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The Search for Value in the New Turkish Cinema: Creating Values or Creating Appropriate Conditions for It

Abstract: This study problematizes New Turkish Cinema through the concept of “value” and takes Zeki Demirkubuz and Reha Erdem from the universe of independent directors as an example. The fact that both directors have common philosophical projections in their films makes this choice meaningful. The question sought to be answered in the study is how both directors responded in their films to the attempt to overcome the sense of worthlessness created by modernism on the individual. This study, which was designed on a qualitative pattern and used the parameters of philosophical analysis, was limited to the cinema of Zeki Demirkubuz and Reha Erdem, and it was assumed that the effort to create new values to overcome nihilism in New Turkish Cinema could not be mentioned apart from these two directors. The findings show that Zeki Demirkubuz and Reha Erdem’s films show new life possibilities to the audience, and they focus on the creation or constitution of a space of freedom for a new creation, not exploration in the search for value. In other words, it can be said that both directors, following the footsteps of Nietzsche, Camus and Sartre, give priority to ‘destruction’ rather than ‘construction’ in their films and that this destruction is functional in terms of showing the audience new life possibilities.

Keywords: New Turkish Cinema, Search for Value, Destroying Values, Creating New Value, Nihilism.

Yeni Türk Sinemasında Değer Arayışları: Değer Yaratmak ya da Bunun İçin Uygun Koşulları Oluşturmak

Öz: Bu çalışma, Yeni Türk Sinemasını “değer” kavramı üzerinden sorunsallaştırmakta; bağımsız yönetmenler evrenselinden Zeki Demirkubuz ve Reha Erdem’i örnekleme almaktadır. Her iki yönetmenin de filmlerinde ortak felsefi izdüşümleri barındırıyor oluşu bu seçimi anlamlı kılmaktadır. Çalışmada yanıtı aranan soru, her iki yönetmenin modernizmin birey üzerinde yarattığı değersizlik duygusunu aşma girişimine filmlerinde nasıl cevap verdiği üzerinedir. Nitel desen üzerine tasarılan ve felsefi çözümlemenin parametrelerinden yararlanılan çalışma Zeki Demirkubuz ve Reha Erdem sinemasıyla sınırlandırılmış; Yeni Türk Sineması’nda nihilizmi aşmak için yeni değer yaratma çabasının bu iki yönetmen dışında söz konusu edilemeyeceği varsayılmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, Zeki Demirkubuz ve Reha Erdem’in filmlerinde, seyirciye yeni yaşam olanakları gösterdiğini, değer arayışında keşfe değil, yaratıma ya da yeni bir yaratım için özgürlük alanı oluşturmaya odaklandıklarını göstermektedir. Eş deyişle Nietzsche, Camus ve Sartre’in izinden giden her iki yönetmenin de filmlerinde önceliği ‘yapma’ya değil ‘yıkma’ya verdiği, bu yıkımın seyirciye yeni yaşam olanakları göstermek anlamında işlevsel olduğu söylenebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Türk Sineması, Değer Arayışı, Değerleri Yıkma, Yeni Değer Yaratmak, Nihilizm.

Introduction

Nietzsche, who changed the direction of the world of thought with concepts such as eternal recurrence, superhuman, amor fati, finds the solution¹ to the meaning crisis flawed caused by modernism found by names such as Kierkegaard and Dostoevsky. According to Nietzsche “meaning, value or truth is not something that exists there and is to be found, discovered, but rather something that needs to be created” (2002: 280). For that reason, “attempts to escape nihilism without reevaluating our values so far: they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute” (Nietzsche 2002: 32) Nietzsche, who thinks that by announcing the death of God, man is left alone in this world, and that all kinds of values belonging to the modern period and the past feed nihilism, has the following suggestion for creating creating values: “Send your ships to the uncharted seas” (Nietzsche 2000: 74). This view, which advocates trying the untested in order to create values, mentions that a person should prepare himself in the name of new values: “If we want to create values, it is necessary to give ourselves a greater freedom than has ever been given

¹ Kierkegaard (2007) and Dostoevsky (2006) claim that overcoming the meaning crisis caused by modernism is possible with belief in God.

to us, so that we can get rid of morality and cheer up with festivities. (Premonitions of the future! Glorify the future, not the past! Finding the myth of the future! To live in hope!)” (Act Bataille 2000:31) A similar thought comes to life about half a century later in the philosophy of Camus: “Can man create his own values alone, without the help of either God or rational thought?” (Camus 1994: 53). Just like Nietzsche, Camus defines the embracing to God and the values of the past as “philosophical suicide” in order to get rid of the feeling of emptiness brought by the modern period (Camus 2012: 21). Sartre shows his consensus with Nietzsche and Camus in his work *Nausea*. Roquentin, who wants to determine his existence by realizing that he is living a life imposed on him, believes that since he is a writer, it may be possible for him to create values by writing books. He conveys the relevance of this to the ‘new’ as follows: “Can’t I try?... it has to be a book; I can't present anything else. But it is not a history book, because history speaks of something that existed” (Camus 2012: 260). The three mentioned thinkers also talk about the need to put forward new values against the modern period's de-humanization, but they do not give an idea of what this will be. For example, in his work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1964: 95), Nietzsche tells his apostles that they should lose themselves, and only in this way they can return to themselves. The expression is directed that when it is said what should be done after never forgetting the past, it will be no different from rational thought or the commandments of God. Therefore, creating values for these names, as in Kafka's *The Trail* (2013), is possible only when an individual enters through a unique door, that is, by walking on his own path with his own decisions. A contrary effort, as Shestov points out, is meaningless: “... no one wants to tell himself directly that it will be useless to connect the chain that has been broken once, that it will be useless to put time back on the way it came out. Everyone is chasing new initiatives to make the ghost of the old happy days live again. They tell us without getting tired, without getting tired of shouting... that it is necessary to ‘believe again’, ‘go back’. Old ideas do not make us happy, but they persistently refuse to understand it, constantly driving them in front of us as binding cement”

(Şestov 2017: 111). What led Shestov to this idea is the inability of traditional values to survive in the face of life or the death of God (Nietzsche 1964:11).

