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## Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article

# Bereavement And Melancholy in Cinema: A Comparative Review Between Turkish and American Cinemas<sup>1</sup>

*Sinemada Yas ve Melankoli: Türk ve Amerikan Sinemaları Arasında Karşılaştırmalı Bir İnceleme*

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### ÖZ

Sinema, insana ve deneyimlerine ilişkin hemen hemen tüm duyguları yansıtmaya sebebiyle sanat dünyasındaki en kuvvetli ve duygusal yansıtma araçlarından biridir. Bu duygulardan biri de sevdiğimiz kişiyi kaybetmenin üzüntüsüdür. Tıpkı varolmak ve yaşam gibi bu konu da birçok filmi kapsayan dikkat çekici bir meseledir. Bu nedenle yas ve keder kavramları sinema izleyicisi üzerinde derin bir etkiye sahip en belirgin ve ortak temalardandır. Bir başka deyişle, evrendeki tüm kültürel ve sosyal farklılıklara rağmen keder ve acı, yoğun ve evrensel duygulardır. Bu duyguların farklı sinema kültürlerinde hangi bağlamlarla ele alındığını anlamak ve yorumlamak, sinematik anlatıların kültürel izdüşümlerini ortaya koymak noktasında elzemdir. Bu düşüncenin bir parçası olarak bu çalışmanın temel amacı, Türk Sineması ve Amerikan Sineması'nın yas ve ağıt kavramlarına nasıl yaklaştıklarını ortaya koymaktır. Bu doğrultuda, *Canım Kardeşim* (1973), *Babam ve Oğlum* (2005), *Rabbit Hole* (2010) ve *Manchester by the Sea* (2016) adlı dört film bilinçli örneklem yoluyla belirlenmiş ve ilgili örneklem betimsel analiz yardımıyla kayıp ve ölüm açısından belirgin benzerlik ve farklılıkları kendine bağlam olarak analiz edilmiştir. Filmlerin incelemeleri sonucunda, Türk Sineması'nın ölüm ve kayba yaklaşımının melodrama, duygu sömürsü ve yerel çağrışımlar içerdiği, Amerikan yaklaşımında ise bireysel krizlerin, zihinsel çöküşlerin veya yıkımların merkezinde daha gerçekçi bir bakış açısı ile sinema ekranında yer aldığı görülmüştür.

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### ABSTRACT

Cinema is one of the most vivid and sensational reflection tools in the art world since it reverberates almost all emotions concerning human beings and their experiences. One of these emotions is grief due to the loss of our beloved ones and in the same way as existence and life, it is a striking issue covering lots of films and thus the concept of mourning and sorrow are the most outstanding and common themes having a profound impact on cinema audiences. In other words, despite cultural and social differences all around the world, grief and pain are intense and universal emotions. Understanding and interpreting the contexts in which these emotions are addressed in different cinema cultures is essential to reveal the cultural projections of cinematic narratives. As part of this idea, the main purpose of this study is to illustrate how Turkish Cinema and American Cinema approach the concepts of bereavement and lament. Accordingly, four well-known films, *Canım Kardeşim* (1973) *Babam ve Oğlum* (2005), *Rabbit Hole* (2010) and finally *Manchester by the Sea* (2016) have been determined via purposeful sampling method and analyzed by focusing on remarkable similarities and differences in terms of loss and death with the aid of descriptive analysis. As a result of reviews of the films, it has been observed that the Turkish approach to death and loss includes melodrama, emotional abuse, and local connotations while the American one involves a more realistic point of view underlying individual crises, mental collapses or devastations.

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## Introduction

Cinema is the place where death and life gather, sorrow and joy intersect, and melancholy and gloom identify with each other. That is, cinema is a juncture feeding up from opposition, chaos, and life. Thus, cinema and its connotations become intense and meaningful, especially when the matter is death and loss which is a rife theme. Even though death and mourning are two leading subjects differing culturally and socially, they often evoke analogue emotions among people (Sullivan and Greenberg, 2013, pp. 1-2). However, expressing someone's vexation and melancholy may not be the same all the time. Herein, cinematic expression is one of the mediums manifesting how people perceive death and bereavement. Religious beliefs, traditions, customs, meanings ascribed to God, or other references all shape cinematic stance.

Throughout cinema history, wars, disasters, terror, violence, and other bloody events all are conveyed to the screen to underscore what human beings feel. Thus, trauma, sorrow, and melancholy have transformed prevalent themes in the cinema industry and audiences have been exposed to grief, unhappiness, abandonment, and bereavement for decades. At this juncture, making out what these terms mean comes into prominence. According to Cambridge Dictionary, melancholy is defined as "sadness that lasts for a long period, often without any obvious reason". Furthermore, it is also expressed as "a gloomy state of mind, especially when habitual or prolonged; depression". Another prominent term for this study is bereavement, defined as "a state of intense grief, as after the loss of a loved one; desolation". As explicit in the definitions, these concepts include loss, grief, and affliction for people.

