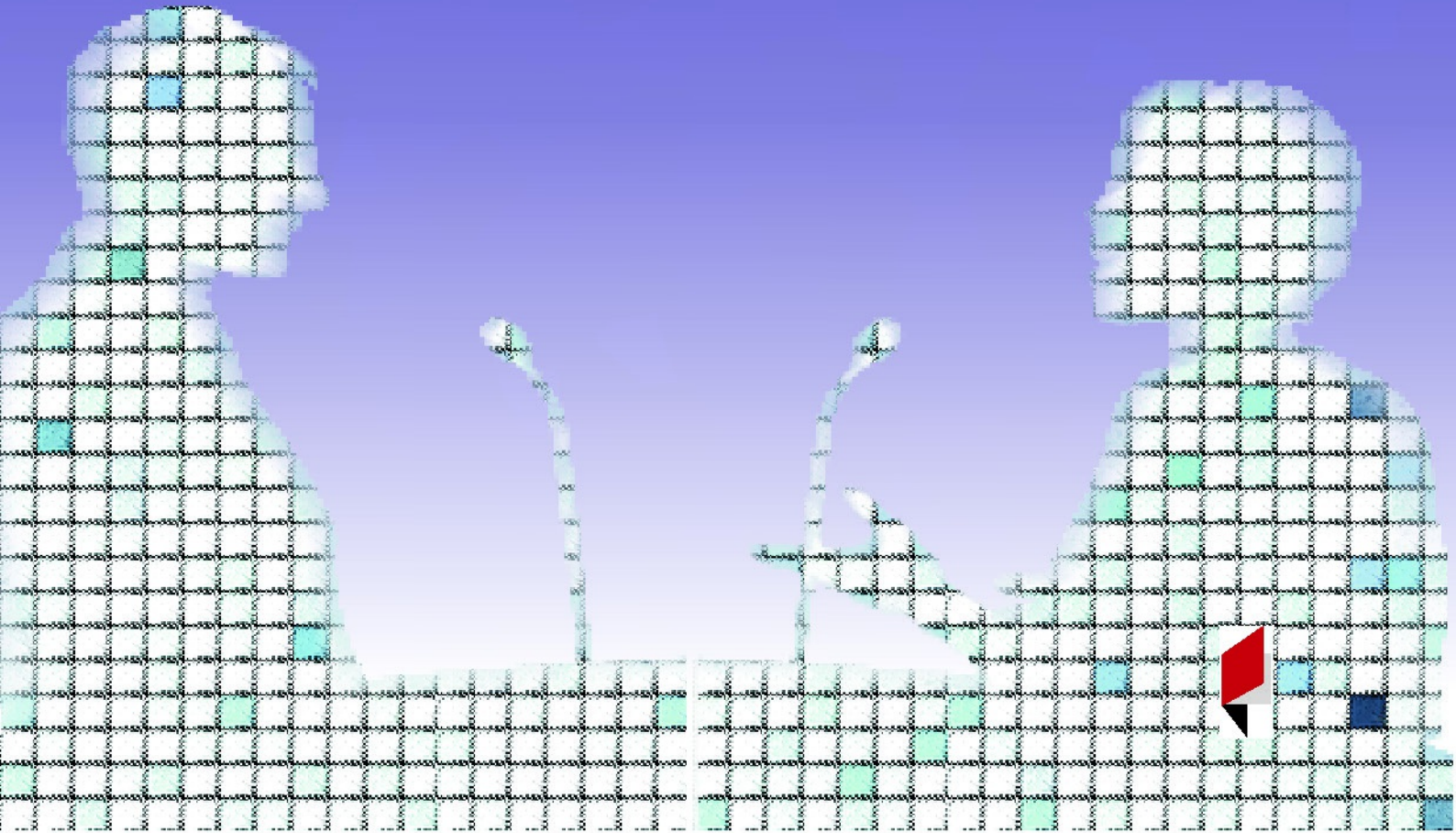


Critical Debates in Social Sciences

Edited by
Bedriye TUNÇSİPER
Ferhan SAYIN



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Representation of Labourers and the Labour Problem in the Late Turkish Cinema

Mehmet IŞIK

INTRODUCTION

Due to economic, social and political reasons, labourers in Turkish cinema have usually been the “invisible subject” (Hepkon and Aydın, 2010), and their problems have been ignored as well. However, labourers and problems related to labourers have been within the interest of cinema since its beginnings. The first labour film is *The Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory in Lyon*, 45 seconds long and shot by Lumière brothers in 1895 (Wagner, 2014: 316; Mazierska, 2015: 42). The film is a sign of how modernity is meaningless for the French working classes, with the images of heavy and dull work being the foundation of urbanisation in Lyon, France, at the end of the century (Wagner, 2014: 316).