In contrast to the directors who tried to create values in the new Turkish Cinema but discovered values, it can be thought that Zeki Demirkubuz and Reha Erdem followed the footsteps of Nietzsche, Camus and Sartre. The statements of Demirkubuz, who reminds us of Zarathustra but inspired by Dostoevsky, seem to summarize the aforementioned similarity: “The biggest message of the novel *Notes from Underground* is this: To say that two times two equals to four is bullying, one exclaims two times two equals five. In other words, he perceives the freedom and humanization as believing that two times two equals five. Now this is also an objection. It is the feeling of dissent” (Civan & Deniz 2012). After the criticism or destruction that the director brings against rational thought, his views on the new creation are as follows: “It is a different subject. Our current problem is to demolish the idea that two times two equals four” (Civan & Deniz 2012). The emphasis, on the one hand, indicates that it is necessary to avoid showing what the new value that needs to be created, and, on the other hand, it is an indication that Demirkubuz disagrees with his contemporaries², who think that there is an unworthiness and an absurd situation today accompanied by the modern period. “..I do not think that Turkish society has a problem of alienation and nihilism in the Western sense. On the contrary, it is currently living a situation that is farthest from the issue of alienation in the world; that is, if we use this alienation in a negative sense, our society does not alienate at all, claims its stupidest values in the most absurd way, headlong, without question. Therefore, alienation remains very luxurious in this society, it may even be a shame to call it nihilism” (Işıklar 2017: 511). The expression is like a translation of the ideas of Nietzsche, who said that “the highest mountains came out of the deepest seas” (Nietzsche 1964: 171) that it is possible to overcome

² Most of the directors in recent Turkish Cinema, especially Derviş Zaim, talk about the intense feeling of meaninglessness and emptiness in Turkish society (Deniz 2009: 80; Şirin 2017).

the feeling of meaninglessness-emptiness by living it, and that it is only possible to undergo nihilism in value creation. The equivalence of this idea in Reha Erdem is as follows; “Is not the lack of exit, that is, the depths, which a person enriches with the depths that he does not know his ways, can be colored in the darkness in which he disappears, rises with his wounds as he pursues what he does not know?” (2009: 188). Reha Erdem’s attitude towards the current situation is similar to that of Semih Kaplanoğlu and Derviş Zaim: “When you can’t rebel... you can become a despicable man(sun)”, but the solution is in the opposite direction: “... when you can’t ‘kill your father’, you suffer a lot from it” (Yücel & Acar 2009: 157). Although the view that interprets the efforts to create new value to destroy the old one is perceived by most cinema critics as a “praise for pessimistic nihilism” (Daldal 2014: 64; Kabil, 2010) and defined as the dark side of postmodern cinema (Daldal 2018: 298), it would be ambitious to say that films of Erdem and Demirkubuz have a narrative that paralyzes the audience (Daldal 2016: 94; Süalp 2009: 235). On the contrary, it can be thought that the two mentioned directors show the audience new life possibilities.

1. The Creation of Values in Reha Erdem’s Cinema

For example, Burak Acar states that although Reha Erdem’s films describe the uniformity of rational life, a way of life far from passion, and a world shrouded in half-truths, they give hope to their audience (2009: 36). The main reason for this is the power of Erdem’s cinema to make the audience dream (Yücel 2012: 95), and the director seems to have already reached this power in his first film. In his 1988 film *A Ay*, the narrative is based on the east-west conflict, as in Derviş Zaim’s *Cenneti Beklerken*. However, unlike Zaim, Erdem does not base the search for value on the basis of changing and developing by relating the two cultures to each other. The main character of the film Yekta is at his early ages, who lost his parents, lives with his grandfather, the owner of the old mansion where he lives, and his aunt Nükhet Seza. Yekta, who dreams of his mother he has never seen with the stories his aunt

has told him and lives with the ghosts of the family past, that is, constantly keeps his connection with the past, tells those around him that he sees his mother crossing by boat every night, who sailed to the sea a long time ago and never returned. He invites his friend Nuran, who does not believe in him, to the house, and he wants to show his mother. However, Nuran does not want to see this moment, but to record it on a camera. When Yekta tells her that his mother has passed, Nuran presses the shutter button, but only darkness appears. Realizing that what is being said is not true, he rebels against Nuran. Yekta asks her: "Can you show everything you see?" Aside from the fact that Yekta's reproach is a response to Reha Erdem's criticisms of offering/not offering a new value, it can be argued that the connection the character establishes with the past since he is a child is a similarity between the death of God and humanity longing for traditional values. However, time continues to flow on behalf of both humanity and Yekta. Although Nükhet Seza does not notice the clock that suddenly rings and cannot be silenced, and even if she does, she probably will not touch it: Yekta will fix the clock, witness the flow of time, that is, he will save life from past where it stuck.

In the film, there is a semantic decoupling between the passage of time through the corrected clock and the inclusion of Yekta's other aunt Neyir in the narrative. Because unlike Nükhet Seza, who lives in an old mansion, in an 'old time', Neyir is someone who lives in Burgazada and tries to take Yekta with her, tries to teach him English and make new friends, thus aiming to separate Yekta away from her mother or even from his entire past. In this sense, it can be considered that Nükhet Seza and Neyir are the representatives of two different perceptions of the world. While the one sanctifies tradition, and thinks that it is unchangeable and that the wisdom of truth is reached through spirituality; the other believes that the world has become the object of causal reason and scientific knowledge, and that truth has been limited to fit the human mind (Altıntaş 2009: 58-59). Forced by her aunt Neyir, Yekta, who began to memorize poems and wear formal clothes appropriate for his body, returns from this trip as an adult who is ready to comply with Neyir's wishes,

having killed her childhood. According to Reha Erdem, adulthood often means “entering the path, not maturing” (Yücel & Acar 2009:157).

