



→ **Regular Research Paper – SS**

Economic Infrastructure of Independent Cinema Works, Distribution Opportunities and Preferences of Content

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Abstract

Independent cinema is a concept used for films that are taken apart from studio system, with small budgets and outside the narrative strategies of mainstream cinema. Because of its economic organization, it is possible to read independent cinema which stands against classical narrative cinema as a cultural struggle against hegemony in terms of its approach to cinema. In this respect, it is possible to give the title of independent era to the works that give importance to artistic narrative and pioneer the works of cinema to be produced in the future and which are alternative to accepted narrative structures. In this study, independent cinema will be explained with its history; how it is organized economically and what opportunities it has in distribution. In addition, how independent cinema differs from mainstream cinema in terms of content and shooting preferences will be examined. Also, Turkey has won many awards and the independent filmmaking is important in terms of providing visual inspection. Descriptive research method is adopted as the method of the study. In this study, sample Turkish films will be subjected to content analysis in the context of Peter Wollen's categorization, where he distinguishes between mainstream and independent cinema. The films of Semih Kaplanoğlu, Yeşim Ustaoglu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz, which are accepted by the authorities to lead the Turkish cinema after 1990, are selected as samples. As samples, aforementioned director's movies named Honey, Waiting for the Clouds, Clouds of May and The Third Page is selected. The main hypothesis of this study is that independent Turkish cinema has competence to matching the world's criterias. The nature of American and Turkish cinema movements do not correspond to different completely. They are both shot with view of perspective and under the mainstream spotlight.

Keywords: Independent Cinema, Mainstream Cinema, Finance, Movie Context.





1. INTRODUCTION

In the dictionary of Turkish Language Association, cinema is defined as “the art of creating films which are suitable for being reflected as the branch of fine arts, white screen, and seventh art”. The device which is the most primitive form of contemporary cameras named “Sinematographe”, was invented in 1895 by the brothers Louise and Anguste Lumiere. The Lumière brothers, who introduced their inventions with a performance at the Grand Cafe on Capucines Boulevard in Paris, were not aware of the cultural, social and political importance of their inventions would gain. (Baudrillard, 2011: 8).

Directors, academics and cinegoers have discussed that what is cinema as an art, what do films represent and serve and also which impacts it has in the social sense and minds. The term cinegoers is used to refer to people who are addicted to cinema and films. As those who evaluate it in the historical and cultural context; there are also efforts to explain the narrative structure in relation to reality. According to one view, it is the history that determines the real value of cinema because the existence of cinema as a separate language indicates that it evolves in the field of cultural production (Dudley, 2018: 126). According to Lev Manovich, cinema serves only two purposes: lying and acting (Dudley, 2018: 13). Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek mentioned another approach. To him, a movie is never just a movie; It is not a product of fiction that aims to distract, entertain and to take us away from the real problems and social reality. Films reflect the lies which are at the heart of our social structure, even when they lie. Cinema is the observer of the historical social movements, transformations and lies; and it reflects it to the big screen, as a follower of its structural vision. The most important achievement of the art of cinema is not to enable us to perceive fiction as real; but it is that it identifies moments where reality approaches fiction and “enables us to experience it as fiction” (Daban, 2017: 297). Especially in the so-called post-modern era, reality and fiction are intertwined. It is not a coincidence that the independent films that is examined in the next pages, are on the rise after the 1980s, which is considered the beginning of post-modernity. Because artistic production and social conditions have been interrelated throughout history. This perspective should be exerted to *They Live* (1990) directed by John Carpenter that developed a critical view of the fictional part of reality which produced in United States, at the time when the hegemony of capitalism was at its deepest.

Turkish cinema, on the other hand, did not follow the same line of development as world cinema; there was no domestic production except documentary films until the establishment of the Central Army Cinema Department which constituted by Enver Pasha, in 1915 (Liman, 2011:43). Only after 1915, the first domestic productions were started to be taken by the official institutions (Coşkun, 2009: 17).

The history of Turkish cinema is divided into two parts in the literature. These are the eras of Filmmakers and Theaters. Firstly, it can be said that Muhsin Ertuğrul, who was a member of Kemal Film which was established by the state in 1921 and then produced under İpek Film, which was established in 1923, undertook the monopoly of the period of the Theaters (1922-1940). The reasons for this monopoly are explained by the fact that no one other than İpekçiler who owned many movie theaters in the country can invest in big production, and the actors who could not act separately from Muhsin Ertuğrul who was the head of the City Theaters (Coşkun, 2009: 20-22). Theatrical Period was met with criticism that a competent cinematographic discourse could not be established and that theatrical narrative dominated the cinema. The Theater Period was also criticized for the fact that Muhsin Ertuğrul turned his face too far to the west and could not develop his own language (Sevim, 2016: 78). Lütfi Ömer Akad's movie *Kanun Namına* (1952) is the first which put cinema language into Turkish cinema (Coşkun, 2009: 18). After Akad, Metin Erksan was the leading director that produced most significant works after 1960's, who entered the cinema with the movie named *Aşık Veysel'in Hayatı* (*Karanlık Dünya*-1952). Following him, Atif Yılmaz Batıbeki took its place in the history of Turkish cinema. Social realism and folk cinema movements emerged in the Turkish cinema after 1960; a language of cinema developed in a realistic way to explain the life conditions of common people. During this





period, Halit Refiğ, Ertem Göreç, Duygu Sağıroğlu and Yılmaz Güney who is the Golden Palm Award winner, are among the most notable directors (Coşkun, 2009: 34-54).