Apart from the paramount influence on cultural interactions and attributions to death and loss, cinema intermingles these universal themes with touching stances. Nevertheless, nearly every culture construes its society within its original culture, based upon ancient traditions, customs, beliefs, or religions. This occasionally builds a complex or vague process of how people discern the concept of death. In other words, some countries glorify death since they regard it as a new door to a better life while others are not able to have a sign of adequate courage to come up against it. At this point, cinema functions as a bridge and makes it doable to compare and contrast the notions that people ascribe to death.

Death is often considered the end of life in most cultures while it is sometimes believed a new era to a new life in another community. As a result of this, loss and bereavement do not carry similar possibilities. This is almost the same from the cinematic point of view. For example, melancholy and grief are the issues reflected in Hollywood more realistically, yet Turkish Cinema uses melodramatic and sensational themes in an allegoric way giving rise to a more profound, but at the same time dramatic atmosphere. About the argument claimed here, the main concern of this study is to present similarities and differences between Turkish and American Cinemas within the context of mourning, loss, and reception of them by the audience. For this purpose, *Canım Kardeşim- My Dear Brother* (1973), *Babam ve Oğlum- My Father and My Son* (2005), *Rabbit Hole* (2010) and *Manchester by the Sea* (2016) are the film examples that I am going to review to back up the argument.

The examples have been selected via purposeful sampling, and descriptive analysis is the method of the study. The reasons why these films have been chosen also indicate the main purpose of this essay. Firstly, *Canım Kardeşim* (1973) is a paramount example of Yeşilçam Cinema (Turkish Cinema is known as Yeşilçam till 1990s.) and includes lots of basic themes in Turkish Cinema. Even if *Babam ve Oğlum* (2005) was not shot during the Yeşilçam era, it does contain almost all Yeşilçam features and functions like Yeşilçam's revival with the help of acting, costume design, setting and plot as well being a blockbuster. The American film

preferences, however, stem from the ratings, modern American cinema inclinations and different cultural possibilities related to death.

Before the film analysis, this paper tries to explore some crucial themes such as death, sorrow, and mourning. Also, understanding some explanations on death rituals, cultural traditions and ceremonies in both cultures to address the similar and different approaches towards bereavement are crucial for this paper. Furthermore, This study has endeavoured to summarise the general principles of American and Turkish films by highlighting realistic and melodramatic perspectives in the cinematic experience as well as referring to reality in cinema now that I strongly believe that understanding general approaches to these two cinema types and their probable associations and attributions may make more possible to grasp the traumatic sides of the concept of death.

### **Brief Overview of Perceiving Death in American and Turkish Culture**

As expressed before, unhappiness and grief after losing our closest family members or friends are natural emotions which mostly result in mental devastation or trauma for a while and according to Anthropology and Psychology, an attitude like this includes a multidimensional range of experiences concerning social, historical, cultural, or economical connotations (Bonanno, 2001, p. 495). Thus, explaining death in a specific public is a complex process necessitating a cultural journey into the different geographies experienced in various historical incidents. From this point of view, both Americans and Turks have reacted to death and grief differently. To begin with, Americans have evaluated death and grief according to their religious beliefs, yet the country has a diversified amount of races, religions and ethnic groups. Hence, there is no one specific way of lamenting in this huge geography. In other words, America and the concept of death are not simple to formulate in basic codes. Especially existence of Native Americans in the country made it very elusive and complicated to make some crystal clear definitions about death and post-death rituals as Indians have had numerous different, eccentric and unusual conventions connected with death.

However, in general terms, Americans' attitudes towards death have altered remarkably since the 1950s. and there are two basic cohorts belonging to different age groups experiencing death and post-death rituals: The first group born before the Second World War, witnessed lots of deaths closely and can be categorized as elderly people over 65 years old who mostly lived in rural, interested in farming and husbandry and death was occasionally visible to them owing to the fact that health facilities were limited in rural areas and treating systems were not strictly established in those years. Due to this, the first group defined death within their terms, not the manipulative impacts of the mass media (Fulton and Owen, 1988, p. 380). Because of this, their manners towards death were more traditional and end-of-life ceremonies were shaped modestly as it was accepted as a normal process.

The second group born after the Second World War experienced death not closely, but at a distance, since they had a chance to live in cities and were exposed to the influence of mass media which shows bloody scenes, deaths, pain and wars in an ordinary way (Fulton and Owen, 1988, p. 382). Namely, death has not been an incident that has been observed up close and personal for the second cohort members who have been mostly young people unless they lose their relatives. That is to say, the second group also known as the baby boom generation experienced improved health systems and enjoyed city life have been luckier compared to the first group and they perceived death superficially.

The American way of life is mostly surrounded by the codes of the capitalist system focusing on profit and this directly can be observed in the daily life habits, rituals and even post-death processes. To illustrate, most parts of the country have funeral companies or organizations planning the funeral ceremonies for you and they have funeral packets according

to your desires, religions, beliefs or rituals. That is to say, with the effect of capitalism, death and post-death ceremonies have transformed in the USA and death has been commodified. Namely, as time went by, the meaning of death and how it is grasped by society have changed in a dramatic way (Doss, 2002, p. 65).