Yekta’s jumping into the sea to see her mother despite all the obstacles and not finding what he was looking for corresponds to the death of God in Nietzsche’s literature. After this stage, Yekta stops making the world he is in disappear for the sake of his beliefs. He starts the transition process from a herd membership to the last person who puts a distance between himself and his beliefs that do not meet his expectations. Nehir, as the representative of modernity, explains the situation to Nükhet Seza on Yekta’s behalf: “The most pleasant thing was that he offered it himself. He said let’s go, I’ll pack my things, I’ll say goodbye to my aunt. And since that day, no matter how wise, he is no longer approached for his joy. That’s very good, of course. Getting out of this house will make it easier for the child to get used to school, and we can focus on English language thoroughly now.” After this line, a big break occurs, Yekta leaves the old mansion and his past and starts a new life with his aunt Neyir. In other words, Yekta does not experience the agony of decoupling from her values and aspirations like Ahmet in Derviş Zaim’s *Nokta* or Eflatun in *Cenneti Beklerken*, so she does not strive to create a new life guide for him by intertwining the difference of opinion between Nükhet Seza and Neyir. Although living with aunt Neyir means that he has abandoned the traditional faith, it does not allow the inference that he has become a prisoner of modern thought, which tries to explain the unknowability and the mystery of life by taming nature because Yekta suddenly disappears on a trip he started with Aunt Neyir in his new life. Neyir tells those he meets while searching for Yekta that Yekta has “suddenly disappeared”. The phrase “suddenly” used by Neyir is one of the key words in Nietzsche’s philosophy and was chosen to describe a break from the values that have hitherto been considered as the dominant value and the morale of the modern era. For those who are tied, great liberation from their bonds comes suddenly, like an earthquake: the young soul is suddenly shaken, affected, startled—he himself does not understand what is happening... A desire, a wish awakens, to go away, where and at

any cost; an intense and dangerous curiosity for an unexplored world flares up in all his senses. 'It's better to die than to live here'- that's how that commanding voice echoes (2021: xii). The audience does not know whether Yekta prefers death rather than adapting to Neyir's life, but he is sure that he has not returned to his traditional lifestyle, that is, to her aunt Nükhet Seza, as Yusuf did in Semih Kaplanoğlu's *Yumurta*. This inference is supported by the cinematography of Reha Erdem. The camera rises to the vast sea and sky with a turning motion, implying the idea of freedom. The message is the rejection of traditional and modern values, the realization of one's existence by oneself outside of the imposed ones. The director's views on the subject are as follows: "I am more in search of meaning/creating meaning... Only what we call meaning can make art exciting or emotional. And this can only happen with the 'new'... Cinema should be something that will open a person's mind. It is not to open our minds and to make us happier. It is for so that we can take a step forward in our lives. Towards where? That's not clear. But let it be" (Yücel & Acar 2009: 162). Based on the expression, it can be said that *A Ay* is the first sentence of Reha Erdem's views on the creation of new values, which he will repeat in all his films.

Following *A Ay*, Reha Erdem, in the *Beş Vakit*, gives a hint about the 'new'. The film is a reflection of modern culture that says "there is no place for poetry, frivolity, vanity, unnecessary (that is, useless, that is, non-functional, that is, human)" far from the metropolis, the "symbol of rebellion" takes place in the countryside (Erdem 2009: 188-189), but it says something completely different from the provincial narratives of Zaim and Kaplanoğlu. The world of values of characters who have not met modern nihilism in Erdem's countryside does not represent the stage, or in more accurate terms, the place to turn that must be reached in order to realize human existence and overcome the feeling of worthlessness. On the contrary, those who lead their lives with these values are portrayed as hypocrites, evaders and ordinary people who make the truths that they cannot admit to themselves their own prisons (Erdem 2009: 158). What rational thought is for people in urban life, it

is the same for the people in the countryside of in the mosque located in the middle of the village? Adults want to shape their lives and time according to the sound of the call to prayer heard from this mosque and instill in their children the 'decency' they received from their elders. The Children whom the director favored can dream of a hopeful future in nature, where they can directly observe the stereotypical information of geography lesson at school, that is, "away from their families, on stones, in bushes, in grass, blowing the smoke of the cigarettes they smoke illegally towards the sky" (Acar 2009: 40).

At the beginning of the film, the director, through an old woman in a funny language, conveys his point of view on the tradition via one of the main characters, Yakup, when his grandfather scolds his father and his father does not resist: "Your man doesn't make any noise either. His father's father was like that, his ancestors were the same, my mother used to tell. His father's father's father was like that, so is your man's grandfather's father". In the film, the sequence really continues in this way. However, the children Ömer, Yakup and Yıldız intend to put an end to this chain, albeit with secret scenarios (Aker 2021: 97). Ömer's father is the imam of the village. He precedes his young child, who recites prayers by heart and knows the multiplication table like his name, to Ömer, who ran away from his house where traditional values prevailed and went to watch the lunar eclipse, mating animals, and clouds. Contrary to Zaim and Semih Kaplanoğlu's films, the only place where Ömer and his classmate Yakup can breathe is not the traditional values in the countryside, that is, anti-nature morality (Nietzsche 2014: 42), but nature devoid of morality (Nietzsche 2002: 79). In Nietzsche literature, this orientation, which points to achieving healing by breaking away from culture and regaining health (Nietzsche 2002: 338), again turns to the desire for violence aimed at eliminating all the obstacles to becoming an individual, which Nietzsche insists on. On the one hand, the audience watches Ömer's moves to kill his father, that is, the dominant morality or tradition, and on the other hand, listens to his father's sermon at the mosque: "O boys, listen to the father's teaching and pay attention to understand the knowledge.