1.1. The Concept of Independent Cinema and Its Historical Development

Independent cinema is a movement that emerged against the Hollywood studio system in America and reverberates throughout the world. It differs from classical narrative cinema in terms of economy, distribution, representation and content. In this section, the historical development process of independent cinema works is explained; then, it is tried to put forward what the term independent means in the concept of independent cinema. It is explained by different ideas from the literature that it is independent from whom, what and in what aspects. Finally, it is going to be explain what is the distribution and display possibilities that independent cinema has. After that, how independent directors could find the financial supports which were necessary to be able to shoot a movie, will be examined.

1.1.1. The Emergence of Independent Cinema Works

There is an uncertainty about the date of the emergence of independent cinema history. Some authors point to 1909, and other authors refer to 1970. But there is a point that all authorities have reached consensus that independent cinema was born in America. According to Tzioumakis, the establishment of Motion Picture Patents Company in the USA between 1908-1909, gave birth to the first independent filmmakers (Tzioumakis, 2015: 41). Poverty Row companies, which emerged in the 1940s and 1950s following cinema companies affected by the 1929 Crisis, are considered among the pioneers who deserve the word of independent because of their unpretentious productions, discourse structures away from the classical film language and appealing to audiences of different ethnic identities (Tzioumakis, 2015: 99-115). On the other hand Holm says that the concept of independent cinema settled in our language around 1977 (Holm, 2011: 12). This is because he points to the emergence of cheap and easy filmmaking technologies such as 8mm films, which became widely used in the 1950s as the reason for the rise of independent films and made it easier to shoot at home / individual film (Holm, 2011: 20). Another factor that played an important role in the emergence of independent cinema in the United States was the 1948 court order known as the Paramount Decision. Like all other social institutions and processes in cinema were affected by World War II, the profits of movie theaters began to fall. Following this process, Loew's, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, RKO and Warner Brothers (Big Fives) which were owners of movie theaters and Columbia, Universal and United Artists (Little Trio) which didn't have a movie theater, lost their monopoly privileges by the American government that was following anti-trust policy. Block sales were banned and the dominance of the chains of the saloons, which left the independent exhibitors under burden, was terminated. This decision enabled independent exhibitors to achieve equal conditions for accessing films, as well as doubling the number of independent productions between 1946 and 1956 (Çetin, 2014: 211). Nevertheless, in the 1950s, independent producers and studios had continued to experience difficulties in terms of funding and distribution. In these years, only one third of American movie theaters were found to be economically viable (Özdemir, 2019: 9).

Our Daily Bread (1934), which is considered to be one of the first independent cinema examples in the USA, both produced and directed by King Vidor as an independent feature, was taken with 125,000\$ bank loan despite having a lot of criticism about the banking system (Holm, 2011: 21). Independent filmmakers of the 1970s, also called "The Seventies Films" and described as the era of independent cinema grow stronger in America, can be named as Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Dennis Hopper, Paul Schrader. But Susan Hayward points John Cassavetes who was productive at late 1950's, as a pioneer (Özdemir, 2019: 10). The films that emerged in America and set an example for independent cinema all over the world can be exemplified as ise Taxi Driver (1970), Easy Rider (1969), The Last Movie (1971), The Converstation (1974), Apocalypse Now (1979), Last Chants for a Slow Dance (1977), Eraserhead (1979), Mystrey Train (1989), The Man Who Wasn't There (2001), Drugstore Cowboy (1989), Virgine Suicides (1999), Sex, Lies





and Videotape (1989) and Blair Witch Project (1999) which were published on the online platform.

Another factor that led to the elimination of the Hollywood studio system and its sense of entertainment film is the development of various cinema movements in Europe. The New Wave and avant-garde cinema in France, Free Cinema in England, Italian New Realism and experimental Soviet cinema can be shown among these movements. When Dudley explains the wave movement in France, he said: "The words such as 'Rediscovering cinema from the beginning', 'Filming as if you were making a film for the first time' only can be said by director which was educated at Cinematheque Française, proudly declaring that they were the first generation to reach this wisdom and who knew the history of cinema by heart." (Dudley, 2018: 16). The French New Wave cinema, which François Giroud first called "Nouvelle Vogue" in weekly *l'Express* magazine, has become effective since 1958 (Coskun, 2017: 199). The establishment of the National Cinema Center (Centre Nationale de la Cinematographie) in France and the entry into force of the Film Aid Law in order to encourage new films to be produced, created a driving force for artists who would produce films within the New Wave. (Coskun, 2017: 200). The magazine *Le Chaiers du Cinema* (Cinema Notebook), which was published by Andre Bazin in 1951, became the center of attraction for young filmmakers, the essays and criticisms in this magazine have created an intellectual pool, leading to an increase in original artistic productions (Coşkun, 2017: 201). The French New Wave cinema refers to films shot using "small budget, non-crowded team, and amateur actors despite of the star system, light, hand-held cameras, outdoor, natural lights and decors" (Yıldırım, Can, 2019: 167). At the same time, this trend gave birth to the "auteur directors" which would lead the art of cinema around the world on the following years. Auteur directors often marked directors who were responsible for all stages of the film and who developed a unique language that was easily recognizable. Directors such as Alain Resnais, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol and Louise Malle are the most important figures in this movement.

Another vessel fed to American independent cinema is Italian New Realism. This cinema is fed by political aesthetic it takes its source from Gregory Lucaks' aesthetic ideas which they were from Italian political scientist Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks (Önbayrak, 2008: 191). The directors, who came out of the studios and shot in the streets and fields, blessed the natural light and sound and declared that the only aim of cinema was to confront the nakedness of reality.

De Santis expresses the place and importance of realism in Italian cinema with the following words: "Even if it is fantastic, the efforts should be made to reflect the gestures, the general environment, or rather the elements that will serve to express the integrity of the world in which people live; there can be no other effort but cinema, because unlike others, this branch of art appeals to all our senses." (Önbayrak, 2008: 194). Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica and Luchino Visconti have made the most competent examples of Italian New Realism to the cinema. Another trend that inspired the independent cinema can be found in Soviet Russia. Cinema was supported by Soviet Russia because Lenin was aware of its ability to reach and influence the masses. (Coskun, 2017: 49). Soviet Cinema, which developed under the dominance of social realism, considered as a means of social communication and propaganda rather than as a means of entertainment (Coşkun, 2017: 51). This cinema, which has a rather epic narrative language, includes directors from both left and right political views that affect world cinema. These directors can be exemplified as Sergey Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Olga Preobrashenskaia.