To give an example, Americans used to hold their funeral ceremonies at home with their families or friends to commemorate the deceased person, yet it does not happen as in the past because of the impacts of the funeral companies arranging lots of details related to commemoration, burial or cremation. Nowadays, people send the body of the deceased person to a funeral home where company morticians prepare the body for viewing after a short period of the mourning process (Silverman, Baroiller and Hemer, 2021, p. 3).

Another striking difference concerning the funeral process in the USA from past to present worth mentioning is that cremation is becoming more common compared to burial in the country and it has transformed death traditions and stances towards death. Indeed, they are not completely canonical since the country owns numerous different religions and sects. Also, before someone entombing, as mentioned before, displaying the deceased person at visitations by ornamenting the dead body and decorating the atmosphere are widespread in American culture now, but it was not common in rural areas in the country. Personalization during the funeral is prevalent in the country and it is bound to the religions the deceased person firmly believes (Silverman, Baroiller and Hemer, 2021, p. 6). Eulogies are significant parts of funerals. Music, which may be the soundtrack that important to the family members or a sound helping the formation of melancholy often accompanies end-of-life organizations or services. After the burial, most families serve meals or refreshments to pray or memorialize the decedents. As can be noticed from the manners of Americans, they react to death more realistically and with their cultural heritages including some materialism and liberalism (McLeod, 2022).

As I have stressed before, there is no sole funeral ceremony way in America because the country is like a salad bowl, a common metaphor to underline the multiculturalistic origin of the country where millions of separate nations or identities live together by protecting their cultural establishments. This may result in a sort of obstruction to make up a unique national norm creating ingeminating traditions. It is worth bearing in mind that this complex structure and multiculturalism in society do not allow to found a mere convention, yet this cultural richness influences all parts of the country and constitutes a strong cultural interaction (Green, 2021).

When it comes to Turkish culture, it is probable to recognize some clear-cut norms in Turkey. Turkey is doubtlessly a paternalistic, conservative, religious and conventional society and this of course has an impact on rituals, ceremonies and habits relevant to bereavement in the community. Once looked over the history of Turkish rituals on the end-of-life process, it can be seen that rituals have shifted from past to present like in the USA, but the transformation is not as intense as in the USA on account of the fact that Turkish culture is close to being unique even if Turks have lived in various geographies and had a nomadic way of life.

In the past, Turks used to adopt a nomadic lifestyle, but it was highly common to build graves and huge stones or statues which were like temples. According to lots of academic resources, these graves were the results of the Turkish belief consisting of a new life after death (İnan, 1976, p. 61). As a result of this, Turks would believe the rebirth and funeral ceremonies were usually painstaking due to this belief system. Besides this, the ancestors of Turks, known as Gokturks had believed in the existence of heaven and hell even if their attributions were not the same as in the Koran and the Bible.

Some old myths in Turkish beliefs also claim that people who lost their lives are still alive as a soul for 40 days and the concept of ghosts in Anatolia is directly linked with this idea

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(Alsan, 2022, p. 183). This faith has also shaped the traditions after the funeral ceremonies (Tryjarski, 2012, p. 74). Turks who attached credence to Tengrism and Shamanism for a long period converted their religion and became Muslim in 751 AD. with Karakhanids and this event changed the faith system radically. Turks who have had still traces of old conventions inherited from ancestors learnt Islam in-depth way giving rise to a kind of hybrid belief system pertaining to postmortem understanding in the society (Ersoy, 2002, pp. 86-87).

Today, the way Turkish people react against death and bereavement often embodies within the framework of codes belonging to Islamic regulations as it is known that %99 of the complete population believes in Islam in Turkey. However, the old traditions are still effective owing to oral historical traditions. According to Islamic tradition, when a person passes away, kinspeople of the departed try to be quick to commit to the ground. Therefore, the azan, defined as the Muslim call for the pray is the determiner of when the deceased is buried. Prior to this, bathing the deceased by the closest family member or a dead body bather called a gassal is the most crucial part of the funeral process before shrouding. Afterwards, family members, friends and close neighbours meet at a specific place, mostly a mosque, to perform a funeral prayer. As soon as it finishes, the body is transferred to the cemetery for the burial process. The body is placed in a grave with a shroud, yet the direction of the body is significant because it must be the direction of Mecca, where the Muslims come together and make a pilgrimage. Next, people there pray and the ceremony is completed. A low-key ceremony or an overdone style often depends upon the level of economy of a family.

The ceremony often takes place according to these directions despite some minor alterations related to ethnic and denominational differences. Nevertheless, early cultural habits and beliefs are still strong in Turkey. For instance, old Turks would place the deceased on the west side due to the direction of the sun. Even if it is not very common in the country, some Turks, believing in Shamanism still apply for the same ritual. Apart from this, Turkish tribes used to bury the bodies near forests, mountains or lakes (Alsan, 2022, p. 186). In today's understanding, most graveyards are located in big forests or higher places and this convention arises from these old beliefs and rituals going back to very old times.