Because he teaches you well. Do not forget what I teach. Because I am also my father's son. I am kind and sweet in my mother's eyes. And he said to me, my son, pay attention to what I say, obey what I say." In Nietzsche, the listeners who correspond to the herd people submit to what the imam says, but Ömer tries new ways in an attempt to kill his father, which he somehow did not succeed in. Finding a poisonous scorpion, dumping the medicines used by his father in the trash, making a sharp knife are Ömer's actions. Those who listen to the imam, whose child is also in love with the teacher, are voyeuristic by climbing on the window of the teacher; they beat their daughters for the brother they accidentally dropped on the floor, or their sons for not accepting the life they want. Moreover, these adults who have not grown up sit down in front of someone who beats orphaned son of the village with a stick because he took peanuts from someone else's tree and tell him that what he is doing is wrong.

Yakup's father, who is one of the adults who 'found the pure path' in Erdem's words, goes to clean the field at his father's request, gets angry at something and wants to leave, but returns at his father's order. The fact that the sound of a horse as a domesticated animal is included in the audio tape placed on this stage, the fact that animals watch people during culture-specific rituals, and people who cannot gain their individuality due to dominant values are important indicators to understand the distinction that the director makes between provincial/traditional values and nature. Adults could not grow up in the film, and according to Erdem, "all the troubles that have happened to us are wrong... because of people who grew up before they could grow up" (Yücel & Acar 2009: 156). For this reason, *Beş Vakit* does not praise a value that exists, waiting to be discovered, but "praises the untamed one;" inspired by the energy of the untamed one, it "wants to carry rudeness to life" (Erdem 2009: 158). Does this attitude, which praises nature by turning against man, mean proposing another 'old', as opposed to the traditional one, and; therefore, discovering values, not creating values? Erdem says no: "(This hurts me) a lot. I actually don't think there's a place to return. At the utmost, there is a place to go.

However, a number of individuals may be aware of this” (2009: 181). Based on the expression, it can be said that *Beş Vakit* proposes a human type that is “prone to pursue his/her own alternative creative potentials” by opposing the chains of values imposed through the child characters (Tuncer 2009: 88). The important thing is not where the resistance will lead to, but the important thing is to leave, to “leave your father’s ass” in the words of the director (Yücel & Acar 2009: 156), to be able to break away from the traditional. Therefore, it can be considered that *Beş Vakit* is a film that rejects the old, specifies the appropriate conditions for its possibility, not the new, sanctifies the immorality of the sovereign’s assessment style and advocates living with a Dionysian culture in the face of Apollo (Nietzsche 2005), and turns its course to the views of Nietzsche, Camus or Sartre, who desire an ‘immoral’ morality.

In his film *Kaç Para Kaç*, Reha Erdem examines the incompatibility of the dominant understanding of morality with human beings “who is torn from his animal past will suffer” (Nietzsche 2013: 101) through the transformation of a tradesman who makes his living by selling shirts and who is so honest and ethical that those around can qualify him as pure. The main character Selim finds a large amount of money in the taxi he is riding; he does not return it, but he does not reveal his immorality to his relatives either. Realizing that he does not have the morality that he thinks he is born with, that is, the moral corruption he experiences ends with him falling from a balcony and dying at the end of the film. His crime is that he cannot legitimize his immorality and produce a new morality (Altıntaş 2009:61). *Kaç Para Kaç*, emphasizing the destruction caused by the inability to create new value after the broken chain, evolves from *Korkuyorum Anne* into the theme of forgetting, which Nietzsche stipulated for the creation of new value (Nietzsche 2013: 74).

Ali is a middle-aged taxi driver who has lost his memory as a result of an accident he had. For a long time, he does not remember his father, Rasih, and those around him, who paired masculinity with circumcision, proper breathing with aiming, and criticized him for not being able to step on the ground correctly. Ali’s

response to his father's efforts to remind him, who represents the dominant culture, is similar to that of Ömer in *Beş Vakit*, who deliberately delays the medications of his father while he is having a heart attack. Erdem, as in all his films, in *Korkuyorum Anne*, also portrays individuals who represent traditional values as patients.

Rasih, who dreamed to be a doctor but could not achieve it, is also a neurotic, and the fact that he is facing death due to a heart attack has a significant impact on his son's memory loss, which will allow him to direct his life the way he wants. As time goes by, Ali, with the common help of those around him, remembers the things he loved in his past life, except for his father.

In the film, the tendency to reject traditional or modern values to realize his own existence is felt not only in Ali, who has given up his memory, but also in Keten, who stands against his mother preventing him from getting married to the girl he loves, and in Aytekin who wants to get a certificate of disability to be discharged from the military service, and in Çetin, who has escaped from circumcision. However, the herd is an obstacle to this: "Everyone thinks about the other's well-being, tries to protect him. They want him to be circumcised, to be a good soldier, to be a good man. They want him to be harmonious not happy; be like everybody not himself: the stones of goodwill cover the stones of hell" (Altıntaş 2009: 56). Ali remembers his father with fear in a tragic moment; Aytekin is 'convinced' to join the military and Çetin is convinced for circumcision. However, Reha Erdem does not lose his faith in realizing one's existence or trying the untested for new value creation. In the finale, we find Keten, his mother who scolded him in front of the girl he loved, and Ali, his father who wanted him to live according to dominant values, climbed on the rocks and turned their backs to the community looking to the endless sea. The director's views on the subject are as follows: "I want people to pass from game to game while watching, those irresponsible forgetfulness of children when playing games, such as their drunkenness, forget what they know and disappear, struggle with what they find where they disappear. I'm trying this with the desire to

be able to do it; I don't know where it will lead to... because only when watching movies like this do I get the idea that being a human being is not a bad thing" (Yücel & Acar 2009: 165).

