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The Auteur Theory in the Filmmaking of Emin Alper

Auteur Kuramının Emin Alper Sinemasındaki İzlekleri

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Abstract

This research examines the films Turkey's director, Emin Alper, created via the lens of the auteur concept and aims to explore common styles and inherent meanings within his creations. Initially, the auteur concept was introduced to distinguish elite directors from ordinary ones. However, it has progressed now to distinguish the directors who display technical competence, unique style, and inner meaning in their films. The role of a screenwriter is often associated with the auteur concept, given the prominence of the screenplay writing process in this theory. Emin Alper, who has directed and written four films in the last ten years, is an exceptional director whose work warrants scrutiny within the domain of auteur theory in Turkish Cinema. Throughout his films "Tepenin Ardı," "Abluka," "Kız Kardeşler," and "Kurak Günler," Alper incorporates characteristic features and internal meaning beneath the surface of the depicted events. Qualitative content analysis is utilized in this study to examine these features in Alper's films based on the auteur theory criteria. An essential aspect of auteur theory is the director's signature, namely their works' distinctive styles and themes. Distinctive styles and themes were also identified in Alper's films.

Keywords: Auteur theory, Turkish cinema, film analysis, Emin Alper.

Öz

Bu araştırma, Türkiye'den yönetmen Emin Alper'in filmlerini auteur kavramının merceğinden incelemekte ve yönetmenin eserlerindeki ortak üslupları ve içkin anlamları keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Başlangıçta auteur kavramı, elit yönetmenleri sıradan olanlardan ayırmak için ortaya atılmıştır. Ancak bu kavram günümüzde, filmlerinde teknik yetkinlik, benzersiz üslup ve içsel anlam sergileyen yönetmenleri ayırt etmek için kullanılmaktadır. Bu kuramda senaryo yazım sürecinin öne çıkması nedeniyle yazarın rolü de sıklıkla auteur kavramıyla ilişkilendirilir. Son on yılda dört filmin hem yönetmenliğini hem de senaristliğini üstlenen Alper, Türk sinemasında auteur kuramı çerçevesinde incelenmesi gereken istisnai bir yönetmendir. Alper, "Tepenin Ardı", "Abluka", "Kız Kardeşler" ve "Kurak Günler" filmleri boyunca, tasvir edilen olayların yüzeyinin altında karakteristik özellikler ve içsel anlamlar barındırır. Bu çalışmada, Alper'in filmlerindeki bu özellikleri auteur kuramı kriterlerine göre incelemek için nitel içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Auteur kuramının önemli bir yönü, yönetmenin imzası, yani eserlerinde bulunan ayırt edici tarzlar ve temalardır. Alper'in filmlerinde de ayırt edici üslup ve temalar tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Auteur kuramı, Türk sineması, film analizi, Emin Alper.

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Introduction

The movie 'Abluka' (2015), written and directed by Emin Alper, was the winner of the 48th Best Director Award of the Cinema Writers' Association (SİYAD), "Kız Kardeşler" (2019) was the winner of the 52nd Best Director Award, and "Kurak Günler" (2022) was the winner of the 55th Best Director Award. This award is bestowed upon successful directors in Turkey's cinematic industry. A standout characteristic of this award is that most directors who have won this award are also screenplay writers. One possible conclusion based on this is that film writers who take part in the voting process imply that they also consider the quality of screenwriting when selecting the 'best' directors, albeit not explicitly stated. The close relationship between screenwriting and film directing evokes the 'auteur' theory in Cinema. According to David Andrews (2013, p.40), citing Jacques Rivette, the auteur theory underscores the intimate link between the director and screenwriting. The great American directors earned their acclaim not because of the superior infrastructure of the American cinema system but because they began with the script from the outset. Indeed, Andrews (2013) identifies the directors' recognition of screenwriters as 'technicians' and the mastery of the script from the very beginning as the primary reasons why they were held in high regard as 'great directors.' Narrowing down the auteur theory in Cinema to the relationship between the director and screenwriting would be inaccurate. However, using the auteur theory as a reference for analysis can be a good starting point. Therefore, this article will examine the films of director Emin Alper using the auteur theory as a framework. The following sections of the article will discuss the auteur theory and its implications for Turkish Cinema. The following section will analyze Emin Alper's Cinema regarding the auteur theory, focusing on his four films made to date: Tepenin Ardı (2012), Abluka (2015), Kız Kardeşler (2019), and Kurak Günler (2022).