This film is followed by the films related to labourers and labour problems such as *The Gay Shoe Clerk* (1903), *The Quarry Man* (1908), *Unemployed and Unemployable* (1908), *A Workingman’s Dream* (1908), *The Song of the Shirt* (1909), and *A Corner in Wheat* (1910), *Strike* (1925), *October* (1927), *The Deserter* (1933). Late 1920s and early 1930s are the years when images of labourers in American film were taken into account seriously for the first time, and according to Jacobs, who makes researches on various aspects of the history of film and the film industry from its beginnings until the late 1930s, filmmakers were mainly interested in the personal sufferings of the labourers; however, they didn’t focus on working-class organisations or activism (Ross, 2001: 83).

The real popularisation of labour cinema comes when the labour movement gains power after the World War II. The period from the mid-1960s to its end is the time when social turmoils occurred among women, labourers, blacks and students in the USA and the World, and the labour

movement reached its highest after the war (Ryan ve Kellner, 1997: 62). The rising social opposition and the dynamism in social life find its place in cinema (Ryan ve Kellner, 1997: 21-23), and in many countries including Hollywood, carry the working class into cinema (Işık, 2015: 215).

The number of films depicting working class is very low in Turkey. Except for a few examples handling working class with its most fundamental dynamics and phenomenon of class consciousness, other films present labourer as a thematic element in the background. Even with this aspect, nevertheless, these films are quite important to understand social transformation (Hepkon and Aydın 2010: 81). This research investigates how labourers and labour problem are handled in the late Turkish cinema. In this context, the films *Zerre* (2012) by Erdem Tepegöz, *Dust Cloth* (2015) by Ahi Öztürk, *My Father's Wings* (2016) by Kıvanç Sezer are analysed and it is revealed how the labourers are represented in the late Turkish cinema and how the ideological production is done. Before the analysis, it is examined how labour and labour problems are handled in Turkish cinema since its beginnings. Then, aforementioned films will be analysed. By this means, it is tried to present an exposition of the transformation experienced.

1. LABOUR FILMS IN TURKISH CINEMA

Turkish cinema has not paid much attention to labourers and labour problem since its beginnings. However, labourers have been an important topic of the agenda in social life with their strikes and protests since the Ottoman Era. Beginning from the early years of 19th century, the competition from the outside World began to transform the traditional production system and soon created wage-earning industrial labourers (Karakışla, 1998: 28).

Consequently, first strikes started to be seen from the second half of the 19th century. Even though some strike actions had occurred before because of low wages or late payments (Çelik, 1999), in Ottoman lands, the first strike in modern terms was the labour strike in coalmines in Zonguldak in 1863 (Issawi, 1980: 50-51). From 1870s, the number of strikes increased with the effect of growing financial problems of the country, and in January 1872, Hasköy Shipyard workers; in February 1872, Beyoğlu Telegraph Office workers in Istanbul; in March 1872 Rumeli Railway workers went on strike. These were followed by new

strikes done by labourers working in branches such as shipyards, railways etc. (Yıldırım, 2017: 209). In 36 years from 1872 to the proclamation of the 2nd constitutional monarchy (1908), 92 strikes happened (Yıldırım, 2017: 224).

Despite the fact that labour problem became visible in press and in public opinion since the early periods, Turkish cinema has preferred to ignore these problems. In this choice, it is also effective that the labourers are seen as dangerous subjects with the impact of labour protests around the world since the working class was weak. Inclusion of prohibitive provisions towards labourers in Police Regulations of 1845 and regarding it as an issue of city police even when the labourers gather and make a crowd (Doğan, 2012: 85) reveal that situation. These prohibitions continued in the following years, and in 1909, Strike Law forbade going on strike in workplaces where public service is carried out (Toprak, 1981: 153), and this prohibition continued until the adoption of the constitution of 1961. Labourers only acquired the right to go on strike with *Collective Labour Agreement Strike and Lock-out Law no. 275* in 15 July 1963.

The ignorance of Turkish cinema towards labourers began to disappear in 1960s thanks to the rise of labourers' struggle to claim their rights and unionisation in the atmosphere of freedom coming with the new constitution, and to the fact that Socialist Realist cinema gained power. Since the freedom of opinion was restricted in all areas from academic life to press, and to political life during the period before 1960, it is not quite possible to encounter films handling social reality in that period. In the films, an atmosphere of optimism is dominant where everyday problems are ignored (Güçhan, 1992: 80). No social difficulty is handled, and people, whatever their environment or time is, only betray, are betrayed, love, suffer from tuberculosis and die (Daldal, 2005: 65).