1.1.2. Mean of the Notion of Independent in the Concept of Independent Cinema

The term independent in the concept of independent cinema can be described in the simplest terms; the movies which consciously distanced from studio systems, economic domination of large production companies; the interventions of the producers, distributors and screeners on the content and of course the mainstream narrative structure; and produced under the light of intention of realizing their artistic production out of them. While such works, which are far from the studio system and production companies, are generally financed by state support and some





private funds, they tend to develop an alternative view to the dominant ideology (Hayward, 2012: 68-69). “While classical narrative cinema addresses the audience who has internalized the codes of popular culture, contemporary narrative cinema is known as a follower of high culture products” (Özdemir, 2019: 13). In other words, whereas mainstream cinema works to reinforce and reproduce existing cultural/ideological orientations, independent cinema works often have the desire to say something outside and beyond these orientations. They use their artistic language to break the social codes that have been used and studied many times by using new methods and textures. Hollywood studio system was established in the 1930s and 1940s and its strategy is still alive. “Hollywood studios are so well matched with the sensitivities of large audiences that it becomes difficult to make an untraceable film.” (Dudley, 2018: 117).

Ece Kinacı, who was interviewed within the scope of the project and won awards at both national and international film festivals with her short documentary *Five Women in the Hill* (2015), and her short movies named *I Dreamed Dead in My Dream* (2018), *Seabird* (2017) and *Neighbor* (2016) defines independent cinema as “Directors, screenwriters and actors who do not adhere to the sanctions of a producer, school, or any external factor, and try to express their opinions freely without interference” (Kinacı: 17.12.2019). Fatih Ertekin, who was also awarded many prizes in national and international film festivals with his documentary films *Memtevre* (2019) and *Beyond the Clouds* (2016), was also interviewed within the scope of the study to explain the concept of independent cinema. His statement about independent cinema is “Independent cinema is mostly used to describe films that are not financed by large production companies and that do not have large budgets. But since I do not find it right for every low-budget film to be included in this definition, it includes art cinema for me.” (Ertekin: 15.11.2019).

Independent cinema has earned the title of ‘independence due to its economic foundations and deserves this title because of the differences in narrative structure. According to Todorov, the classic Hollywood narrative structure is based on a specific and repetitive scheme. According to him in the story; “Equilibrium is established, the equilibrium is disturbed, the characters detect that the equilibrium is disturbed, the characters try to eliminate the problem to restore the equilibrium, the equilibrium restored” (Özdemir, 2019: 14). However, independent cinema prefers a more vague and original narrative structure. Contrary to linear time tracking, sperate evolution is followed (Miller, 1993: 147). The psychological processes in which the characters go through and the dynamics of their inner worlds are prioritized. Reality and reflecting its different perspectives are vital goals. Films that do not follow in a linear direction do not include exaggerated shooting and acting, sometimes approaching poetic language and an artistic discourse prevail as independent cinema practices (Young, 2009: 9). Galt and Schoonover state that art films find pleasure in the things Hollywood ignores, and states that in these films, which stand out with internal conflict, self-reflexivity, and non-narrative elements rather than empirical forms of knowledge and pleasure, they show an attitude that transcends modern tendencies.” (Galt, Schoonover, 2018: 31, cited in Özdemir, 2019: 22). Holm (2011: 36) makes incarnation “epic alienation” to the products of this artistic approach and content choice.

1.1.3. Economic Resources of Independent Cinema, Screening and Distribution Opportunities

The screening and distribution possibilities of independent cinema works are not as rich as those mainstream films. While most of the works cannot get the opportunity to deal with the distributor, those who have had trouble finding cinema saloons or showing in very limited time and in very limited places. The primary reasons for these adversities are audience and economic concerns. According to the data obtained from the website of the General Directorate of Cinema and the Cinema Sector Report of the Competition Authority (2016), it is possible to detect UIP, Tiglon, Özen Film, Pinema, Mars Production as a dominant distribution companies in Turkey. In the survey had conducted from 2005 to 2015 in terms of the share of revenue between UIP, Mars Production and Pinema, which was determined as the first three distribution companies in 2015; their revenue reached a record level of 89% in 2013 and 74% in 2015. The share of the





revenue of the distribution companies which distribute mainstream movies such as Eyvah Eyvah, A.R.O.G, Recep İvedik series, helps to illuminate the audience's choices, as well as the monopoly that excludes the independent films in the sector.

In terms of displays, it can be said that the majority of the pie in Turkey goes to the movie theater chains. As cinema chains in Turkey, Cinemaximum, Cinema Pink, Cinemarine, Avsar Cinemas, Cinetech can be identified and of these the vast majority are located in shopping centers. However, according to 2016 report of the Competition Authority movie theaters located in shopping centers in 2014, 80.4% in Istanbul, 85.4% in Ankara, 80.4% in İzmir, 63.5%, in other provinces and 71% across Turkey. The rate of cinemas not included in shopping centers is 19.6%, 14.6%, 19.6%, 36.5% and 28.6% respectively. These figures indicate that, the movie house chains whose target is maximizing profit, tracks audience impressions according to the orientation, has been creating a monopoly in Turkey. This situation is parallel to the fact that the screenings of independent works with high artistic value are quite limited.