The Rise of Auteur Theory

André Bazin, a prominent French film critic and theorist, played a significant role in shaping the auteur theory's philosophical underpinnings. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Bazin argued for the primacy of the director's vision as the defining factor of a film's artistic value (Andrew, 1978). This perspective aligned with the core principles of the auteur theory, which would later gain prominence in the writings of French New Wave critics such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard.

Bazin believed in "ontological realism," asserting that Cinema could capture and represent reality uniquely and authentically (Bazin, 1967). This belief led him to prioritize the director's role in shaping a film's outcome, emphasizing the director's artistic choices in capturing reality through the camera's lens. In his writings, Bazin championed directors like Orson Welles and Jean Renoir, who displayed a distinctive and personal style in their films (Dudley, 1978).

Furthermore, Bazin's advocacy for the use of long takes, deep focus, and minimal editing reflected his belief in Cinema as a medium that could capture the nuances and complexities of reality without excessive manipulation (Bazin, 1967). New Wave directors would later embrace these principles and adopt similar techniques in their films to assert their individual visions and artistic voices (Hillier, 1985).

After World War II, European Cinema departed from the classical notions of Cinema and pursued innovation. The new Realism movement in Italy was at the forefront of these innovative approaches. The influence of Neorealism in France led to the establishment of Cahiers du Cinéma magazine, which Bazin headed. The young film writers who gathered there brought the auteur theory to the world stage.

Bazin founded Cahiers du Cinéma magazine. Bazin's endorsement of directors as central figures in the filmmaking process laid the foundation for the auteur theory, which would be further developed and popularized by critics associated with the French film journal Cahiers du cinéma. These critics, including Truffaut and Godard, would cite Bazin's writings as a significant influence on their approach to film analysis and their own filmmaking practices (Truffaut, 1954).

Astruc's views while working for Cahiers du Cinema impacted both critics and directors. While this theory, named "director's cinema," was based on Astruc's ideas, it did not constrain the notion that the director is the primary author of the film. Astruc maintained that the director should utilize the camera as an expressive tool to communicate his emotions and thoughts freely. Moreover, Astruc's introduction of the concept of "camera-stylo" (camera-pen) advanced the auteur theory. According to Astruc's argument, filmmakers are to use the camera as writers use a pen to convey their personal vision and reflections. In his fundamental essay, Astruc remarked, "Gradually, cinema will liberate itself from the oppressive aspects of its visual nature, the image per se, and the direct and explicit demands regarding the narrative, to become as sophisticated and flexible a medium for expression as written language" (Astruc, 1948, p. 17). Astruc's notion accentuated the significance of the director's unique perspective in shaping the film, adding to the evolution of the auteur theory.

Auteur Theory and Different Approaches to Auteur Theory

Auteur theory embraces the notion that film, as a work of art, must bear the director's signature. The use of the adjective 'auteur' for directors began after the Second World War when a group of film writers in France, who were not in a close professional or theoretical relationship with each other, developed a new approach to American Cinema (Kuhn & Westwell, 2020, p. 51). These writers re-evaluated American Cinema with the idea that not all American films were produced with commercial concerns and that there were also films produced by master and artist directors (Kuhn & Westwell, 2020, p. 51). It should be noted here that the word auteur in French means author in English, and author in Turkish means artist, master (artist) and writer (Güngör, 2014, p.83). Therefore, the auteur director can be perceived as the sole creator of the resulting film, likened to a novelist, or as a director who makes a difference, who is a master, and whose artistic concerns predominate.

The cultural production of Cinema is deeply intertwined with dominant institutional practices. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson invite us to reflect on the true freedom and ideology of film production, arguing that all Cinema, whether Hollywood, national, or avant-garde, has no choice but to respond to the conditions set by the classical Hollywood mode. The claim that even a director like Welles, who defies Hollywood's commercial formulas, unintentionally endorses the mainstream system calls into question the genuine autonomy of auteurs (1985, pp. 60-83). If the dominant mode of film production already determines the cultural narrative, what is the role of the "author as producer"? (Benjamin, 1934) It is questionable whether filmmakers can challenge the ideological saturation of Hollywood. At this point, it asks, "Are filmmakers nothing but pawns in the commercially driven cinematic environment?".