The melancholy and bereavement period after burial is also shaped according to Islam in Turkey. People usually pray for the departed and condole by helping, supporting and consoling the kith and kin. What's more, people eat some specific foods and pray again and they usually believe that all pray and the foods they consume help the deceased person in another universe, hell or heaven. Turkish people have strong family bonds and losing someone from a family is like a calamity. Hence, lamenting, crying by clamouring among women, fainting because of grief and heavy depression are normal scenes at a funeral in Anatolia. Even though it changes from one city to another, Turkish people show their unhappiness and mourning visibly. Last but not least, Turkish funerals are not arranged by a specific company. Instead of it, most of the actions related to funerals are executed by relatives or close friends.

### **Basic Themes in Turkish Cinema and Reflections of Death and Bereavement in Turkish Films**

Turkish Cinema has some basic codes and trends repeated for decades regardless of the genre. For Yeşilçam, the main themes are closely related to some cliché stereotypes of melodrama comprised of binary oppositions comprised of rich boy-poor girl or vice-versa, affluent father and his snob son, or mortal diseases creating a deep melancholy in the film atmosphere. Nonetheless, the 1960s in Turkish Cinema can be expressed as a milestone in changing the themes in the films. As of this date, social realism became more dominant and migration stories, rural-city transformations, and newly emerged youth movements became prominent. Thus, the influence of Yeşilçam lessened gradually inducing the formation of more

individual stories (Pösteki, 2005, p. 9). However, the social and cultural atmosphere of the country almost always has shaped the expectations of the film audiences, who are willing to come face to face with melodramatic expressions or spleenful moments. Turkish Cinema, whether it is Yeşilçam or recent Turkish Cinema, mostly utilizes recurrent themes because some stories often attract audiences in the country. Due to this, destiny, pain and death are common issues covered in a melodramatic way in most productions (Çelik, 2021, p. 2).

It is possible to assert that cinema has the potential to deal with the concept of death and lament within two basic methods. As an audience, you can either be exposed to violence that is circumscribed with bloody scenes, and wounded people about to pass away or the concept of death may be reperussed within a framework including melancholy, confusion, and grief. Despite having an old tradition, the Turkish Cinema has been building its structure according to the latter. That is, bereavement is the key point concerning the representation of death. Turkish society culturally owns several different ceremonies, rituals, and organizations in terms of funerals after-death periods which can be seen in films. All these events implicate how Turks perceive death.

In her book named “*Türk Sinemasında Ölüm*” (*Death in Turkish Cinema*) Akdaş (2022) makes another categorization of how Turkish Cinema deals with the concept of death considering the economic and political side of cinema in the country and she divides it into two groups as death in Yeşilçam and death after in New Turkish Cinema. She underscores the similarities between the two groups despite structural differences because of directors. She claims that some images such as a coffin, graveyard, transportation of departed to the cemetery, and reactions and denials of the relatives of the family bear a resemblance to each other. In other words, many scenes in both Yeşilçam and New Turkish Cinema have white heat. However, they are such strong emotions that they afflict the audiences sharply.

Accepting the reality of death is not an easy thing for the Turkish community and the way of showing emotions is conventional there. Lament, weeping, elegising, fainting, or other exaggerative actions might be observed during the funerals or the after funerals and they have been represented in the same way in Turkish Cinema. Although it is not very possible to make a certain generalization on this issue, the attitude towards death and loss often indicates parallel features in Turkish films. Hence, film directors convey death and loss within this framework engendering confusion, melodrama, weeping and grief in the productions.

### **Basic Themes in American Cinema (Hollywood) and Reflections of Death and Bereavement in American Films**

The American Cinema industry, known as Hollywood has a powerful history and it has some settled precepts, expectations and purposes. What has largely been accepted in American Cinema has been dependence on a commercial system made up of studio-based, having huge budgets and being dominant in the cinema market. Apart from this profit-driven approach, American cinema also has avant-garde productions based upon more artistic and postmodernist tendencies. However, the first connotations that come to mind in terms of the American Cinema industry are success and money-oriented films (Şahin, 2021, p. 352). Thus, much as it is not very simple to create a de facto verdict about Hollywood as it is a tremendous structure, it can be claimed that it owns certain features.

In the 1920s, gangster productions, biographies, films about conscience and musicals were widespread and almost all of them had one aim: earning money and box office gross, yet as time went by, social transformations, wars, economic recessions and fluctuations, the cold war period and political instability all formed or reshaped the general principles of Hollywood. Indeed, Hollywood has constantly updated itself according to the audiences' social shifts and general expectations. At first, most films were built based on a narrative structure having a love

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story played by a star, a plot made up of a constant cause-effect system, and heterosexual relation networks (Turner, 1993, p. 81).

Yet, in the 1990s, film noir or neo-noir, sci-fi, or horror genres involving slasher films overquelled (Bitlis, 2017, p. 297). Hence, murder and death have been usual themes for ages. However, it has some other cliché stereotypes such as hero-based films, good and devil opposition, praise for the American Dream, nationalistic inclinations, similar camera angles, iterant themes with the same actors and actresses, and elevation of violence are some striking peculiarities in Hollywood (Sharrett, 2008, p. 24). In addition to them, death, melancholy and bereavement are overripe issues in this industry since they always attract the attention of film viewers.