Film festivals are one of the most important channels for independent movies to find distributors and meet with the audience. The Telluride Film Festival, which premiered in 1974; The Sundance Film Festival, which started its activities in 1978, enabled American independent cinema to have both distribution and screening opportunities (Holm, 2011: 62-63). In Turkey, the İstanbul International Independent Film Festival, the Festival on Wheels, Flying Broom International Women's Film Festival, Other Cinema offers representation to other independent compositions. Apart from this, Turkey's independent films are being shown in film festivals organized in various places in the sub-branch and rewarded. There are also cinema saloons that regularly show independent films and reserve their saloon to that kind of works in Turkey. Even if their economic income corresponds to a small amount, the cinema halls that display independent films with the awareness of contributing to the development of the art of cinema are Majestik Sinema and Beyoğlu Cinema (Özdemir, 2019: 135-138).

Another important issue is how independent films financed separately from studios and large production companies and how to obtain the necessary economic resources. The sources for independent productions are; individual investment, incomes from film festivals, appropriations provided by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and international funds. In Many directors and producers mostly applicant foreign fund distributed by the Council of Europe's Eurimages (The european found for the support of co-production distribution and exhibition of the creative features and documentaries) in Turkey. In addition, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Cinema gives specific supports to projected cinema works. Director Fatih Ertekin (15.11.2019) interviewed within the scope of the study uses the following expressions for the support provided by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism: "Another method of funding the film is the appropriations provided by the cultural ministries of almost all countries. 50% of your film can be financed if you project the movie and apply to these channels. But there is no guarantee. If 500 films apply, 10 films may be eligible for support. This situation varies from country to country. For example, at least 10% of the budget of all projects in France must be met and 100% of the budget shown. Certain number of the movie's budget 50% defrayed. Moreover, favouritism in these channels annoy the filmmakers."

1.2. Turkish Cinema and Independent Cinema

The date of the production of independent productions in Turkish cinema can be traced back to the 1960s. In this period, parallel to the emergence of American independent cinema as an alternative, alternative films to Yeşilçam cinema began to be put forward. After the 1960s, which witnessed the emergence of movements such as national cinema and social realism, Turkish cinema changed its image with the 1980 military coup and subsequent economic/social changes. This section primarily focuses on the new cinematographic language that has been inactive since the 1960s; then the cinema created by the directors who emerged after 1990 and also known "festival directors" is examined.





1.2.1. Turkish Cinema After 1960

The emergence of independent films in the history of Turkish cinema is dated back to 1960. While the individual, aesthetic and political efforts of the young filmmakers did not draw attention until the 1960s; Turkish cinema is gaining visibility with the 'public cinema which had been active between 1961 and 1965 and national cinema which became socially realistic by 1967-1969 (Akser, 2012: 37). Metin Erksan, Halit Refiğ, Ertem Göreç and Duygu Sarioğlu are the leading directors of this period that claim to host different aesthetic forms not found in mainstream cinema (Coşkun, 2009: 56).

Yeşilçam started to grow in the 1960s and it started to wiped away after 1980s; the first independent movies which shot to be alternative Yeşilçam's gravitational narrative discourse and shooting techniques has been faced censorship as the biggest problem. This period can be characterized with Metin Erksan's *Dark World* in 1952 and state censorship applied to Yılmaz Güney's films in the 1970s together with, the fact that cinema hall owners and film distributors gave priority to mainstream cinema works and ignored independent cinema works as censorship within the sector. The most prominent example of sectorial repression is the *Time to Love* directed by Metin Erksan in 1965. The film distributors refused to distribute that movie, and the film received negative reactions from the audience, which attract attention with its formal similarity with the Italian directors Antonioni and Visconti (Akser, 2012: 37). Halit Refiğ who emphasized the emerge of social realism and national cinema based on in response to both the Asian type of production and the Western admiration and explains the differentiation of Turkish art from the West with individualism. According to him, individualism, which derives from the economic organization of the western societies, is the main motivation even in the works are about society. In the Ottoman and traditional Turkish societies where there was no private property, both social and traditional art were turned away by the representation of the types that represent the society. Refiğ says that Turkish films can only be regarded as national if they have a language that is compatible with this tradition (Coşkun, 2009: 61).

In the period of public and national cinema as the most successful of these films can be exemplified as Halit Refiğ's *Four Women in the Harem* (1965) and *I Loved a Turk* (1969), Metin Erksan's *Time to Love* (1966) and *Well* (1969), Duygu Sağıroğlu's *Endless Road* (1965), *I Live as I Die* (1965) ve *Homeland and Namık Kemal* (1965), Atıf Yılmaz's *Hürmüz with Seven Husbands* (1971), *Kozanoğlu* (1967) ve *Koroğlu*(1968) and lastly Lütfi Akad's *Kızılırmak-Karakoyun* (1967), *River* (1972) ve *Gökçe Çiçek* (1973) (Coşkun, 2009: 62).

1.2.2. Independent Turkish Cinema After 1990

Independent film directors can be defined with their acts like, they shoot with their own economic means, mostly undertake their own production. In addition to this definition, especially independent cinema reveals itself with differentiation in content in Turkey. The years in which independent production gained momentum in Turkish cinema were the 1990s. Talented young directors emerged in the 1990's have represented Turkey taking several awards at international festivals and they created a new cinematic language in Turkey (Özdemir, 2019: 55). The lifting of state censorship on cinema in the 1990's, Eurimages helped to began to be given in Turkey, increasing cultural and assistance reserved for cinema works the Ministry of Tourism fund, has created the conditions that led to the rise of independent cinema in this year (Gürbüz, 2015: 273). Warner Bros. and UIP entered the Turkish cinema sector as distributors at the 1990s which the date Turkey started to become integrated into the global neoliberal market. Those companies have the lion's share in Turkey's market with Hollywood movies, has increased motivation of young directors to create alternative movies with more artistic and unique cinematic language (Ormanlı, 2013: 24).