1960s became a turning point for Turkish cinema in terms of reflection of social and cultural issues in cinema (Esen, 2000: 9), and many matters used to be regarded as taboos began to be mentioned (Scognamillo, 1998:190). One of the matters used to be a taboo and not mentioned before is labourers and the labour problem. It was not possible to make films about the labour problem during the before mentioned period when labourers' natural rights such as to establish union or to go on strike were prohibited or restricted. This attitude did not change much in the period after World War II, when freedoms increased to some extent. Until 1960s, labourers didn't come to mind when social problems were mentioned (Coş, 1974: 5); therefore, the labour problem did not find a place in

cinema.

Tablo 1: The Films Related to Workers and Problems in Turkish Cinema

	Film	Director	Year	Production Company	Actors
1	Şehirdeki Yabancı (Stranger in the City)	Halit Refig	1963	Be-Ya film	Göksel Arsoy/ Nilüfer Aydan
2	Karanlıkta Uyananlar (Those Awakening in the Dark)	Ertem Göreç	1964	Film Limited	Fikret Hakan/ Ayla Algan
3	Bitmeyen Yol (The Road That Has No End)	Duygu Sagirolu	1965	Gen-Ar Film	Fikret Hakan/ Selma Güneri
4	Topragn Kanı (Blood of the Earth)	Atf Yılmaz	1966	Günes Film	Fikret Hakan/ Belgin Doruk
5	Gelin (The Bride)	Ömer L. Akad	1973	Erman Film	Hülya Koçyiğit/ Hakan Balamir
6	Diyet (The Blood Money)	Ömer L. Akad	1974	Erman Film	Hülya Koçyiğit/ Hakan Balamir
6	Endise (The Anxiety)	Yılmaz Güney/ Serif Gören	1975	Güney Film	Erkan Yücel
7	Insan Avcısı (Manhunter)	Duygu Sagirolu	1975	Uğur Film	Cüneyt Arkin
8	Babamın Oglu (Father's Son)	Melih Gülgen	1975	Gülgen Film	Cüneyt Arkin
9	İki Kızgın Adam (Two Angry Man)	Ertem Göreç	1976	Sezer Film	Kadir İnanır
10	Günesli Bataklık (Sun Over the Swamp)	Süreyya Duru	1977	Murat Film	Hakan Balamir
11	Yasam Kavgası	Halit Refig	1978	Ugur Film	Fatma Girik
12	Maden (The Mine)	Yavuz Özkan	1978	Çiçek Film	Cüneyt Arkin/ Tarık Akan
13	Demiryol (The Railroad)	Yavuz Özkan	1979	Burç Film	Tarık Akan/ Fikret Hakan
14	Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde (On Fertile Land)	Erden Kıral	1979	Irmak Film	Tuncel Kurtiz
15	Düşman (The Enemy)	Zeki Ökten	1979	Güney Film	Aytaç Arman
16	Bir Günün Hikâyesi (Story of a Day)	Sinan Çetin	1980	Belge Film	Fikret Hakan
17	Çark (The Wheel)	Muzaffer Hıçdurmaz	1987	Burak Film	Tarık Akan
18	İs (The Work)	Ahmet Faik Akıncı	1994	Gizem Ajans	Berhan Şimşek
19	Ekmek (The Bread)	Ahmet Faik Akıncı	1996	Gizem Ajans	Fikret Hakan
20	Baska Dilde Ask (Love in Another Language)	Ilksen Basarrı	2009	Kutu Film	Mert Fırat
21	Zerre	Erdem Tepegöz	2012	Kule Film	Jale Arıkan
22	Nefesim Kesilene Kadar (Until I Lose My Breath)	Emine Emel Balcı	2015	Prolog Film	Esmem Madra
23	Toz Bezi (Dust Cloth)	Ahu Öztürk	2015	Roni Film	Asiye Dinçsoy/ Nazan Kesal
24	Babamın Kanatları (My Father's Wing)	Kıvanç Sezer	2016	Nar Film	Menderes Samancılar

The first director to feature a labourer protagonist in a film is Muhsin Ertuğrul. Ertuğrul, in *Halıcı Kız*, filmed in 1953, also, the first colour film of Turkish cinema (Özön, 2010: 118; Özgüç, 1988: 22), carried the labourer protagonist to the silver screen by giving actress Heyecan Baran the role of Gül, textile worker on carpet loom. However, this labourer protagonist still does not mention social rights, strike, labour union, and

serves only as a background. Beginning of appearance of labourer protagonists and labourers as a class in films, in real terms, takes place due to the fact that the new constitution, brought by 27 May after 1960, loosened the prohibitions of opinion and gave way to opinions and actions minding labourers' rights (Dorsay, 2013: 10). Labourers, previously seen as individual protagonists, begin to appear in time as a class on silver screen (Işık, 2015: 217).