In *Hayat Var*, Erdem, who establishes a relation between forgetting and being a human, and a relationship between forgetting and creation, adds joy to the big break just like Nietzsche. The lion in Nietzsche's philosophy means that the camel, which bears the burden of the dominant values, turns into a nihilist character who takes action by ignoring all values (Nietzsche 1964: 44). Unlike Ali and Keten in *Korkuyorum Anne*, who dream of a different life by the sea, and unlike Ömer in *Beş Vakit* who cannot take an action to kill his father, Hayat moves towards another life by abandoning the values of the social structure and the ways of evaluating them into which she was born. Hayat's devaluation of values is similar to the exclusion of social foundations by Marseult (2019) in Camus's *Stranger*. "An insurmountable state of indifference has crept into his eyes, which immediately attracts the attention of adults, but also children of his age. This is an unresponsiveness that causes anxiety in those around them because they cannot relate this to a child" (Yücel 2012: 87). Hayat does not react to the slap her mother gave her during her first menstrual period and the shortening of her hair for the same reason, nor to the scolding she received from her teacher for being wronged, nor to the touches that meant harassment or even rape she suffered in the name of compassion. She seems to know that if she speaks, she will be included in the 'herd' because everyone around her is in a rush to liken her to themselves. Her neighbor, who said that she experienced the same things when she found out that she was abused, her bedridden grandfather, who attributed his inability to breathe to being asthmatic like herself because of what she had experienced, and her father's environment, which engaged in sex work because of her beauty, are examples of this. And, "Willing Nothing does not in the least mean willing the mere absence of everything real; rather it means precisely willing the real, yet willing the latter always and everywhere as a nullity and, through this, willing only annihilation" (Heidegger 2001: 34). Accordingly, at the

beginning of the film, for example, in the scene where Hayat takes food to her grandfather does not disobey the order to wash her hands, but does not clean them even though she turns on the fountain, that is, she does not neglect its mask, but she shows the audience what is under the mask at the end of the film. By resisting the impositions of being a civilized person at school and the traditional way of thinking of his bedridden grandfather, even leaving him to die and putting aside the conscience that guards herd morality (Nietzsche 2013: 107), she leaves behind all the values and forms of evaluation of the life she is in. She takes the child with her, who does not communicate throughout the film but only sings songs to her; and by dancing and playing, she goes out to the sea into the unknown.

Thus, Reha Erdem does not want to frame his character in a way that is very similar to only one of the possibilities of life outside, which he defines with his own directorial authority, draws his own boundaries, very similar to just one of the possibilities of life outside; “he prefers to leave life as an uncertainty that only Hayat can explore” and “he avoids saying to Hayat ‘this is the life waiting for you, nothing more than that, go and live it’, on the contrary, he seems to say ‘I don’t know where you are going because I can’t look at the world from where you are looking’” (Yücel 2012: 89-90). Reha Erdem’s objection to the views that this final is an escape (Çiçekoğlu 2015: 119) also means that Hayat has a further way to go to create new value: “There is actually no escape there. There is no horizon line or anything, not in the sense of ‘there is no horizon’, but it does not end, they just go. I think hope is also here... they laugh, get painted, play games, and play hookers. They play bravely among those uncanny ships that the whole movie creates, and they tease them. It is not a hopeless ending, but it is certainly not a ‘happy ending’” (Yücel & Acar 2009: 169). The relationship of this method, which is preferred in order not to be didactic, to the creation of new value can also be understood from the words of Zarathustra: “My brothers, why is the lion needed in the spirit? Why does the beast of burden, that resonances and is reverent, not suffice? ...To create new values- even the lion is incapable of that: but to create itself freedom for new creation-that the might of the

lion can do" (Nietzsche 1964: 44). It is possible to draw the following conclusion from Hayat's story and what the director said about the film: "We are called upon to do something new, to confront a no man's land, to push into a forest where there are no well-worn paths and from which no one has returned to guide us. This is what the existentialists call the anxiety of nothingness. To live into the future means to leap into the unknown, and this requires a degree of courage for which there is no immediate precedent and which few people realize" (May 2008: 40).

2. Creating of Values in Zeki Demirkubuz's Cinema

Another name that Turkish Cinema focuses on in its search for value, not on discovery, but on creation or creating a space of freedom for a new creation is Zeki Demirkubuz. Like Reha Erdem, the construction of new temples for Demirkubuz can only be possible by destroying the old ones (Nietzsche 2013: 111). For this reason, in his films he gives priority to destruction and not to construction. In Demirkubuz's cinema, it is the audience that will determine what the new value will be reached at after the darkness. The director's response to those who criticize this method is as follows: "For many years.... This is a criticism that I have found worth thinking about. Especially by highlighting the film *Yazgı*, it is the criticism that the heroes in the film have turned into nothing, the reason for the issues described, what they serve, even that the film has a "fascistic" side that praises evil itself with a Heideggerian understanding. This criticism also seems justified at first glance. However, when we question the subject, especially from a moral point of view, a harsh, dominant and didactic look appears that has lost its subtlety. For that reason, it would be embarrassing to come to such a proposition, such a place after these films" (Demirkubuz t.y).

Based on this point, it can be said that Demirkubuz invites the audience to be the lion who creates this space, not primarily because he does not show the values to be created in order not to be didactic, but because he thinks that individuals who are alienated from the dominant values in Turkey or who have a sense of emptiness

are almost nonexistent. He exemplifies this idea as follows: “We must not forget the story: Jesus was killed by being spat on, humiliated, and crucified. Muhammad (puh) lived on caves for months like a fugitive, being chased like a wolf, here and there lived on a knife edge. Therefore, the price of things that we find valuable is not always to be understood, to be approved; in fact, it never happens. There has to be a price for this” (Öperli & Yücel 2006). The expression means that those who are considered valuable today were created with destruction at the time they were created, and one of the important examples of paying the price mentioned in the Demirkubuz cinema is the character Musa in his film *Yazgı*.