In this period, Zeki Demirkubuz, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Derviş Zaim, Reha Erdem, Semih Kaplanoğlu and Yeşim Ustaoglu, who were awarded many awards both in national and international film festivals and who could be pointed out as pioneers of independent Turkish cinema after 1990, can be listed. These artists are called as "festival directors". Nuri Bilge Ceylan won various





awards from Cannes Film Festival, one of the most prestigious film festivals in the world and Semih Kaplanoğlu was awarded the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival with his film *Bal* (Ormanlı, 2013: 24). The subject of these directors's movies is the alienation and depression of urban people, provincial-urban duality, male-dominated violence and ideology, individualization and loneliness.

2. A Content Analysis Application on Turkish Independent Cinema Works

The conceptual definitions, historical development, sources of independent cinema and their reflections in Turkish cinema are explained in the pages above. In the application part of the study, firstly, the categorization of Peter Wollen, which is accepted as a guide and criterion for content analysis, reveals the differences between mainstream cinema and independent cinema will be explained. Once these are explained to facilitate clarity, content analysis will be implemented. Here, due to temporal limitations, the leading directors who were awarded the most awards both nationally and internationally were selected among the directors that emerged after 1990. These can be identified as Semih Kaplanoğlu, Yeşim Ustaoglu, Zeki Demirkubuz and Nuri Bilge Ceylan.

2.1. Differences between Mainstream Cinema and Independent Cinema Defined by Peter Wollen

Content analysis to be performed within the scope of Peter Wollen's explanation of the differences between mainstream cinema and counter cinema can also be applied to independent cinema. Because avant-garde cinema, counter cinema and independent cinema are in the same critical position. The content analysis method in the study is based on Wollen's categorization criteria. According to Peter Wollen, the seven differences which distinguish independent cinema from mainstream cinema are:

- The first one is the transivity of narrative in mainstream cinema versus the intransivity of narrative in independent cinema.
- In spite of the use of the identification element in mainstream cinema, the alienation element is used in independent cinema.
- The mainstream uses transparent narratives against it, independent cinema uses foreground extraction.
- In contrast to the simple narrative feature in mainstream cinema, there are multiple narratives in independent cinema.
- There are open endings in independent cinema versus a certain end closing in mainstream cinema.
- Although we do not prioritize pleasure in mainstream cinema, we witness the rejection of pleasure in independent one.
- Finally; Whereas mainstream cinema is based on fiction, independent cinema relies on its back to reality (Lapsley, Westlake, 2006: 192-193, cited in Özdemir, 2019: 32).

The distinction between passivity and non-passivity indicates the development and fluency of the narrative as a feature of mainstream cinema; and the narrative of independent works is discontinuous. The second article is based on what the film is and as to whether its aims can be easily grasped for the audience, and whether or not it can reconcile what the viewer experiences with his or her own background knowledge. Under the consideration of transparency and prominence, although the mainstream cinema's preferred visuality is clear, simple; expressing the characters, space and a certain theme is more important in the opposite cinema. The fourth criterion shows the reversible and difficult language in independent cinema, despite the preferred linear timeline and narrative structure that helps the viewer in mainstream cinema. The fifth article indicates the existence of open-ended, ambiguous endings in independent cinema that leave a share of the imagination of the audience; The sixth article explains the language created by mainstream cinema in response to the hedonist structure of modernity.





Finally, the seventh one illuminates the subject preference of independent productions, which considers the mission of reflecting different perspectives of reality (Lapsley, Westlake, 2006: 192-193, cited in Özdemir, 2019: 32).

2.2. Content Analysis Application

Independent cinema gained a new breathes with 1990s which occurred at 1960s in Turkey. Derviş Zaim, Reha Erdem, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Zeki Demirkubuz, Semih Kaplanoğlu and Yeşim Ustaoglu are among these directors. Considering the time limitation content analysis will be only applied to movies of Semih Kaplanoğlu, Yeşim Ustaoglu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz within the scope of the study. Semih Kaplanoğlu's film Honey was chosen for receiving the Golden Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival, Yeşim Ustaoglu's film The Waiting for the Clouds is her third feature film was chosen because it was a work she shot before becoming an auteur director. In the same way, Nuri Bilge Ceylan is known as an auteur director after the 2000s. For this reason, his film Cloud of May in the 1990s was the subject of the research. Finally, Zeki Demirkubuz's Third Page has been examined because of the awards he won in both national and international competitions.

2.2.1. Semih Kaplanoğlu- Honey

The movie, which premiered at the Berlin Film Festival in 2010, returned to Turkey with the most prestigious award, the Golden Bear, from same film festival. The film is produced by Semih Kaplanoğlu's own production company, Kaplan Film Production. It is common practice for independent directors to establish their own production companies in order to avoid producer pressure. The film, directed and produced by Semih Kaplanoğlu and screenwriters Orçun Köksal and Leyla İpekçi, lasts 103 minutes. The film was shot with a 35 mm film and Barış Özbiçer was director of cinematography and headliners are Erdal Beşikçioğlu, Tülin Özen and Bora Altaş. The film, shot at Rize Çamlıhemşin, develops around a close and ambiguous relationship with the father of 7-year-old Yusuf (Bora Altaş) and following that one day his father goes to forest in search of the mysteriously lost bees and never comes back.

When Kaplanoğlu's Honey film is examined in terms of transivity/ intransivity, which is the first of the distinctions put forward by Wollen, the film is seen that it exhibits the intransivity characteristic determined as a feature of independent cinema. The narrative is constantly interrupted. The film begins with the accident of Yakup (Erdal Beşikçioğlu) in a forest and then it goes to Yusuf's school. Returning home from school, the camera jumps to different times and places with scenes almost interrupted throughout the film.