While Ekrem (Erol Taş) of the film *Gecelerin Ötesi* (1960) by Metin Erksan is a textile worker, Mehmet (Ayhan Işık) of *Acı Hayat* (1961) appears as a welding worker in Kasımpaşa Shipyard. Also, while Selim (Orhan Günşiray) and Durmuş (Kadir Savun) of *İkimize Bir Dünya* (1962), a successful adaptation of John Steinback by Orhan Nevzat Pesen, appear as construction workers, Sabahat (Lale Oraloğlu) and Cemal (Turgut Özatay) of *Kırık Çanaklar* (1961) by Memduh Ün are labourers as well. The film *Mahalleye Gelen Gelin* (1961), by Osman Seden, tells the story of Belgin (Fatma Girik) who is a rich girl and starts to work as a worker in her uncle's factory to find some idea for the book she is planning to write. In these films, where labourer character is depicted as a detail in the main plot of the film (Hepkon ve Şaki Aydın, 2010: 87) or where it is used as a background, instead of the labour problem, common economic problems and the difficulties of life are carried into cinema in a melodramatic way. (Işık, 2015: 217).

The first film to consider the labour problem in a serious way is *Şehirdeki Yabancı* produced by Halit Refiğ in 1962 (Güçhan, 1992: 10). Vedat Türkali wrote the screenplay of the eighty minutes long film (Dönmez-Colin, 2008: 238). The film, which is about the alienation of Aydın, an engineer studying in the UK and coming back to his homeland Zonguldak, from the people of the town and his conflict with them, and which also mentions the struggle of mine workers who suffer under the pressure of despotic and deceitful upper class administrators and business people (Uzdu, 2016: 95), handles, for the first time, the reality of social atmosphere in the axis of mineworkers (Kılıç Hristidis, 2007: 107). Although the main plot of the film is a love story, it is implicated that the labourers develop self-awareness during the flow of events. On the other hand, the only action that the labourers take during the film is saving Aydın and Gönül from the crowd wanting to kill them (Coş, 1974: 6).

Many researchers accept *Karanlıkta Uyananlar* as the first film carrying directly the labourers and their problems in real terms onto the silver screen successfully (Coş, 1974: 14; Teksoy, 2007: 42; Morva

Kablamacı, 2011: 59). Vedat Türkali scripts the screenplay of the film, directed by Ertem Göreç in 1964, again. The film, which carries the Turkish labourer with its environment, problems, worries and struggles for the first time into cinema (Kalkan, 1993: 40), is separated from other films by telling the story of all labourers, instead of only one labourer protagonist, in a paint factory (Coş, 1974: 14).

The film handling issues such as labour union, strike and labour problem for the first time (Scognamillo 1998: 342) mentions that working class, who is scorned and whose labour is exploited, is slowly gaining power. At the end of the film, characteristics of the generation of 68, protesting, and opposing the system when necessary, and taking side with the oppressed and abandoned, are seen in the labourers, who gain self-awareness and self-confidence, and then band together against capitalism and come down to earth crying “We exist” (Kasım ve Atayeter, 2012: 35). During the film, working class is glorified with its anti-imperialist standing. Filling this stand with a nationalist discourse gives them the mission to be on the alert any moment and to protect the homeland (Maktav, 2013: 284). In fact, at the end of the film, the labourers do not surrender the factory to the managers of the multi-national company buying it to make a packaging workshop (Işık, 2015: 218).

Bitmeyen Yol directed by Duygu Sağıroğlu in 1965 is among the best films in Turkish cinema, representing labourers migrating from Anatolia to large city. The film, taking place in Turkey of 1960s when the migration clogs the roads and unemployment is at its highest (Doğan, 2011: 448), is about the struggle of peasant men, six young countrymen, with their bags on the back coming to city to look for a job (Esen, 2000: 81) to stand and survive in the big city (Teksoy, 2007: 42). According to Coş (1974: 12), *Bitmeyen Yol* has been a film able to convey the story of labourers of country origin in big city in a tangible and realistic language without making it insignificant, without sacrificing it to melodrama in a similar way that many examples in Turkish cinema fall into. After that film, except for *Toprağın Kanı* (1966) of Atıf Yılmaz, which discusses the nationalisation of petroleum production (Luxembourgeois ve Baris, 2018: 5; Esen 2010: 73) and the awakening process of peasants working in a petroleum refinery, no films addressing the labour problem are produced until mid-1970s.