In contrast to Turkish Cinema, American films treat these concepts more realistically and are suitable for the pace of life. I mean most American productions build truthful films with unsophisticated but at the same time top-end acting, classical narration, soft and sensational music, and modest and authentic scenarios. Avant-garde films in America might deal with the concept of death differently, but their point of view is not utterly different from a film consisting of a classical narration in Hollywood. The reason for this inclination might be linked with the impact of American literature traditions in cinema. Most of forms in American literature strive to grasp death in a philosophical way and they integrate to death and mortality relation (Grønstad, 2008, p. 85).

Another substantial issue worth mentioning is the concept of reality. Reality in cinema might mean differently in various cultures. Realism in cinema dates back to the mid-1940s with Italian Neorealism. Italians used to avoid exaggeration and artificiality in acting. Cinematographic extensions were utilised in accordance with the daily life routine and they were for reflecting the reality by averting exaggeration (Haaland, 2012, pp. 35-38). According to Robert Hopkins (2016, pp. 160-167), realism in cinematic expression can be classified under five groups: Accuracy and precision, recessive form, illusion, transparency and collapse. All these approaches are evaluated differently in a cinematic universe and the concept of reality is flexible according to the cognitive references. However, taking into account the economic concerns, the way how a cinematic stance approaches the concept of catharsis, local and socio-cultural expectations and of course cinematic trends and movements might change what we grasp from reality in cinema.

In their articles named “*Sensational! Violent! Popular! Death in American Movies*”, Shults and Huet (2001, pp. 138-139) assert that death in Hollywood can be made out with either blood, terror and attack or fear, ambiguity and melancholy according to the genre of the film. However, they underline the popularity of death when it is described in action or slasher films. That is, when an American film modestly explains death with dramatic effect, its impact might be not as strong as in Turkish films. People love consuming films in the USA and cinema is not only a sort of centre for catharsis there. Instead of this, the first aim is box office and blockbuster productions, most of the time copying a popular plot among American audiences. Even if the Turkish Cinema structure gives importance to profit, emotional satisfaction and catharsis are very significant for a film or producer as it attracts the audience incessantly and it is a kind of guarantee to make future films.

### **The Analysis of the Films**

This part directly focuses on the similarities and differences between Turkish and American productions related to the theme of death, bereavement and melancholy. While underlying these concepts, I have tried to highlight the possibilities of cinema such as light, camera angles, sound, costumes, setting and acting in order to propound the potential influences of cinema on audiences.

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## **The Analysis of *Canım Kardeşim* (1973) (*My Dear Brother*) Concerning the Themes of Death and Grief**

Director: Ertem Eğilmez

Actor/Actress: Tarık Akan, Halit Akçatepe, Kahraman Kırıl

Production Date: 1973

Plot: *Canım Kardeşim* (1973) has been one of the most sensational films in Turkish Cinema in recent years and made its mark with its political references and tragic topic. The film dwells upon the family bonds strongly and the concept of death distressingly. The film tells a dramatic story and deals with Turkish society and its first meeting with television. The film effectuates the dramatic potential thanks to Kahraman, the young boy in the film, who is about to die as he is a leukaemia patient and his only desire is to watch tv at their home.

At that time in the country, television was a very expensive gadget and having a television at home was a symbol of being wealthy and privileged. Hence, Tarık Akan as Kahraman's brother and his best friend Halit Akçatepe as Halit who are broke men and have no job, try to find ways to purchase a television before Kahraman passes away, but they can not accomplish it at once. When they find an illegal way to get the television, then it is too late and Kahraman dies at the end of the film. In this sense, the film illustrates the gap between rich and poor masterfully, but while portraying Turkish society, it shakes the audiences and touches the family bonds and possible fears concerning death and bereavement inducing an extra intense cinematic experience.

Cinematography: The director describes the characters, plot and of course the country within the spectrum of socio-realism, he features death, melancholy and trauma with the effects of melodramatic narration, though. The music, dialogue, the costumes which are old and rags and the atmosphere all accompany the melancholy felt all the time in the film. Almost everyone who is subjected to this dramatic production can not stop crying and controlling emotions is out of question owing to the wounding ending of the film. Camera angles and the sound form a unique, but plaintive situation and it must be reaffirmed that this regenerates melancholy again and again, making the film more poignant.

Acting: Despite the realistic acting, the subject treated here is highly sensitive for almost every audience. In fact, the director Ertem Eğilmez achieved something unique by combining melodrama with reality and this method increases the influence of the film considerably. Especially the performance by Tarık Akan and Halit Akçatepe intensifies the emotions drastically and the catharsis process turns into a combination of melodrama and realism, a hybrid way to reveal the emotions, which is rare to see in Yeşilçam. When viewed from this aspect, this film achieves something peerless, but it must be highlighted that melodramatic attributions still form the general framework of the film.

Sociological Aspect: The sociological perspective of death in the film is highly striking as it provides a complex glimpse into the cultural and traditional references concerning Turkish society. *Canım Kardeşim* navigates the tensions between modernity and tradition, showcasing how death becomes a catalyst for reflection on cultural values and the evolving nature of family relationships. Also, the reactions against death in the film are not limited to the personal grief and it includes family dynamics which underlines the significance of the family in Turkish society.