Wollen mentions that there is a distinction between mainstream cinema and independent cinema on the identification or alienation of the film with which the audience is exposed, watched, experienced. Since the traces of mainstream films have no difficulty in following the film, they immediately identify and adopt stories and characters. However, in independent cinema, the story resists the audience. It does not open itself immediately, which alienates the viewer. Kaplanoğlu's Honey film features long-range landscape shots. Kaplanoğlu did not use music and he also applied it by using natural sounds and lights. Less dialogue with simple acting, Yusuf's difficulty in speaking in front of people, and his whispering with his father character seem to be conscious choices made at this point.

Thirdly, Wollen puts the emphasis on independent cinema in front of the transparent narrative structure in mainstream cinema. Here, usage of Kaplanoğlu's darkness and light contrast, the ship and garden shears in the father's workshop, the mirror in the hands of the child, and the continuous introduction of the Caucasian bees into the story highlighted the tension of Yusuf and the clarity of the provincial life. In addition, the nature of the Black Sea is in constant perspective from different angles.

Wollen also mentions that the mainstream cinema has a simple narrative structure in, which is the continuity of time and spatial relations and is established in a distinct manner. However, independent cinema has multiple narrative structures. The narrative structure that begins with





the accident of the father character in Honey tells the tense life of Yusuf with his father and his environment in temporal jumps. In addition, the passage of space is very distinct and is between the ambiances that the audience is unfamiliar with and sees for the first time.

Whereas there are open endings in independent cinema, the mainstream cinema closes with a certain end. This leaves space for the audience's imagination and exceeds the boundaries of the closed narrative structure. The film ends with Yusuf sleeping in a tree hole in the forest at night. The film ends with the disappearance of the father character and the news of death and the processes of Yusuf and his mother reacting to it. In fact, the audience doesn't know what their two lives will be like. However, Kaplanoğlu's Honey film is a continuation of Egg (2007) and Milk (2008). In fact, it is known what will happen to Yusuf and his mother in the future.

Wollen's sixth distinction suggests that although mainstream cinema prioritizes pleasure, we witness the rejection of pleasure in independent cinema. It is possible to see the respond clearly in the film Honey. There are no scenes of sexuality, violence or personal satisfaction in the film. The story, which reflects the countryside and told with natural clothes, sounds and attitudes, has turned its back on pleasure.

Lastly, independent cinema is embellished with realities, as opposed to the fact that mainstream cinema gives more space to fictional elements. It has the task of reflecting the truth. In this film, Kaplanoğlu do not include any elements based on fiction and turn his camera into the simple life of a child living in the countryside and his family.

2.2.2. Yeşim Ustaoglu-Waiting for the Clouds

Waiting for the Clouds, produced under the co-production of Ustaoglu Film and Silkroad Production in 2004, under the sponsorship of Efes Pilsen and supported by EURIMAGES. The film, co-written by Yeşim Ustaoglu and Petros Markaris, was shot with a 35 mm film and is 88 minutes long. The actors was Rüçhan Çalışkur, Dimitris Kamberidis, Jannis Georgiadis and Rüçhan Çalışkur won the Best Actress Award at the 2004 International Istanbul Film Festival. The film depicts Ayşe (whose real name is Elini), who came under the auspices of a Turkish family during the Greek exile in 1916, after the loss of her half-sister, whom she moved to the Black Sea Trebolu, to commemorate her brother Niko, who was lost during the exile, and to look for him.

When the film is examined in terms of transivity / intransivity, the first of the items that Wollen compares to mainstream cinema and independent cinema; in this film, the element of intransivity is dominant. The narrative begins with the images of migration in 1916. Ayşe's relationship with her neighbor's child is constantly interrupted by different issues such as the conversation between the neighbors, the Russian man who comes to the village and the friendship between the two children. While sometimes focusing on Ayşe's emotion and story, she sometimes turns her camera into the sharing and experiences of children.

The second distinction described by Wollen, the identification / alienation distinction also shows that the film proceeds in parallel with the features of independent cinema. The audience doesn't know the real identity of Ayşe at first and cannot understand who is the main story based on before the long statements of depression after Ayşe's sister's death. They cannot be sure what to expect in the continuation of the film and for what events have occurred. It is ambiguous to know who he is Niko and why she suddenly started to speaking in Greek. This is evidenced by the fact that Ustaoglu uses the alienation factor in an ingenious way.

Despite the arrangements in the mainstream cinema, where all narrative strategies are explicitly processed, the feature of bringing character and narrative into the forefront in independent cinema is seen. In the film Waiting for the Clouds, Ayşe's home scenes, which emphasize the loneliness of her, the atmosphere of the Black Sea, blended with the mountains and the sea, and the boat scenes in which the two children express their wishes and the pursuit of them are highlighted as the foundation of the psychology of the individuals in the story. In addition, Ayşe's story telling in Greek, broadcasting in Russian on television, and using nationalist expressions of emotion against Russians as side elements are functional in terms of providing a historical and geographical perspective. In addition, in the film, which was mentioned in 1975, the image of





leftists and policemen chasing them was used in several places in order to present the political atmosphere of the period.

Fourth, in contrast to the simple narrative feature in mainstream cinema, Wollen puts the multiple narrative feature in independent cinema. Even if a linear timeline is chosen in Ustaoglu's film, spatial jumps are quite a lot. A secondary narrative, which is the main pillar of the story, Greek immigration, that is hidden in the story for a while, a surprise to the audience, is made visible much later. In addition, Ustaoglu, with the emphasis on the reality of rural life, the village women talk among themselves, neighbor's child who is very attached to Ayşe and his friend with the correctional facility, can be shown as the source of spatial jumps.