The second half of 1970s was a period when the audience became distant from cinema, and surrendered to sex films of Yeşilçam due to the reasons such as rise of social movement, violence becoming a part of

everyday life, deepening of economic crisis and TV becoming widespread (Dorsay, 2013: 11). In the meanwhile, this period was a time when Yılmaz Güney and young directors following his steps produced films with a high level of criticism. Therefore, most of the labour films produced in this period are more critical than the previous period. Primary labour films of this period can be listed as *Gelin* (1973), *Düğün* (1973), *Diyet* (1974) trilogy of Lütfi Akad, *Endişe* (1974) of Şerif Gören, *İnsan Avcısı* (1975) of Duygu Sağıroğlu, *Babanın Oğlu* (1975) of Melih Gülgen, *İki Kızgın Adam* (1976) of Ertem Göreç, *Güneşli Bataklık* (1977) of Süreyya Duru, *Yaşam Kavgası* (1978) of Halit Refiğ, *Maden* (1978) and *Demiryol* (1979) of Yavuz Özkan, *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (1979) of Erden Kıral, *Düşman* (1979) of Zeki Ökten, *Bir Günün Hikâyesi* (1980) of Sinan Çetin (Işık, 2015: 219).

The interest of Turkish cinema in labourers and their problems awakened in early 1960s and continuing in the second half of 1970s after a period of stop almost completely disappeared dating from the first half of 1980s because of the reasons such as 1980 Military Coup d'état, domination of neoliberal economy ideology in the World and in Turkey and the inability of Turkey to overcome the crisis of late 1970s. Legal reforms of post-1980 Coup regime making the organised struggle of labouring class (also working class) impossible, restrictive effects of new-right wing economy policies introduced promptly in Turgut Özal period and the failure of the following governments to fulfil the reforms to enable organised struggle of working class formed (Dursun, 1998: 211) the legal basis for this indifference.

While about twenty movies addressing labour, problems were produced from 1962 to the end of 1980, in 30 years from that date until 2010, no feature length films directly about labourers and the labour problem were produced except for *Çark* (Muzaffer Hiçdurmaz, 1987), *İş* (Faik Ahmet Akıncı, 1994), *Ekmek* (Faik Ahmet Akıncı, 1996).

Çark, a large part of which is filmed in Kazlıçeşme, leather industry centre of that period (Evren and Çeker, 2003: 248), tells four labourers' struggle for life, working in a glasswork factory and dismissed after asking for promotion on their wages by their boss saying that glasswork is dead due to the "plastic competition" (Işık, 2015: 225). The film *İş* mentions the resistance of the labourers working in a dam construction against the exploitation of foreign capital. *Ekmek*, where Fikret Hakan and Demir Karahan play the leading roles, depicts Zonguldak mineworkers' fight for bread, who resist against privatisation.

Besides these, there are films not discussing the labour problem, yet addressing indirectly to the labour problem for the reason that the protagonist is a labourer. Among those, *Until I Lose My Breath* (2015) film of Emel Balcı reveals effectively the heavy working conditions of textile factory by focusing on the struggle of Serap (Esme Madra), a runner in a textile factory, to stand tall. *Love in Another Language* (2009) of İlksen Başarır tells in a successful way the problems of call centre labourers having to talk to people they don't know all day long over the love story between call centre worker Zeynep (Işıl Aksoy) and hearing impaired Onur (Mert Fırat). *Love in Another Language* (2009) is one of the rare films of the late Turkish cinema, where the labourers go on strike.

Among these feature length films, we should remember and mention Murat Kaya's *Yüz Bin Kişiydiler*, filmed in 2009, and *Derin Çığlık 263*, filmed in 2011, and Murat Utku's *Direnişçi* (2010), Ahmet Akıncı's *Soma 301* documentaries as well. The first of these films addresses to collective protests of Zonguldak mine workers in 1990 and the great march following those events (Soner, 2015: 213). The second film tells the struggle of TEKEL (Turkish Tobacco and Alcoholic Beverages Company) workers in 2009 (Arda, 2014: 151). The third film is about the firedamp explosion happening in 1992, Zonguldak, Kozlu, and causing the deaths of 263 mine workers (Göl, 2012: 207). The fourth one depicts the mine accident in Soma causing the deaths of 301 miners.

The indifference to labourers and their problems reached a new breaking point in 2012 with the film *Zerre* filmed in 2012. It is considered that media's wide coverage to labourers due to occupational accidents and the International Labour Films Festivals begun to be held simultaneously in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir had an influence on the interest of Turkish cinema, especially young independent directors, in the labour problem (Başaran, 2015: 9). Forty films from twenty countries were screened in the festival held in 1 May 2006 for the first time with the theme of "Stories of Resistance Against Neoliberalism" (Çelik, 2015: 29). A total of 65 short films, documentaries and fictional films, of which 47 are from Turkey and 18 are foreign, were screened during the festival held for the 13th time in 2018 with the motto of "Silence is good only at the cinema". 761 films have been screened at the festival so far.