At the opening, Musa, who works in a small customs company where intimate relations are experienced far from the severe competitive conditions of capitalism, is portrayed as someone who can communicate with his surroundings, lives with his mother, who shows him all kind of support, and seems to be related to his neighbors on a certain level. However, in the following scenes, it is observed that he is a nihilist who rejects traditional and modern values. As far as we can learn from the scene in which he talks to the prosecutor, he is a carrier of traditional codes, someone who grieves the death of his mother, but also feels a strange happiness, evaluating this loss as at least one of the burdens on his shoulders has been reduced. Musa’s indifference, which led to him being depicted in literature as “a zombie who has killed his soul and does not feel this world” (Daldal 2006), continues with his response of it doesn’t matter to his coworker Sinem, who wants to marry him after his unresponsiveness to the death of his mother. Applying his attitude towards traditional values to the institution of marriage this time, Musa devalues the values of the flock with a passive resistance (Susam 2015: 204). However, the purpose of Demirkubuz is not to depict him as someone who has strayed, killed his soul by focusing on the depression experienced by someone who has broken away from the values that guide life, but to reveal the danger of clinging tightly to the values of the flock that have lost their function, and the side of traditional values that do not coincide with man, and to show Musa as someone who has entered the ‘healthy path’

(Nietzsche 2001: xiii). For this purpose, the director gives sections from Sinem's life, who is more worried about the death of his mother than Musa and considers the institution of marriage as serious. Sinem has an affair with her boss Naim and is waiting for Naim to divorce his wife and marry her. But this expectation does not come true, and Sinem proposes to Musa. Though she does not like the answer, "it does not matter", Sinem, who has achieved her goal, soon cheats on Musa by having an affair with Naim. Thus, Demirkubuz gives the message that the problem is not in those who seek their own path by becoming alienated from the society in which they live, but in those who cling to the deep-rooted values determined by 'them' (Heidegger 2008: 133-134), and that he finds the meaning attached to loyalty along with marriage incompatible with human structure. Therefore, what is reflected on the screen is the criticism of anti-nature morality or traditional values, as in the Reha Erdem cinema.

Moreover, Musa's devaluation of dominant values not by action, but by judgment, is not limited to this. Although he did not commit it, he does not react to the charge of murder thrown at him because he does not have faith in God, devaluing the definitions of crime and guilt in the language of the dominant; and the concept of justice with his non-reaction to being unjustly sentenced to death (Karaca 2006: 155-156). What they told the prosecutor during the interrogation is like translation of the distance between the herd values and him: Prosecutor: "They say you are too withdrawn and quiet?" Musa said, 'I don't have much to talk about, so I keep quiet'. Prosecutor: "How long have you been with Sinem?" Musa said, "It has been a few years. I don't know her well". Prosecutor: "Does a person marry someone he does not know?" Musa said, "I do". Prosecutor: "haven't you never wondered who is that?" Musa said, "I have not". Prosecutor: "I don't understand what this is, wouldn't one wonder a little bit?" Musa said, "Maybe one would, but I didn't". Prosecutor: "Your neighbor Necati, is he a good friend?" Musa said, "I have no friend". Prosecutor: "Did you cry the day your mother died?" Musa said, "I do not cry". Prosecutor: "Do you believe in God/ Or other things?" Musa said, "I do not believe in

anything". Based on his answers and with Demirkubuz's statement, it can be said that Musa appeared before the audience as an antipathetic and destructive moral who does not offer the possibility of identification, a character who attacks all the values of humanity, tries to take away the values people have, one who is unloved or wants a questioning side to be loved (Yardımcıel 2006). From this point of view, it can be thought that Musa has not yet passed to the value creation stage, but he has never taken on the burdens determined in the form of making, so he has reached the threshold of creation. Therefore, it can be said that Musa is a suitable person for the "free spirit," which Nietzsche defines as a person "who thinks differently from what, on the basis of his origin, environment, his class and profession, or on the basis of the dominant views of the age, would have been expected of him" (Nietzsche 2021: 163). Thus, the director's response to the opinion of cinema critics that he is a passive viewer who has lost his values about Musa and is numbing himself with modern period practices (Pay 2011: 45; Daldal 2014) is as follows: "Such an action, that is, an action such as inaction and lack of expectation, in my opinion, is one of the harshest actions in the world" (Aydemir 2001). Demirkubuz, who, like other directors of his period, puts a distance between himself and modernism, in other words, focuses on the character Muharrem, who is trying to overcome the feeling of meaninglessness (Harvey 1997: 39) that is the result of the modern period after the inactive and unexpected Musa. Muharrem, who lives his life as an ordinary civil servant and feels lost in this routine, prefers to fight them instead of returning to traditional values to overcome the feeling of emptiness he experiences. The boredom we witness while his wandering the streets on his way out of work, strolling through arcade halls or entertainment venues reminds us of the rebellion starting words of Camus, who questioned the possibility of creating new values without the help of traditional values and rational thinking: "...Rising, street-car, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, street-car, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time" (Camus 2012: 23). The

similarity between Muharrem's experiences and Camus's discourse is not limited to this: "A lonely day 'why?' he rises, says Camus, "and everything begins in this bewilderment-smelling boredom. But one day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. 'Begins'—this is important. Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening" (Camus 2012: 23). Through the inner voice, Muharrem has the audience think that he will not return to the chain in the adventure he started: "A secret quarrel began between me and everything. But I was not someone who would care about it, who would take a step back". Muharrem does not end this war with homework morality or belief in God and escape to the ease of reaching peace; on the contrary, he tries to overcome sudden bursts of hysteria by "creating a small-scale prostitution world," in his own words, by 'disappearing' in nightclubs and masturbating because "the free man is immoral, because it is his will to depend upon himself and not upon tradition" (Nietzsche 2021a: 19).