It is possible to see another example of independent cinema that differs from mainstream cinema by open-ended endings in *Waiting for the Clouds*. Ayşe, who began to remember and miss her brother Niko after her half-sister's death, whom she lost during the exile, eventually went to Thessaloniki to find him. These parts of the film, in which almost all of the dialogues take place in Greek, are tense because Niko, who allows her to stay at home, but chilliness to her and represents the electrical relationship between the two of them. The last scene of the film is Elini and Niko look at the photographs during the years of migration. Then what happens is outstanding. Does Ayşe live with her brother? Will she go back to Tirebolu? Have they improved their relation? These are the question marks left in the minds of the audience.

Wollen talks about the intense exposure of pleasure in mainstream cinema and the inhibition of pleasure in independent cinema. In Ustaoglu's film, it is noteworthy that no type of pleasure is taken into the frame. The exclusion of the young child whose father was Russian, the sadness shared by friends from two different nationalities later on, the intense depression experienced after Ayşe's losses, suggests that the element highlighted in the film is the opposite of pleasure.

Independent cinema, which has turned its face to reality against the mainstream cinema, which derives its biggest revenues from the genre of fiction, is concerned with showing all the simplicity or exaggeration of the lives that are not normally shown and left untouched. In the *Waiting for the Clouds*, the rumors made by village women among them, the process of ascent and descent to the highlands, the use of television broadcasts reflecting the atmosphere of 1975 and the opposition of leftist / police, proves that their backing is based on vital and historical realities with the use of exile images, reflecting the historical reality.

2.2.3. Nuri Bilge Ceylan- Clouds of May

Nuri Bilge Ceylan was in the charge of screenplay, production, cinematography and directing in *Clouds of May*, was produced by NBC, the production company of Ceylan. The cast was Muzaffer Özdemir, Fatma Ceylan, Mehmet Emin Ceylan, Sadik Incesu, Mehmet Emin Toprak and Nihat Cakmak and the movie completed in 1999. The film, which is one of the first works of Nuri Bilge Ceylan was awarded Best Film and Best director from If Istanbul International Independent Film Festival in 1999 and it won the Best Film award from Cinema Writers Association, lasts for 130 minutes. The story of Muzaffer's efforts to make a film with his family who lives in a town in Çanakkale makes us think that Ceylan has made an allegory of his own story. Moreover, the conflict of the father character with the state trying to enter to his land and the emphasis on the law is another theme of the film. Ceylan shares the fiction with Ayhan Ergüzel which movie crowned the music of Bach, Handel and Schubert.

According to Wollen's first distinction: transitivity and intransitivity, when the film is examined; it can be said that due to the simultaneous story development of different characters, it has an intransitive nature. On the one hand, Muzaffer's amateur efforts to make a movie in the town where he spent his childhood, on the other hand his father Emin's effort to protect his trees which planted since 1926 against cadastralists. In other respect, Ali's character development and Saffet's disappointed dream of living in Istanbul who is a worker in factory show how many different stories are in the movie. This interrupted the fluency of the narrative and helped establish a ping language. Secondly, in terms of identification and alienation, it can be said that the narrative language of the film does not exhibit the element of alienation at a very advanced level. The dialogues of the Muzaffer, the intimate communication he established with





his family, the fact that the actors except Muzaffer and Saffet, characters are amateur, draws the audience into the film. Although cinematographic discourse and original shooting angles do not coincide with the visual language of mainstream cinema, it can be found that the film is closer to identification than alienation.

The third distinction, the transparent narrative construction in the face of the use of the element of the foreground, Ceylan's father fuss for his land, Muzaffer's efforts to produce his own art can be said to bring to the fore his sincere feelings. Before Muzaffer shot his movie, he shows some images of his family which is the most artistic ambience throughout the whole film and it declares that Muzaffer is connected to them with an aesthetic connection. It is one of the recurring themes in the film that Ali carries an egg for thirty-seven days without breaking it for what he wants.

It is clear that Ceylan preferred the multiple narrative structure which is one of the most prominent features of independent cinema. The film is arranged around Muzaffer, Saffet, Ali and Emin. Muzaffer's film making and family relations, Saffet's struggle with his fate and family, Ali's scenes of primary school and town life which also can be seen in Kaplanoğlu and Ustaoglu's movies, and Emin's relationship with his son and land caused spatial leaps, if not temporal, made the film language move away from a simple schedule.

It is also featured with open endings in *Clouds of May*, which is encountered in almost all independent film works. The film ended with Emin's sleeping on the base of a tree, who preferred to remain the only one in his land after shooting a scene, left many questions in mind. It is not clear whether Muzaffer could complete the film and achieve any success with it, it is also unclear whether Emin could save his land from the state. Did Saffet find a job in Istanbul as he wished? Did Ali get his musical watch which the reason he carried an egg for days? At this point, Nuri Bilge Ceylan got his share of the imagination of the audience and allowed them to imagine the desired end.

It is easy to say that Ceylan is on the side of independent cinema in the separation of choosing pleasure or rejection of pleasure. There is no room for sexuality, sadistic /masochistic elements or alcohol/drugs. Built on art production, family relationships, long-term preservation of labor and a new life, the film's simple narrative cannot accommodate any hedonist element.

Finally, the practice of making stories on the facts that are directly opposite to the fictional background in mainstream cinema is also included in the *Clouds of May*. The topographic features of the Aegean town, the unpretentious life in the family house, the amateur acting that was chosen from the local people, and the language of the people in the dialogues supported this finding.

2.2.4. Zeki Demirkubuz- The Third Page

The *Third Page*, which was directed and written by Zeki Demirkubuz, was released in 1999. Produced by Mavi Film, the film was shot with a 35 mm film and lasts for 92 minutes. Zeki Demirkubuz shares the film production with Nihal G. Koldaş. In 2000, the film won the Best Director and Best Screenplay award at the Istanbul International Film Festival and the same year's Best Screenplay Award at the Tbilisi International Film Festival. In 1999, it was awarded Best Director and Best Screenplay at the Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival and Best Director at the Orhan Ariburnu Awards and Best Screenplay by the Film Writers' Association. The film is built around the crisis of İsa being beaten and threatened for fifty dollars, killing the landlord, saving by Meryem, and then developing the relationship between the two.