2. METHOD

Today, cinema creates a cultural representation arena of particular

importance to pursue such political struggles. Films are the platform of contest where various forms of representation compete with each other to define how social reality will be comprehended, moreover, to define what it will be (Kellner ve Ryan, 1997: 37-38). In this sense, films focusing on labourers and the labour problem form one of the platforms where the competition between various representation forms is the toughest. Within this frame, this research analyses how labourers, being among the central political actors of social and political life in Turkey, and their problems are represented in Turkish cinema and how labour-oriented ideological production is done. Since, throughout the study, it will be a presentation of revealing the ideological meanings about the selected films and the mechanism of these meanings' formation, it is not aimed to analyse the conditions or processes of the production and reception of the films (Dursun, 1998: 225).

As mentioned before, dating from 2012, there has been a weak awakening to labour and the labour problem in Turkish cinema. However, this new interest is more about the problems labourers face in daily life, being different from the interest awakening in 1960s and continuing until 12 September 1980 military intervention. *Zerre*, directed by Erdem Tepegöz in 2012, *Dust Cloth*, directed by Ahu Öztürk in 2015, and *My Father's Wings*, directed by Kıvanç Sezer, draw attention as being the first products of this new concept. In this context, aim of this study is to present how labour and the labour problem is represented in the late Turkish cinema and how labour-oriented ideological production is done by means of the films *Zerre* (2012), *Dust Cloth* (2015), *My Father's Wings* (2016). To achieve this aim, discursive analysis of these films is conducted in the research

3. FINDINGS

In the research aiming to reveal the representation of labourers and the labour problem in Turkish cinema and how the ideology is founded during the representation process, discursive analysis of the films *Zerre* (2012), *Dust Cloth* (2015), *My Father's Wings* (2016) is conducted in the research.

Zerre, the first film to analyse, is directed in 2012 by Erdem Tepegöz (1982), one of the new generation directors. It is important for being the first film to address the labour problem after 2000. The film tells the story of Zeynep (Jale Arıkan), a textile worker in her thirties, apart from her husband and living with her aged mother (Rüçhan Çalıkur) and her

daughter (Dilay Demrok) in Istanbul, Tarlabaşı, in a slum (Ottone, 2017: 68). Zeynep, dismissed from her job in the textile factory, look for a job without stopping to maintain her family and to pay her debt to her landlord who urge her to sell one of her kidney's to him. Unable to find a job, she even consents to work in a textile factory in Tekirdağ leaving her aged mother and disabled daughter. She, however, leaves there suffering harassment. Having to struggle against unemployment, poverty, insecurity, male violence and harassment, organ mafia to survive and to protect her mother and daughter, Zeynep fears that her daughter might come to harm and agrees, at last, to give one of her kidneys for money.

The second film, *Dust Cloth*, is directed in 2015 by Ahu Öztürk, a new generation director as well. *Dust Cloth* being the first feature length film of the director is about the struggle of Nesrin Nesrin (Asiye Dinçsoy), going to houses for cleaning, and Hatun (Nazan Kesal), her neighbour from the upstairs and closest friend, to hold on to life. Having to go on struggling for life with her little daughter after her husband Cefo left home, Nesrin is only out to get a job with social security. Hatun, on the other hand, wants to have a house similar to the ones she goes cleaning and get away from the slum that she still lives. These two women pour out their grief to each other during long talks and question the differences between the lives of the women they go cleaning with and theirs. Although they cross with each other from time to time, they carry on supporting each other. At the end of the film, Nesrin leaves her daughter to Hatun and never comes back. Hatun, on the other side, leaving the girl to her father at first, then takes her back and takes a step towards a new life.

Dust Cloth draws attention to social problems in a line of work where lawlessness rules by moving the problems of women labourers who go to houses for cleaning onto the silver screen over the stories of Nesrin and Hatun. The film, filmed in Gülsuyu neighbourhood in Maltepe, Istanbul, won the Golden Tulip Award in the best film category and the best scenario the best actress awards in National Competition of the 35th Istanbul Film Festival.

The third and the last film is *My Father's Wings*, directed by Kıvanç Sezer. The film tells the events following that headworker Ibrahim, with his nephew Yusuf (Musab Ekinci), starts working in the construction of a skyscraper in order to pay the instalment of the house they bought in place of the one collapsed during the earthquake in Van and learns that he has fallen sick with an incurable disease. The film, in which Menderes Samancılar brings life to the role of Ibrahim Usta (constructor, in English),

discuss simultaneously the story of Ibrahim Usta, who gets closer to death day by day and tries to relief his pain with praying, and of his nephew Yusuf, who display different manipulative behaviours including informing on his colleagues with a passion to climb the social ladder. The film, produced in a real building site in Esenyurt, moves onto the silver screen in a realistic approach the problems facing construction workers the existance of whom we don't even realise although we pass by them every day.