Muharrem, who shows his devotion to himself by embracing the 'evil' in his nature instead of silencing it with mental or moral inferences, is in a sense undergoing transformation in his own desert: Here the spirit becomes lion, it wants to hunt down its freedom and be master in its own desert (Nietzsche 1964: 44). The truth or falsity of his actions or wishes does not matter, in a sense it is beyond good and evil because "the essence of a free spirit is not that it has more correct views, but that it disconnects itself from the traditional one. Whether you achieve success or experience a failure" (Nietzsche 2021: 164). Muharrem's desire for evil and the fact that he does not do it with a rational inference based on interest distinguishes him from his contemporaries in Turkish cinema, from characters who agree with a lot about what the truth is and resort to evil for profit. In this sense, unlike the Musa of *Yazgi*, Muharrem, who decided to rebel against being left like a package on the walking lane of collective life and take his life into his own hands (Akarsu 1979:

111), reflects the inner war outwardly. His target is co-workers, neighbors and friends who are part of the herd, which in his own words represents the 'most despicable order in the world.' He tries to devalue their values and break their pride. Demirkubuz expresses the situation Muharrem is in with an example from his own life in an interview he gave without such an intention: "Humanity is hypocritical and immoral for me... because it thinks only about how to feed itself, how to better integrate into the system. Those who put shame on me are worth it to them. Those who put shame on them are worth it to me" (Metin 2002). Among those of the flock that are ashamed and blessed by Muharram are howling, growling, predisposition to 'evil'. Perhaps it is necessary to refer to Nietzsche to explain what Muharram is ashamed of and what the flock blesses: "...the reverence which is suitable to youth, respect and tenderness for all that is time- honoured and worthy, gratitude to the land which bore them, to the hand which led them, to the sanctuary where they learnt to adore,— their most exalted moments themselves will bind them most effectively, will lay upon them the most enduring obligations" (2021: xii). As the film progresses, Muharrem's war expands from Turkan, who comes to clean his house, to neighbors who organize parties and make noise, to the woman he is with for money, to colleagues who lead a regular life, and even to his own life, such as Dostoevsky's anonymous hero the underground man (2015). For example, Cevat, who received an award for the book he wrote, and Muharrem spend the whole night without sleep planning to taunt their hypocrisy in their faces and turn their values inside out before the dinner that they will meet and celebrate with other friends; because realizing the truth and applying it in life are different things. Feeling increasingly lonely, Muharrem reminds us of the character of Rautin in Sartre's *Nausea*: "Now he is buried in loneliness; in the loneliness that will never end. Everything suddenly collapsed, rumbling. His dreams of becoming a cultured person suddenly disappeared. At first he will be afraid, he will spend days without sleep, then the days of exile will begin (Sartre 2005: 255), that is, Muharrem, who as sick around him.

His environment defines Muharrem as a sick person who during these sleepless nights and days of exile describes his friends at a celebratory dinner, his neighbor Türkan at the end of the film, the woman he is within the hotel room, and humiliates those who live on the earth, and, unlike him, are trying to protect existing values, “it is a disease which may destroy the man” this, “first outbreak of power and will to self-decision, self-valuation” (Nietzsche 2021, xii, xiii).

In the final, the destruction that is approaching step by step knocks on Muharrem’s door. During the film, he breaks and tears everything in the house, including the Nietzsche books he is reading, breaks and spills things. Although Nietzsche showed him the way he should walk, now he has to determine his own path himself. Muharrem utters the following words: “I suddenly realized that this is the reason for all the disasters that have happened to me. I was saying that I couldn't change anymore, I didn't want to do it myself, and I couldn't be another man.” To the question of whether this means staying in the vicious circle of nihilism, never moving to the stage of new value creation, Demirkubuz answers as follows: “It's not right to be deceived by that decor and the broken spills and read a picture of unhappiness. Because learning that you can't be another man anymore means, in a sense, connecting with reality. Maybe after that, this man will change his life” (Deniz & Civan 2021: 37). The director asks “So when are we going to see the change?” His answer to the question is that if he does so, he will not be different from the teachings or existing values: “I had no problem of showing the change. I leave it to the people. Accepting that he can no longer change, that is, accepting the truth, can it be the beginning of a change or not; let the viewer decide for him now” (Deniz & Civan 2012: 38). Demirkubuz’s comment on the finale of *Yeraltı* in another medium is as follows: “... in fact, the greatest inspiration and basis of this film is Nietzsche, even more than Dostoevsky. His Superman. The Superman order, which can be reached by pushing the will to suffer, to suffer to the end. Muharram is the prototype of this course of events. For that reason, the situation in the final is not an extinction, but perhaps a place at the beginning of resurrection... As a result of pushing the

boundaries of being human so much, Muharrem is on the way to the superman... at the beginning or at some stage of that path” (Iksv 2012). The conclusion from the director's and Muharrem's statements at the finale can be explained by the process Nietzsche mentioned about value creation: “it is a radical cure for all pessimism to become ill after the manner of these free spirits, to remain ill a good while, and then grow well (I mean 'better') for a still longer period. It is wisdom, practical wisdom, to prescribe even health for one's self for a long time only in small doses” (2021: xv).

Bulantı, which entered the vision after the *Yeraltı*, is like the continuation of the *Bekleme Odası*. The main element that distinguishes the two films in the context of this work is the two different forms of getting rid of the feeling of worthlessness. Director Ahmet (Bozkurt 2015: 43), who is inactive and involuntary in the *Bekleme Odası*, just like the Musa of *Yazgı*, who does not feel any desire or who cannot find the strength to pursue that desire, is someone who puts distance between himself and the dominant strings of values but cannot get rid of the feeling of worthlessness he has fallen into, in a sense, stuck in passive nihilism (Nietzsche 2002: 31), Nietzsche's definition of a strong person, “the strong man amid unfavourable conditions, is a strong man made sick. ... Society puts a ban upon his virtues; the most spirited instincts inherent in him immediately become involved with the depressing passions, with suspicion, fear and dishonour. But this is almost the recipe for physiological degeneration” (Nietzsche 2014: 105), describes Ahmet's situation, which adapts to the mood he describes as, corresponds to an intermediate situation that existentialist philosophy decries as normal, but beliefs must be overcome quickly. The name that Demirkubuz gave to the film can also be considered as a reference to this idea. In this context, *Bekleme Odası* is considered by cinema critics to be remembered not with nihilism rebelling against authority, but with submission (Süalp 2009a: 143). Although it is considered as a film in which a new character who does not live after *Yazgı* is dealt with (Atam 2011: 396-405), it is necessary to focus on whether waiting turns into value production.