When Demirkubuz's film is considered within the scope of Wollen's transivity/ intransivity, it is possible to see that the movie encounter both elements. The plot of the film is processed with a certain fluency. The troubles of İsa, the desire to kill himself, the killing of the landlord, falling in love with Mary, and the subsequent events proceed along a certain line. What disturbs this fluidity is the explanation of how İsa, who fainted at the scene of the crime, how he went to his own home, and Meryem's relationship which is hidden from İsa. In this context, it can be said that Demirkubuz prefers to use both elements.





Secondly, in the mainstream cinema and independent cinema classified as identification and alienation, it is noticed that Demirkubuz does not use the alienation element. He catheches the audience with the story of İsa, and he leaves no question in their mind about what the film is for, why things happen and what will follow. The use of poor and subcultural characters helps the audience easily identify with stories and people.

Demirkubuz uses two elements to make it stand out through the construction of transparent meaning, one of Wollen's distinctions between independent cinema and mainstream cinema. He creates the main script in a very transparent manner, while keeping the theme of gun and manslaughter alive with the side scenes. All of the filming of the television series in which İsa worked includes guns and manslaughter scenes. Demirkubuz also shows his own film *Innocence* (1997) in *The Third Page*.

Multiple narrative, which is one of the characteristics of independent cinema as opposed to mainstream cinema, is not included in *The Third Page*. It is possible to say that the film, which is based on the main characters İsa and Meryem, has a simple narrative structure. Even though how İsa left the crime scene and Meryem's secret life from İsa created vital turning points in the film process, both temporal and spatial follow-up is very easy.

Another distinction that Wollen defines is that open-ended ends are found in independent cinema, despite closing with a certain end in mainstream cinema. *The Third Page* shows the last scenes when İsa sees Meryem with her new husband in expensive clothes after she said she is going to her village and goes to her house and brings her to book. Standing on the door of Meryem with a gun in his hand, İsa shoots himself in the face of the woman's carelessness. There is a discursive link between the attempted suicide of İsa, one of the first scenes of the film, and the closing scene. The film started and ended with the theme of suicide. At this point, even though it can be said that the film has an open-ended ending for Meryem, the story of İsa is punctuated.

Wollen also mentions the inhibition of the inclusion of pleasure in independent cinema despite the intensive use of the element of pleasure in mainstream cinema. Zeki Demirkubuz's film only included sexuality in dialogues and did not frame it. The element of pleasure is ignored on *The Third Page*, as in the other three films under investigation. The film is based on poverty, violence against women, helplessness and love.

Finally, it is possible to determine the difference between independent cinema and mainstream cinema as one nurturing reality and the other giving fictional elements. There are no fictional, unreal elements in Demirkubuz's film. It is possible to say that the poverty and the misery of the suburbs are presented in a very realistic way with the costumes, set arrangement and the dark style that dominates the film. Demirkubuz also displays the popular cultural indicators that prevailed in the late 1990s, with television sound heard in the background and television footage, as well as posters in İsa's home.

3. CONCLUSION

Independent cinema works, sometimes alternative to the mainstream cinema strategies dominating the minds of the sector and the majority of the minds of the audience, sometimes opposing and sometimes intentionally provocative. In this respect, it reminds us of art's mission to create a fantasy by only distorting the facts, and to convey the facts in the original language of the producer, and shows that it is still possible to say something other than the dominant cultural/ideological discourse. The only way to produce this, made by filmmakers avoiding censorship, studio/producer pressures and changes. With the independence of the directors who consciously stay away from the big studios and production companies, it is expected from them to step out of the stereotypical processes that are repeatedly presented to the audience and corrode the minds of cultural producers and consumers. With the fact that the directors who do this often suffer great financial and moral difficulties even if they are sometimes awarded by film festivals, the lack of support for independent cinema works becomes apparent. In the light of the literature review and the information received from the directors interviewed within the scope of the study, it would be beneficial to increase the amount of the state and international





funds, to provide equipment support to the filmmakers to increase the cultural production of the country.

In addition, it is vital, the state, municipalities and private companies to create new screening opportunities for independent film works, both for the development of the aesthetic abilities of cinema viewers and for the encouragement of independent filmmakers and new entrants. There are many points that can be cited as supporting the quality and art integrated cinema works. The impact discussion, the subject of early communication research, has shown that cinematic works have a striking and provocative effect on individuals' minds. Moreover, in terms of transcending national and linguistic boundaries, cinema makes it possible for the circulation of culture outside these boundaries and serves as the external memory of human beings as it witnesses history.

The movies, inspected as parts of the study, Honey, Waiting for the Clouds, Clouds of May and The Third Page, are the works of the filmmakers who are credited as the leading directors of Turkish independent cinema which gained momentum after 1990. Semih Kaplanoğlu, Yeşim Ustaoglu and Nuri Bilge Ceylan's films; it is fully independent in terms of intransivity, alienation, prominence, multiple narrative, open endings, rejection of pleasure, and reality-based criteria. Kaplanoğlu's Honey is the last film of a trilogy and may remain controversial about its end, but when the film is read in its entirety, it is clear that the end is not obvious. These findings indicate that the independent cinema described in the international literature is successfully applied in Turkey. Zeki Demirkubuz's script, which includes subcultures and has been awarded many prizes, can be said to have produced a film that uses a transitional, identification element and ends with a certain end. However, Demirkubuz blended highlighting with transparent narrative, simple narrative and multiple narrative, and signed a film that does not contain pleasure and relies entirely on the facts. In this context, it is possible to say that he made a film with a unique cinematographic language in which he used the qualities of mainstream and independent cinema together.

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