The film, bringing occupational accidents, which usually appear in crime pages of newspapers, into light in a dramatic way over a law faculty student losing his life falling down from the construction when the freight lift slides, does not forget to address also tragedies of those becoming disabled as a result of occupational accidents with the words of the labourer becoming disabled after falling down from a construction and nicknamed lame saying “ I worth no money neither alive nor dead”. *My Father's Wings*, the first feature length film of Kıvanç Sezer, proved that it is a successful production winning six awards in the 53rd Antalya Film Festival and seven awards in 23rd Adana Film Festival.

When the common features of the films to analyse are reviewed, it is identified that all the three were the first feature length film of their directors. Each three films are awarded with various awards in highly prestigious film festivals even though being the first films of their directors. It is also detected that the films reached a limited number of audience. According to Box Office Turkey data, *Zerre*, staying in theatres for seven weeks, is watched by 5069 people. *Dust Cloth*, staying in theatres for seventeen weeks, is watched by 7709 people. *My Father's Wings*, staying in theatres for eighteen weeks, is, on the other hand, watched by 23925 people. Though they were watched by a small number of audiences, it is seen that the number of the audience of the films addressing the labour problem is getting higher.

In each three films, not only the events take place in Istanbul, but also the shootings generally take place in Istanbul. Zeynep and her family in *Zerre* live in Tarlabası. Nesrin and Hatun with their families live in Maltepe Gülsuyu neighbourhood in *Dust Cloth*. Ibrahim Usta and Yusuf of *My Father's Wings* live in Esenyurt. The events, also, take place in these neighbourhoods. Except that Zeynep goes to Tekirdağ for a while to work in a textile factory, the protagonists do not leave Istanbul. It is considered that this situation is closely related to the fact that Istanbul, being the most populated province of Turkey, is an industry and finance centre at the

same time.

Each three films are produced in real-world locations. By this means, the reality of the problems tried to display is augmented. In *Zerre*, also in *Dust Cloth* or in *My Father's Wings*, the scenes create the impression that they belong to another time even though belonging to the present. Poor conditions of labourers are reflected on the camera to a great extent. In particular, the textile factories in *Zerre* and the building site in *My Father's Wings* almost seem to be out of a dystopia. The music used in the films often increases the tension and the tragedy. In terms of music use, *My Father's Wings* is quite successful.

In all the analysed films, the smallest opposing movement, collective or individual, is immediately suppressed by means of dismissal. While women labourers talking among themselves that their boss will dismiss them as the insurance time comes are forced to leave the workplace, in *Dust Cloth*, Nesrin is disappointed when Ms Ayten, for whom Nesrin thought that she love her like a daughter, increase her wage on condition reducing the cleaning days from three days to two. In *My Father's Wings* film, however, Abdullah, trying to organise his colleagues to move together for better wages and working conditions, is dismissed with his friends he move together as a result of Yusuf's informing on.

In each three films, working conditions of labourers are quite heavy, yet the opportunities introduced to them are quite limited. The labourers, made to work above the legal span without being subject to a standard working hours schedule, have to work for low wages. Furthermore, they cannot get their deserved wages on time. In *My Father's Wings*, Ibrahim Usta cannot get his wage to pay the instalment of the house he bought with mortgage even though he ask for it again and again. Again in the same film, with the reason that blood money is paid for the law faculty student losing his life due to an occupational accident, labourers' demands of payment are rejected. It is seen that the labourers are not provided with healthy accommodation possibilities in the films. In *My Father's Wings*, construction workers building skyscrapers have to live in rather poor conditions in prefabricated buildings next to the building site. Again in *Zerre* film, women labourers in textile factories rest in sleeping quarters with rats, in filthy beds and laying dirty sheets. Therefore, the labourers become stranger to the product they are producing. They build but cannot live in it. They sew, do ironing in factories but cannot lay even a clean sheet.

The houses of the labourers, however, are in the slums. Despite being

too old to live in, these houses are quite clean and ordered on the inside. On the contrary, employers usually lead a life in neighbourhoods where there are tall buildings or luxurious detached houses in villa style. This difference in spatial representation, on one side, places employers on a more “prestigious” social status (Dursun, 237), makes the labourer subjects that want to climb the social ladder more ambitious. While, in *Dust Cloth*, Hatun is looking at the property advertisements, in *My Father’s Wings* Yusuf dreams of having a house one day in one of the skyscrapers he is building.

Their children, as well, have to lead a difficult life similar to their parents. Whilst Ibrahim Usta’s disabled daughter cannot go to school since there is no school convenient for her in the neighbourhood she lives in, Zeynep and Nesrin’s daughters are obliged to share their mothers’ difficult lives. The realistic images about working and living conditions the audience might associate themselves with create a feeling of affinity between the audiences and the film characters. During the films, the labourers are thematised with their lives in poor conditions, thus, by individualising (handling as if an individual issue), long-established problems belonging to collectivity, in other words working class, become concrete. The social/economic contexts of the problems thereby can be covered behind the labourer subjects’ tragedies (Dursun, 1998: 238).

