for instance, wouldn't consider a film good, if it didn't make her cry. Because Turkish films always scratch a wound, continuously touch our emotions. Scilicet, the films reflect the society. We perceived the films as real back then. We always perceived what was on that curtain as real. Those people's emotions were our emotions; we felt that. “They are like us”, we used to say (Oktay, 1956).

Oktay's narration, underlines that the spectator went to see those films to see themselves in them. Native films are regions that the society encounters with their own troubles, desires and happiness and the society confirms this situation through crying. For the majority of the women spectator, the criterion of liking a film is the potential of making them cry. This criterion was developed with the Turkish films, which were mostly melodramas that covered the curtains in the 60s and 70s. Native melodramas that were about the love between the rich girl and poor man, in which the love solved the class difference problem, were assimilated by the spectator through the oral culture examples such as Leyla and Majnun, which the films in Turkey rely on. These kinds of films, produced in 1960s and 70s also caused the spectator to feel that he or she was the one on the screen.

Oral history interviews, although not exactly through the statements of the interviewees, reveals that going to the cinema implicitly is more of a feminine activity. Interviewees stated that they go to the cinema on the weekends with their husbands if they are married and with their friends on the weekdays. Cinemagoing with friends on weekdays corresponds with minimizing or postponing the housework, sending children to school, husband to work, and gives the opportunity to be with other women who are relatively away from the in-house responsibilities but in the same situation. In fact, screenings that are only for women feminizes the publicity of the movie theatre. This fact supports the opinion of Annette Kuhn when she expresses that women create a subculture established around the cinemagoing experience and this subculture is both strengthening and in some situations destructive (Kuhn, 2002). As can be remembered, Hansen also stated that the women who are not allowed to or not appreciated to look and observe in the society, experiences watching and voyeurism freely in cinema places (Mayne, 1993: 67). Going to the cinema with restricted educational and economic conditions, is almost the only option for women and they build their daily life practice around cinemagoing as an area of socialization. Cinemagoing, especially for the rural women who recently migrated to city is an area of socialization and acculturation where they learn and experience the city life and modernism.

Frequency of Cinemagoing

The narrations show that the frequency of cinemagoing for women depends on the distance of movie theatres to their houses, their income level, the existence of an adult to go there with, marital status and personal characteristics. It appears that in 1960s and 70s, there were too many movie theatres therefore women mostly went to the movie theatres that were close to their houses. At home or around it, mother's, father's, older brother or sister's participation could be considered as an advantage for them to go to the cinema. For instance, Yasemin Yalın (1957) tells that the first film she went was with her grandmother. In most narrations, it is revealed that cinemagoing, especially for women spectators, continued until marriage; however after marriage, because of the burdens such as the housework, childcare, etc. women's cinemagoing activity was decreased and even ruptured. Even though women

spectators kept going to the cinema with their fiancées in the flirt period before the marriage, as stated below, marriage both decreases the cinemagoing frequency and causes to change the movie theatre.

We went to the cinema a lot. Until I got engaged in the summer we went to the open air cinemas 3 times a week. After I got engaged we always went to the movie theatres such as Atlantik, Suadiye (Yalın, 1957).

I got married in 1977 and after 1980 there were no cinemas. I mean after 77, I was engaged to my husband for two years. I neither went to the cinema when I was engaged nor after I got married. Because there were no cinemas back then. Now there are no cinemas in the district we live in. I mean what I say is 50 years ago, 4 years from the other place, this district doesn't have cinema now (Aykın, 1955).

The development of the watching culture is directly associated with the special interest the spectator have, the cinema being the only entertainment and the movie theatres being very common. It is known that the movie theatre number in Turkey started to drop in around 1975s because of the crisis in film industry, urbanization and migration thus because of the social politic events of the time film production was decreased. With the urban transformation, closing the movie theatres especially the open air movie theatres was considered as the main reason for the decrease of cinemagoing frequency. Spectator's narration overlaps with the historic narration. Yasemin Yalın, especially narrates the historic process after 1975 like this:

It was changed like this. Open air cinemas were done in that time. This coast started to get filled up. Besides, the Deniz Cinema, the last stop of the bus to Bostancı, it was right across it. There is a café there, border by rail. I mean you couldn't hear the movie while the train was passing. After the coast started to get filled, the cinema went away. The other one, Yıldız was underside of it, that went away too. We had to switch to the closed movie theatres. We got engaged in 79. Yes we went to the cinema a lot when we were engaged too, once a week. After the marriage we didn't go that often. (Yalın, 1957)

CONCLUSION

The analysis of cinemagoing activity points out that the social and cultural meaning of cinemagoing is heterogeneous and stratified. Results of the narrations of 50 women interviewers could be aligned like this:

Women, more the watching the film, go to the cinema as a habit because of the restricted economic and cultural possibilities. Cinema, is a free time activity, an entertainment caused by necessities.

Cinema is a social practice for women that produces various belongings and consolidates them. These belongings start with providing a privileged statute to women in their neighborhood relations, expands from urban identity to belonging to a wide citizen community through opening to new socialization areas with a pioneering and a progressive roles to them who were delimited to a narrow social frame.

Cinema, in different belonging designs provides an encounter between classes, creates new desires between women besides soothes these desires with magnificent architecture and magical atmosphere of the movie theatres. The desires that cinemagoing experience evokes, could be about consumption patterns such as clothes, foods and beverages that are indicators of a rich life, could also be about different life practices created in the fiction world of films. Movie theatres that are assimilated to temples give chance to the spectator to experience that atmosphere and makes them feel unique, therefore satisfy the desire it made temporarily. Open air cinemas out of any luxury, evokes a comfort to the spectators that is similar to the comfort of being at home, a feeling of being secure and intimacy originated from watching the film with a crowd. The melodramatic narrations shown in these movie

theatres, mostly native, firstly makes them cry and lets them to get relieved. Crying for women spectator is a criterion of a good film.

Marriage is an important threshold for women's cinemagoing experience. Experiencing it with family members or female friends until marriage, decreases because of a husband and children to take care of. None the less some women, even though the social roles and responsibilities they undertake, keep going to cinemas and use the films as a tactic against the difficulty of daily life. Cinema is an experience that clings women to life, makes them strong and creates them an area in social life. Cinemagoing experience is thereby narrated as a story of identifying women as strong, brave, innovator, plucky and progressivist and that experience turns into an element to develop a positive identity fiction.

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