Perhaps one of the most challenging features of auteur theory is that it was not initially developed as a theory and, therefore, does not rest on clearly definable concepts and fundamental assumptions. Nevertheless, attempts have been made to draw a framework based on the publications of film writers and the characteristics of the directors they define as auteurs. For example, Andrew Sarris (1963) identified three main

characteristics for the definition of auteur director. The first of these is the technical competence of the auteur director. If the director lacks technical competence, he/she is not considered worthy of consideration by film writers. However, Sarris (1963) needed to assess what technical competence encompasses. The second characteristic of the auteur director is a distinguishable personality. According to the author, this personality should be reflected as a stylistic character that can be seen repeatedly in the director's films. There must be a connection between the flow of the film and the director's thoughts and feelings. Sarris (1963) pointed to inner meaning as the third and final characteristic of an auteur director, and according to him, inner meaning emerges from the conflict between the director's personality and the material at hand. The second characteristic, the distinguishable personality, tries to dominate or adapt to the material at hand. Again, in this feature, Sarris (1963) does not explain the 'material at hand.' These ambiguities may be due to the fact that the concept of auteur, as the author admits at the outset, was not developed as a theory beforehand but was later transformed into a theory through the discussions of film writers. Sarris (1963) argues as a discourse that the second and third characteristics already exist in most American Cinema. Because in the American cinema system, a film is often commissioned to a director. And in selecting that director, auteur director characteristics play an essential role. In this case, looking at the auteur theory from a narrow framework, it can be concluded that auteur theory began to be mentioned when French film writers changed their perspective on American Cinema, and the new perspective became widespread among American film writers.

Another author who contributed to clarifying the auteur theory is Peter Wollen. Wollen (2013) approaches the subject from a different angle and discusses the differences between the auteur director and those who fall outside this category, or metteur en scène, as he calls them. According to the author, for many years, the model of auteur directing has been European film directors with their strong sources of inspiration and complete control over their films. The most crucial difference between auteur directors and metteur en scène directors is the prominence of the semantic dimension in the films of the first group (Wollen, 2013). In the films of the second group of directors, on the other hand, performance comes to the forefront, and the resulting film consists of the re-coding of a pre-existing text, i.e., a script, novel, or theater play, within the framework of cinematic technique (Wollen, 2013). According to Wollen (2013), meaning is a phenomenon beyond style or expression.

The ambiguities and, at the same time, the clarifications in the concept of auteur can be understood by comparing the points emphasized by these two theorists. Sarris (1963) includes personality traits as the second characteristic of the auteur director and argues that this should be reflected in the director's films as a stylistic character. On the other hand, Wollen (2013) emphasizes the need to project meaning on the screen in auteur cinema, and meaning is beyond style. In a way, it can be inferred that the director will seek to produce meaning from his/her films based on his/her own personal characteristics and technical competence. However, the meaning here is not within the director's fictionalization of the film's flow but underneath it. At this point, Sarris' (1963) intrinsic Meaning and Wollen's semantic meaning overlap. Because Sarris' (1963) inner meaning is also beyond personality traits, it emerges from the conflict of personal traits with the material at hand.

A third significant contribution to the auteur theory comes from Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Nowell-Smith (2003) argues that the term is used in three different senses. The first is that the director is solely responsible for every detail of the film; the second is that the term is used as a measure of value; and the third is that it is used as a principle of method

in criticism (Nowell-Smith, 2003). The author considers the first two meanings as 'absurd.' Because there is no list of 'every detail' in film criticism, the second one creates a dogma that hinders the critical aesthetic approach (Nowell-Smith, 2003). According to Nowell-Smith (2003), the third is the only appropriate meaning. Here, the critical method accepts the existence of the auteur director and constructs criticism around this phenomenon. The critic's job is to discover the characteristic features of the director's film, which are often not easily perceptible in the film.

Although the approaches discussed in this section offer different definitions, they also share common features that are expressed in different terms. It has already been mentioned above that Sarris' (1963) notion of "intrinsic meaning," that is, the Meaning that emerges from the conflict between the personality trait and the material at hand, and Wollen's (2013) semantic meaning overlap. What Nowell-Smith (2003) refers to as "characteristic traits" is similar to the approaches of the other two theorists. The fact that characteristics are not easily and obviously perceptible is close to Sarris' (1963) intrinsic meaning. According to Sarris (1963), the reflection of the director's personality, emotions, and thoughts on the film's flow is more than a planned and purposeful fiction designed to be clearly shown. Nowell-Smith (2003) brings this phenomenon to the point of being a method for understanding film. He, too, thinks that characteristic traits (or inner meaning, semantic meaning) are not self-evident but have to be found and extracted by the viewer; that is, they are in the background of the fiction, not in the fiction of the film flow. As a result, auteur theory places auteur directors in a different place according to their ability to skillfully implant these characteristics into the film's flow.