Besides, the film creates a powerful framework of the society in the 1970s and demonstrates class differences and their indirect influence on death and bereavement.

Television functions here as a societal tool since it was very expensive to buy a television in Turkey in those years. Murat's final efforts to keep Kahraman alive by stealing a television are outstanding examples indicating how family bonds are so crucial and the disturbing impact of the income gap in Turkish community. The film deals with the concept of death and melancholy within the social realities of Turkey, yet the melancholy it creates is so intense that it is not very simple to dwell upon the social and economic aspects of death for audiences.

### **The Analysis of *Babam ve Oğlum (My Father and My Son)* Concerning the Themes of Death and Grief**

Director: Çağan Irmak

Actor/Actress: Fikret Kuşkan, Çetin Tekindor, Hümeysra.

Production Date: 2005

Plot: *Babam ve Oğlum* (2005) is a melodramatic film combining sad and cheerful events masterfully thanks to the great achievement of director Çağan Irmak, one of the leading film producers and directors in new Turkish Cinema. The film focuses upon lots of different themes such as the military coup in 1980 in Turkey, social and political turmoils, the father-son crisis, local references in Anatolia and family matters building the general atmosphere of the film. In the film, Sadık, one of the main characters, is about to die due to his lung sickness. Hence, he returns to his family years later to commend his son, Deniz, to his family. However, the grandfather Hüseyin is not very willing to take this responsibility until he learns the reality about Sadık. At the end of the film, Sadık passes away and as an audience, we are exposed to the process of bereavement and its possible effects on Sadık's family, particularly his son, Deniz. Likewise *Canım Kardeşim* (1973), family is one of the most significant themes in the film.

Cinematography: The film has overtones related to Yeşilçam films, thus observing dramatic mise en scene is inevitable. As can be understood from the plot of the film, grief and melancholy are extremely dominant and any audience watching it can not stop weeping as it evokes our emotions by shaking us drastically. The film touches the same trauma importunately and almost every scene seems to be produced as if this film was programmed to make people cry without stopping. It misuses emotions by reminding us of our losses and it repeats it not realistically but in an intense way giving rise to a shocking experience.

The possibilities of the cinema including the camera angles, over-dose acting, local accents and clothes and some jokes create a sort of alienation effect, making us think that it can not be so real. Melancholy is felt all the time during the film, yet bereavement turns out a kind of rejection and then sudden acceptance that is closely about the religious beliefs of the Turkish people. The director blares out the loss of family members. As a final word, this film comprises general features of how Turks grasp death and react against it.

Acting: The performances in the film have an undeniable impact on audiences and the film gets a new countenance. The scenes between father and son and the final scene before Sadık loses his life are magical touches by the film staff and they completely function in accordance with Yeşilçam cliches. It is possible to allege that this acting helps audiences to achieve catharsis, yet it sometimes creates such an unrealistic atmosphere that the film moves away from being part of real life, which is so common in Yeşilçam.

Sociological Aspect: The film, set against the backdrop of significant political and social changes in Turkey during the late 1970s, captures the impact of death on both the personal and societal levels. The narrative revolves around Huseyin, a staunch nationalist, and his estranged

son, Sadik, who returns to Turkey with his son after learning about his fatal illness. As the characters grapple with Huseyin's impending death, the film unveils a rich tapestry of generational conflicts, ideological differences, and the changing political landscape. The story not only portrays the intimate struggles within the family but also sheds light on the broader societal transformations, reflecting the turbulence of a nation in transition.

In this context, the basic reason for Sadık's death is closely about social conflicts in Turkey. The drama the film effectuates is clear crystal with these social attributions. *Babam ve Oğlum* directly feeds on sociological framework of the country and naturally the melancholy it constitutes has some traces of local Anatolia. Like *Canım Kardeşim* which has similar references to *Babam ve Oğlum* in terms of death and melancholy, this film also brings the value of family into the front considerably.

### **The Analysis of *Rabbit Hole* Concerning the Themes of Death and Grief**

Director: John Cameron Mitchell

Actor/Actress: Nicole Kidman, Aaron Eckhart, Miles Teller

Production Date: 2010

Plot: *Rabbit Hole* (2010) is a story of a couple who lost their son in an accident and the impact of this dramatic incident on their lives and marriage. The film is a clear example of American lifestyle. The houses, streets or schools in the film all portray life in the USA. The film provides a scrutable plot in terms of the pains of a mother after she loses his son. In the film, the couple joins a rehabilitation group that meets regularly to alleviate their pains after they lose their beloved ones. The group consists of couples explaining their traumas by ascribing God, yet Becca seems not to believe in God as she mocks their manners during the session. Thereby, Becca interprets death and loss from her point of view and in an unusual way compared to the other families in the group. On the other hand, Howie tries to integrate the group to console himself and he believes that this unity makes them help to get rid of their huge pain. There is no extended family depicted as a group backing up the couple which really is a clear proof indicating the difference between Turkish and American societies in terms of reacting to a loss.