In all three films, women appear as highly active subjects. The main characters in two films are women labourers except for *My Father’s Wings*. Zeynep in *Zerre*, Nesrin and Hatun in *Dust Cloth* are struggling to stand tall as strong women characters without being dependent on men, even against them. They don’t surrender to their violence or assaults, and resist against them. In *My Father’s Wings*, on the other hand, there is no significant woman to come across, except for the girl working as a cashier in a clothes shop.

The violence and assaults facing women in working life has taken place among the topics discussed in films. In *Zerre* film, some women labourers surrender to headworkers’ sexual harassments and be with them at nights in order to get better working conditions. For the women who don’t accept that, it is not possible to promote or even to find a clean sheet.

Neither the government nor the businessmen care about labourers’ health. Finding out that he fell sick with an incurable disease, Ibrahim Usta makes an application Social Security Institution to retire on disability; however, the woman attendant there states first that it is not possible because he hasn’t fulfilled his time. Getting angry before Ibrahim Usta’s

reasonable questions, she reproaches him. Again, in the event that the labourers or their children get sick, they raise difficulties if the labourer ask for a day off or they are warned in order not to ask for a day off. Even Ibrahim Usta is criticised for going to hospital. It is highly tragic that Ibrahim Usta asks the doctor whether he could work or not when he learned that he has cancer.

Among the films, *Only My Father's Wings* discusses occupational accidents, one of the most important problems facing labourers in Turkey. The Ministry of Labour's attitude to look for the responsibility in labourers' individual fault and the precautions foreseen to take being only for show is criticised over the law faculty student losing his life due to an occupational accident. In the film, the labourers wear safety helmet, gloves, and belts only during the controls. The labourers are even fined if they are caught without wearing them by occupational health and safety controller. On the other hand, the occupational accident happening due to unrepaired lifting crane is not investigated. The crime is whitewashed by the blood money given to his family.

In *Zerre* and *Dust Cloth* the main characters are women labourers, and the gender identities of these characters are represented in a more emphasised way than their labourer identities. It is questioned, on one side, and reproduced on the other side. Zeynep and Nesrin, because their husbands left them, Hatun, on the other hand, since her husband cannot earn enough, have to work and bring home the bacon. Women are represented more for the role they play in economic life rather than their traditional places in family. However, under the effect of heavy working conditions, in each three films, especially to the conversations among women, a longing of women for a husband fulfilling the men's duties.

4. CONCLUSION

Since its beginnings, in Turkish cinema, due to various excuses, labourers have remained to be the "invisible subject", and their troubles to be the ignored problems. In the films featuring the labourer protagonist, on the other hand, the labourers are discussed in a melodramatic approach excluding their concrete economic problems and more within love or tragic family relationships. Even though an interest in labourers and their problems awakens in the first half of 1960s within the atmosphere of freedom the New Constitution provided, this interest lasts short, and after a period of stop, it wakes up again, but disappears completely following

1980 military intervention. While about twenty films addressing to the labour problem are produced from 1962 to the end of 1980, within the thirty years from that date until 2010, only three feature length films are produced. This indifference to labourers and their problems comes to a new breaking point with the film *Zerre* directed in 2012. This film is followed by *Dust Cloth* in 2015 and *My Father's Wings* in 2016.

In this context, this research reveals how the labour problem is represented in the late Turkish cinema and how labour-oriented ideological production is done over the films *Zerre* (2012), *Dust Cloth* (2015) and *My Father's Wings* (2016). As a result of the analysis, it is found out that in three aforementioned films, problems facing labourers, especially women labourers, in their everyday life are addressed; collective labour movement is featured, and when it is featured, the event is suppressed by immediate dismissal of the ones leading such collective movements by employers; phenomenon of cooperation appearing as neighbourhood or workplace solidarity in earlier labour films disappear; labourer individual appears alone in face of trouble and other than their family or a close friend, they are not able to receive help from anyone; ethnical identities become more visible; social gender roles are questioned.

The tension facing labourers, trying to hold on to the city, in everyday life under the shadow of monopolist capitalism is reflected successfully. The problems that unemployment, rapid modernisation and technological advancement create are referred; however, by making the individual protagonists' stories the focal points, collective struggle is made insignificant. Social benefits are ignored bringing individual salvation into the foreground. Parallel to this tendency, while elements often used before 2012 such as dismissal of the resisting labourers, failure of the promised wage increases, employers using an informant among the labourers are featured, plans to go on strike, which is also often included in the story, is not featured.

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