Auteur Theory in Turkish Cinema

Auteur cinema in Turkish Cinema is a phenomenon that emerged mainly after the 1960s. In this period of Turkish Cinema, many directors took on tasks such as writing the script of their films and taking an active role in the editing and shooting process. These directors endeavored to create their unique style in their films. Therefore, auteur cinema in Turkish Cinema means that a director creates a unique signature in his/her films and uses this signature in his/her films.

Auteur theory is a theory that forms the basis of Auteur cinema. This theory argues that the signature characteristics of a director's films stem from the director's personal vision. Accordingly, the director's style and characteristics in his/her films stem from his/her personal point of view, worldview, and aesthetic understanding.

The emergence of modern Cinema in the 1960s, particularly in French Cinema, profoundly influenced Turkish filmmakers and gave rise to the notion of the auteur director in Turkish Cinema during that time. Filmmakers such as Metin Erksan, Ömer Lütfi Akad, and Halit Refiğ distinguished themselves as auteurs by adhering to National Cinema and Social Realism theories, showcasing their unique styles and technical competence. These directors, who gained recognition as auteurs, displayed a remarkable integration of form and content in their films, reflecting their distinct artistic vision and commitment to presenting their own interpretation of Turkish society and culture.

As the 1980s arrived, Turkish Cinema was subjected to censorship due to the military coup, leading to a shift in focus towards more personal, director-driven films. In this period, films centered on internal journeys, dealing with themes such as communication breakdowns and alienation, became prominent. Themes of women and migration were also explored in these director-centric works, which became the predominant cinematic form of the time. Despite the constraints of censorship and self-censorship on narrative forms, directors like Ömer Kavur, Erden Kıral, Atıf Yılmaz, and

Şerif Gören, each with their own distinctive style, were able to produce a limited number of films. Mainly from the latter half of the 1990s onwards, television provided a new platform for Cinema. With the support of the Ministry of Culture, Euroimages, video, and film festivals, filmmakers had more opportunities. This period saw filmmakers producing works without commercial concerns, as these new possibilities allowed them to express themselves more freely in their creations.

The evolution of Turkish Cinema in the 1990s and 2000s was significantly influenced by a new generation of directors who emerged from film schools, bringing academic rigor and a passion for crafting a unique cinematic language. During this period, Turkish Cinema witnessed a significant shift in its aesthetic and thematic focus, primarily driven by directors such as Zeki Demirkubuz, Derviş Zaim, Yeşim Ustaoğlu, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, and Semih Kaplanoğlu. Despite the persistence of traditional Yeşilçam production mode and the increasing influence of television on Cinema, these filmmakers carved out a niche for themselves by producing low-budget films, often with state support and foreign co-productions.

To summarize, auteur cinema and theory in Turkish Cinema have become evident with the works of the directors mentioned above. These directors have created a unique narrative style, aesthetic understanding, and worldview in their films. Screenwriting, one of the main characteristics of auteur cinema, has played a very important role in these directors' films.

Auteur theory is a phenomenon that also shapes the present Turkish Cinema. Especially in recent years, it is seen that directors have tried to create a unique style in their films and have made efforts to emphasize the characteristic features in their films. Auteur cinema and theory have an essential place in the future development of Turkish Cinema.

Auteur theory is a method used in analyzing directors and films in Turkey. As an example, Özcan (2021) published an analysis of Reha Erdem's Cinema within this framework. The author analyzes Erdem's films under the subheadings of time, use of space, characters, and cinematographic style. In essence, the evaluation tries to reveal how Erdem constructs the film under these subheadings and, according to the auteur theory above, the characteristic feature/meaning of the film. According to Özcan (2021), in the movie "A Ay", time does not follow a linear flow. The film's main character, Yekta, who lives with his bedridden grandfather, constantly thinks about the past and moves back and forth between the past and the present. This is Yekta's own time. An old, neglected mansion is the movie's primary location. According to Özcan (2021), this location evokes the feeling of leaving the place as soon as possible. In his character analysis, the author interprets the fact that Yekta misses his mother more than his father as Yekta's rebellion against the patriarchal order.