Cinematography: Camera angles, light usage, costume design, music and make-up all have been located professionally, providing that you not only watch but also feel and observe the incidents Becca and Howie have lived. The possibilities of cinema here play a crucial role and it directly influences the way how film reaches us. To illustrate, the costumes Becca wears are very modest and her make-up is also simple. This combination is compatible with a young mother who mourns after losing her child. Accordingly, the cinematography and the plot function responsively and in this way, it is possible to observe what Becca feels in the film.

Acting: Nicole Kidman as Becca is the mother figure in the film and presents a very simple but at the same time unsparingly realistic performance indicating how an American mother mourns and copes with it. Her acting is so unpretentious but meaningful that any audience watches it identifies with the character and her painful experiences. Nonetheless, this simplicity forms its own profoundness. Becca is not portrayed as a woman, always crying, rebelling or lamenting on and on. She is the figure who endeavours to accept her son's death. Apart from Becca, Aaron Eckhart as Howie is the father character who both grieves for his son and also tries to console his wife and wishes to render to a new beginning by having a baby again. Like Becca, Howie is in a pathetic mood and when someone watches his dialogue and acting, s/he can sense his pain and develop empathy, but it is not a sort of sense forcing you to cry. During the film, most sequences taken part in by Becca and Howie have been presented in

such a professional way that you can analyze how Americans make out or perceive bereavement.

**Sociological Aspect:** The sociological aspect of death is explored through the lens of a grieving couple grappling with the loss of their young son. The film reflects on the impact of death not only on the central characters but also on their relationships within the community, addressing the sometimes isolating nature of grief and the societal pressures to conform to predefined mourning processes. Through its nuanced portrayal of the sociological aspects of death, *Rabbit Hole* prompts viewers to reflect on the complexities of loss within the broader context of societal expectations and interpersonal relationships.

In *Rabbit Hole*, the concept of death is not closely based on any religion. Since Becca does not believe in God or any kind of religion, the way she mourns separates her from the society. Also, her approach to her son's death includes not only a sort of melancholy but also contains some search for a new phase in her life. Family bonds are not a priority in the film and American individualism is dominant even if the matter is death and bereavement. Becca is sorrowing alone and her family does not show a strong support in the film. Also the father figure, Howie tries to set up a balanced life on his own after his son's death, yet he can not communicate with his wife. In brief, the film depicts the concept of death by referring to modern American values and changing postmodern tendencies which makes it very different from Turkish films and their probable connotations relevant to death and mourning.

### **The Analysis of *Manchester by the Sea* Concerning the Themes of Death and Grief**

Director: Kenneth Lonergan

Actor/Actress: Casey Affleck, Michelle Williams, Kyle Chandler, Gretchen Mol, Lucas Hedges

Production Date: 2016

**Plot:** *Manchester by the Sea* (2016) has been one of the most sensational films shot in recent years in America. The film is about Lee Chandler, an extremely unhappy, brooding, lonely man who has to return to his hometown to take care of his teenage nephew after his brother's sudden heart disease and death. When Lee comes back to Manchester by the Sea from Boston, it can be noticed that he is extremely sorrowful, and melancholic and seems to hide an unspeakable truth known by everybody, but not demanded to be talked about. As the film goes on, we learn that Lee lost his 3 children due to a fire breaking out at his house as he was drunk, and he always accused himself due to this unlucky loss. During the film, there is no clear depiction in terms of strong family bonds and it can be inferred that the melancholy and bereavement process have been faced alone for Lee.

**Cinematography:** The setting where the film shot, the music plays and the position of the camera of the film create a highly miserable tone. Cloudy and snowy weather combining bleak sound and limited dialogue Lee make the film more pessimistic. In most films, when a director wants to increase the drama and the emotion, s/he often uses zoom in to indicate how the characters feel. In *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), however, Lee is not shot with close-ups. Most scenes are formed with wide angle which also creates a more realistic cinema atmosphere. With the aid of cinematic techniques in *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), you, as an audience, can get inside the unhappiness in the film and feel the despair, which is the most explicit emotion felt during the production. Flashbacks in the film are also important to feel the realistic atmosphere during the scenes. Most American films use flashbacks with silhouettes or dreams going back to past

lives of characters, but this film benefits from flashbacks differently. Almost all of them are like the parts of the film and when you first watch the audience, you may not recognize whether it is a reference to the past or now as they are slightly located in the film.

Acting: Even though it is not a sci-fi or comedy which are popular genres within the industry, it has had a huge impact on the audiences since it is very close to reality with the help of great acting. Indeed, the story is a stable one and the events are not made out simply by the audience. However, the acting is so realistic that we are caught by the film and we begin to wonder what happens at the end. Lee's long speech with his ex-wife who is about to give birth, his problematic communication with his nephew, his suicide scene at the police station, his pale but realistic face, his silent, calm and dead soul all create a very authentic atmosphere in the film and this makes audiences think that they observe a life story of a couple, not a film. The structure is built highly meticulously by the director and while watching the scenes, you want to cry, yet you can not as it is so real and modest. As an American film, *Manchester by the Sea* (2016) not only reflects the relationship between death and life but also dwells on the funeral process, family reactions to loss, and American cultural traditions towards death adroitly.