Ahmet, who appeared before the audience at the opening as a famous director who wants to adapt Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* into a film, does not realize his project due to his passive attitude towards life. With the women who have entered his life since Ahmet, who is trying to eliminate the distress he has experienced and the loneliness of being separated from the herd, devalues moral values and also has selfishness at the center of his relationships. He makes up lies and leaves every woman who asks for an account for his indifference since restricts the field of freedom. He uses humiliating language to Elif over the cats she cares for in the garden, who has left her lover and settled in her house; However, this is the "innocent side of evil", because "the goal of evil, for example, as a feeling of revenge or a stronger nervous excitement, is not to cause pain to Juniors, but to provide pleasure to ourselves (Nietzsche 2021: 75). However, unable to get rid of the sense of meaninglessness and emptiness he feels in this way, Ahmet gradually approaches suicide, the first option that Camus (2012) may prefer as a result of incompatible discoveries. However, Demirkubuz does not allow this; he leads Ahmet to another path that will get him out of depression he is experiencing. In the finale, Ahmet, who is working on the Crime and Punishment script on the computer as in the opening, deletes the script he wrote, deletes the title of the *Bekleme Odası*, determines the character's name as Ahmet, like Roquantin, who thinks that since he is an author, it may be possible to create values only with a book, but the book he will write should be of a different type from a history book that touches on existing events in order to create new values. Therefore, *Bekleme Odası* can be considered as a film that points to the 'new' in the search for value of Turkish cinema.

Although *Bulantı* is perceived as a continuation of *Bekleme Odası* due to the fact that the main characters have the same name. They have a passive attitude to life, and both characters are portrayed by Demirkubuz. He comes out with an idea that is located at the opposite pole of *Bekleme Odası*, especially with the finale in front of the audience. Ahmet changed his profession in *Bulantı* and went to the academy, married to his assistant Elif and was promoted to parenthood, but his

nihilistic attitude towards life has not changed. He is indifferent to the death of Elif and their daughter Yazgı. He takes women into his life to overcome the feeling of emptiness he lives in. However, his efforts do not prevent Ahmet from the feeling of worthlessness. The audience witnesses the distance between his domain and moral values by making love to a woman on the evening when he received the news of the death of his wife and daughter, by sending money to his brother to fulfill the ritual, who informed him that his mother has dreamt his bride and granddaughter, so she wanted to conduct Islamic memorial service, and by having an affair with a student who remembered him gratefully. However, Ahmet starts to experience some changes over time. He watches Elif and Yazgı's videos and feels guilty, he drives a wedge between his desires, conscientiously helps the woman and her children who come to clean his house. In other words, Ahmet tries to overcome the gap in himself not by creating new values, but by embracing existing values. The most concrete example of this is the scene where the power outage occurred at the end of the film. Neriman, the doorwoman who lives according to dominant values, brings candles to Ahmet, who starts to break down the house in the dark just like the Muharram of the Yeraltı, and continues his life in line with dominant values. Soon after, Ahmet goes to the doorman's apartment and goes down on Neriman's feet and falls into a crying fit.

By cinema critics, this ending is considered as Demirkubuz's first attempt towards 'value'. For example, Cebenoyan mentions the film as "a giant step" (2015), Abbas Bozkurt as "a draught on the threshold" (2015: 42), Fatih Özgüven as "an Iron Cube film that crosses the emotional threshold for the first time" (2015), and Atilla Dorsay as "an outlier masterpiece that rises up in the final" (2015). However, Ahmet's orientation to traditional values is a trap prepared for the audience in the Demirkubuz world, a move to make them think: Ahmet ... why did he fall at the doorwoman's feet; did he surrender his wounded ego completely for a sense of regret? Will Ahmet become another man or is this a way to repair our wounded ego?" (Deniz & Civan 2015: 40). Demirkubuz disagrees that *Bulantı* emphasizes

compassion, altruism or conscience, even though he leaves the answer to the audience: “Did you make a movie about a man who lost his wife, child, surrendering to his conscience after resisting it for a while and bringing regret? Of course, this was something that would not suit me” (Deniz & Civan 2015: 39). The expression is like a reference to Nietzsche (2013: 78; 2021b: 48), who defines the feeling of guilt as a “serious illness”, a “bad conscience” and bases its source on a belief in the authorities, that is, interprets conscience as “not the voice of God in a person’s heart, but the voice of some people in a person” (2013: 78). However, new value creation can only be possible by accepting evil feelings such as hatred, envy, jealousy, power addiction along with the selfishness that came to the fore in Ahmet without denying it (Nietzsche 2020: 29). Otherwise, says Botton, “If we remove every root that we get, we will also destroy the possibility of a beautiful flower emerging from this root later” (2011: 282).

Conclusion

It is claimed that Turkish Cinema, which has focused on themes such as loneliness, alienation and meaninglessness since the mid-1990s and has gained worldwide success regarding the functioning of these themes, has turned to productions that emphasize nihilism with increasing momentum in the 2000s. This approach, which was common among academics and film critics, was expressed by Derviş Zaim and Semih Kaplanoğlu, who were productive directors of the period, and both directors point to traditional values, similar to the views of Kierkegaard, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy, as a solution proposal in their films. However, the cinema of Zeki Demirkubuz and Reha Erdem, which constitutes the sample of this study, gives messages that to overcome nihilism, returning to traditional values, especially belief in God, will feed nihilism. Therefore, by choosing an alternative path, they make the audience think that nihilism will be defeated by trying the untested and creating personal value. This perspective, which has traces of the philosophy of Nietzsche, Camus and Sartre, avoids showing the audience the value to be created,

or synonymous, the final end in order to not be didactic and to indicate that creation is unique to the individual.

This orientation of Zeki Demirkubuz and Reha Erdem causes them to be positioned at the opposite pole of other directors of the period who are trying to overcome nihilism and causes the perception that nihilism is blessed in their films. However, the result obtained in the study is that Erdem and Demirkubuz's films encourage the audience to create new value with open-ended finals at least to create appropriate conditions for this as opposed to surrendering to nihilism. In this sense, it can be said that Demirkubuz and Erdem have produced films that tend towards new values instead of exploring old values in the search for values of Turkish Cinema.

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