In Özcan's (2021) analysis, it is understood that subheadings affect the analysis of the film. While the subheading "Time" emphasizes that everyone creates their own time and lives in it by referring to the tides between the past and the present as the meaning/characteristic feature of the film, the subheading "Use of Space" makes an inference that has nothing to do with the first meaning/characteristic feature, such as that the space evokes the feeling of running away. Similarly, in the subheading "Character," Yekta's missing his mother but not his father is considered a rebellion against the patriarchal order; no connection is established between this and the previous meaning/characteristic features, and the patriarchal order interpretation remains in the air. However, it can be seen as a characteristic feature of this film that the director deals with the theme that everyone has their own time apart from the time that flows

independently of people and that Yekta has a notion of time trapped between the past and the present. The house used as a location in the movie is actually an old and worn-out mansion, an element from the past that also exists today. Yekta's second dilemma can be seen as the dilemma between "showing" and "seeing" that he experiences when he frequently sees his mother, representing the past, but the camera, representing the present, cannot detect this moment, which reinforces Yekta's notion of time.

The connection with his mother does not stand out as an element that can be associated with the characteristic feature/meaning of the film since there is no narrative about the father. These determinations, different from Özcan's evaluation, reveal a feature of the auteur theory. As stated at the beginning, the concept of auteur in Cinema was introduced not as a theory but as a discourse, which was later turned into a theory through the efforts of film writers. This situation points to various uncertainties in terms of basic concepts and methods of analysis. The differences between Özcan's (2021) analysis above and the statements critical of it stem from the weaknesses of the auteur theory.

In this context, a sub-heading in Özcan's (2021) analysis is Cinematographic Style. The subject of montage, which the author discusses under this heading, is perhaps an indisputable example of David Andrews' (2013) description above. Through quotations from Erdem's own statements, the author conveys how important montage is for the director. This characteristic of Erdem coincides with Andrews (2013) pointing out that auteur directors have the ability to master all stages of the film from the script. Unlike Star cinema, Erdem prefers to reflect the characteristic feature/meaning by including montage.

In particular, the elements that recur in the flow of the film are essential in terms of how much the director is involved in the editing process and how the director uses the editing process to reflect the characteristic feature/meaning he wants to reflect in the film. In conclusion, Özcan's (2021) analysis of Reha Erdem's Cinema fits within the framework of auteur theory. The fact that Reha Erdem also wrote the screenplay of the film, the way the characters are processed in the flow of the film, the contribution of the location to the creation of an atmosphere full of mysteries, and the director's use of montage in the cinematographic style not for the consistency of the flow but for the emergence of characteristic feature/meaning is indeed in line with what is required from an auteur director. It is possible to describe the meaning that emerges from the film as Yekta living in his own concept of time, and this concept of time is full of ebbs and flows between the past and the present; this motif is reinforced by the use of an old mansion as a location.

There are also different studies on the application of auteur theory in Turkey. For example, in Dugan's (2022) thesis titled Tolga Karaçelik's Cinema within the Framework of Auteur Theory, Tolga Karaçelik's feature films are analyzed in terms of Auteur theory. Auteur theory emerged to answer the question of who is the creator of the movie. This theory aims to reveal the connections and integrity between the director's films. According to the study, the themes Karaçelik prefers in his films, the metaphors used, and the connections between the films have helped him develop a unique cinematic style. This study addresses the question of whether Karaçelik is an auteur or not. Within the framework of the auteur theory, the three premises identified by Sarris and Wollen's structuralist approach are taken as basis. The director's cinematic background, his personality, the period he lived in, and the society's characteristics were also considered. According to the study results, specific characteristics emerge when analyzing Karaçelik's films in terms of Auteur theory. In particular, the themes frequently used in the director's films, the similarities between the characters, and the connections between the films suggest that Karaçelik is an Auteur.

Another example is Baki's (2020) The Image of Play in Auteur Cinema: The Case of Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz. In this thesis, the films of Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz, two directors who are considered auteurs in Turkish Cinema, are analyzed using the semiotic method through the image of the play. The thesis discusses the understanding of auteur cinema from the perspective of play, how their inner and social observations are reflected in their films, how auteurs remind themselves, and different dimensions of the concept of play. The thesis concludes that both directors' films deal with different dimensions of play and use different forms of imagery and that these forms of imagery contribute to the understanding of the auteur's inner world and the reflection of his social observations.