What really matters during this film is that you feel emotions profoundly including despair, gloom and being forsaken which creates an epitome of the real-life experiences we have to experience every day. That is to say, there is no exaggerated acting consisting of local dialects, no misuse of emotions or no surprising result at the end of the film. The film both culturally and traditionally deals with death, loss, and melancholy differently than the Turkish perspective.

Sociological Aspect: In *Manchester by the Sea*, the sociological aspect of death is portrayed with a raw and unflinching realism that delves into the intricate web of human emotions and relationships. The way the film deals with death is surprisingly realistic. The film is not identical to classical Hollywood films in terms of death. The film directly feeds from unhappiness and despair. Indeed, melancholy is everywhere during the scenes, from the places to the faces. Apart from this, considering the sociological aspect of the film, the family bonds, funeral traditions, social relationships between characters are all signs about how American society reacts to death, indeed. Lee's impassive face after his death's brother, his faint communication with his nephew and his own escape after his children's death are blazing points related to American family bonds. Also, the funeral ceremony in the film depicts how death is received by the society.

### Conclusion

It is possible to allege that death makes wounds in people's lives and healing them is a sort of complicated process changing from one person to another or from one culture to another. Moreover, the way how we react to death also alters remarkably. In this regard, this situation reflects in to the cinema in the same manner. In other words, how cinematic narration depicts the concept of death shifts from one culture to another with some personal or subjective issues, of course. The cinematic depiction of death emerges as a transcultural and transpersonal narrative realm, where the wounds inflicted by mortality are not only acknowledged but also examined in their intricate, multifaceted dimensions. As cinema continues to evolve as a global medium of expression, the exploration of death on screen promises to be an ever-evolving dialogue, reflecting the diversity of human responses to the existential inevitability that is death.

Death and loss are realities of life that we can not flee and always have to face. In this regard, cinema is a sort of mirror to aid us in seeing what we are exposed to every day. However, these daily life experiences may alter from one culture to another like in Turkish and American

culture. This distinction is also clear in the cinematic universe as mentioned in this study. Despite the fact that the catharsis in American films is as strong as the Turkish ones, the atmosphere created by the aid of music and camera angles accompanied by the acting is realistic, which of course does not mean that they are unsentimental. The concept of catharsis is the junction point between Turkish Cinema and American Cinema. Nevertheless, how these two industries utilise the purgation of emotions in a film separates remarkably. More clearly, the first purpose in American productions seems not to make the audiences weep for catharsis, but to make the audiences feel life. Nevertheless, Turkish examples in this paper seem to knock the viewers sideways by making them cry. Thus, these films describe death separately.

Once looked over the Turkish films here, family and religion are vital for Turkish people to cope with death and accept what happens. For instance, *Canım Kardeşim* (1973) is centred on the family, affection and fear of loss. The relationship between Kahraman and his older brother is portrayed in the film from this perspective. It is obvious that Turkish beliefs and habits have shaped the cinematic stance concerning grief. In the same way, *Babam ve Oğlum* (2006) also similarly conveys the meaning. To demonstrate, Sadık's family gathers round Deniz to console and stand by him even after Sadık passes away. The way they depict death and sorrow show similar peculiarities and the impact they create is also identical to each other as they follow the same cultural codes embraced in the country.

The American films in this study depict death as a big trauma as Turkish ones, but the way they present it differs almost utterly. As Americans have more individualistic lifestyles and religion is not the code determining the general life principles of all America, family and religious references play second fiddle. Unlike Turkish films analysed in this essay, they include alienation, isolation and loneliness because of the post-death process. The characters in American films mentioned here tackle the trauma with their own vision overtly, not getting support from their family members. To demonstrate, Becca in *Rabbit Hole* (2010) can not get sufficient support from her family and she is depressed and alone despite her husband's efforts. She also develops her own ways to cope with her son's death. No religion, family or conventional rituals play any role here. In the same way, in *Manchester by the Sea* (2016), the melancholy the actors or the actresses make us feel is so unique that we perceive the grief as if it belongs to us. Namely, the characters, particularly Casey Affleck as Lee Chandler, reflect and experience their regrets, pains and loneliness individually and realistically and the place where the film has been produced supports the plot and atmosphere which aids in strengthening the narration.

To sum up, Turkish cinema, especially due to the Yeşilçam tradition still disposes of death and bereavement with an extreme drama and turgidity engendering loss of reality and emotion. On the contrary, American examples, whether time-image or movement-image dwell on the topic more realistically. It has to be specified that new Turkish Cinema and directors sometimes convey the meaning in an avant-garde way which is not a conventional style and thus it is doable to realize scenes that are closer to real-life experiences in the films. At the same time, it is probable to see an American production involving exaggeration pertaining to death. After taking everything into consideration, looking from a broad perspective, cinematic approaches are closely parallel to social and cultural norms in these two cinemas and the examples covered in this paper can be pointed out as a shred of evidence for the argument asserted here.

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