Emin Alper Cinema in the Light of Auteur Theory

As the introduction mentions, Emin Alper is one of the most successful directors of recent independent Turkish Cinema. All four of his films have been screened at international film festivals and won numerous awards. Emin Alper's first feature film "Tepenin Ardı" (2012), won the Caligari Film Award at the 62nd Berlinale and the Golden Tulip (National Competition), Best Film, Best Screenplay and FIPRESCI (National Competition) awards at the 31st Istanbul Film Festival. "Abluka" (2015), his second feature film, premiered in the competition section of the 72nd Venice International Film Festival and won the special jury prize at the festival. "Abluka" also won the 9th Asia Pacific Screen Awards grand jury prize. Her third feature film "Kız Kardeşler" (2019), won the Golden Tulip (National Competition), best director, best actress (Cemre Ebüzziya, Ece Yüksel, Helin Kandemir), best original music (Giorgos Papaioannou, Nikos Papaioannou), FIPRESCI (National Competition) awards at the 38th Istanbul Film Festival. His fourth feature film "Kurak Günler" (2022), won the Best Director, Best Actor (Selahattin Paşalı), FİLM-YÖN Best Director award in memory of Erden Kıral, SİYAD Best Film Award in memory of Murat Özer, best music (Stefan Will), best editing (Özcan Vardar, Eytan İpeker), Cahide Sonku (Çiğdem Mater) awards at the 59th Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival. "Kurak Günler" also won best editing at the 35th European Film Awards and best Greek co-production (Yorgos Tsourgannis) at the 14th Hellenic Film Academy Awards.

The common feature of these four films is that Emin Alper also wrote screenplays and has his own unique cinematic language. His own cinematic style stands out in a distinguishable way, which can be seen as an essential factor in Alper's being regarded as an auteur director. In almost all of his films, Alper is a director who produces discourse on concepts such as society, the past, the other, power, and masculinity through individual stories.

Although there are moments in Alper's Cinema, which is not directly built on social issues, where the individual's story, personality, and self come into contact with the social, it is not possible to read Alper's Cinema as socialist or political Cinema within the framework of the primary meanings it presents. However, when Alper's films are read regarding the social determinants and influences hidden in the stories of individuals, they offer essential arguments about the society in which they are made. The director's arguments, which are hidden within the main story and discourse and which emerge in secondary interpretations, are about Turkey's social and cultural dilemmas and problems such as power, the other, femininity, and masculinity. In his films, the director emphasizes the intertwining of the social and the individual, the indirection between the two, and that the most accurate and effective way to understand the social is through understanding the individual.

Deniz Elçin (2022) points out that a common feature in Emin Alper's films is timelessness and spacelessness. There are no explicit statements or signs about the period in which the films take place. The viewer can guess about the period in which the movie takes place based on the tools, equipment, etc., used in the films. The same applies to the location. For example, the setting of the movie could be a village (as in "Kız Kardeşler") or a city (as in "Abluka"). In no case is the location of the village or the city made explicit to the viewer. In a way, Alper may have seen this as an element that would narrow the meaning and context of the films.

In addition to Elçin's, there are other studies and debates in the literature on Emin Alper as an auteur. For example, in Çağlar Özdemir and Zeynep Dadak's article titled "Emin Alper and 'New Realism' in Turkish Cinema," it is emphasized that Alper works with a "holistic understanding of cinema" and that his films have parallel thematic features (Özdemir & Dadak, 2019). Again, in Burcu Şimşek's article titled "Allegory in Emin Alper's Cinema: The Case of Abluka," it is stated that Alper frequently uses allegorical elements in his films and thus gives messages about social and political issues (Şimşek, 2019). These studies summarize the discussions in the literature on the evaluation of Alper as an auteur.

In fact, in Alper's cinematic language, ambiguity is not limited to time and space. For example, in the opening scene of the film "Tepenin Ardı", which will be discussed first here, someone angrily destroys tiny poplar seedlings. However, it is not clear who this person is and why he is destroying the seedlings. Later in the movie, after Faik's statements about Mehmet's debt, Mehmet is seen repeating the scene of the destruction of the poplar seedlings. Mehmet takes out his anger at Faik by hitting the seedlings. Faik then tells Mehmet that if anything happens to him, he will leave him the poplar grove he inherited from his father. Faik, who is meticulous about Mehmet's debt, does not care much about the poplar. It is understood from Mehmet's destruction of the seedlings that the poplar has no material value. Mehmet can, therefore, take out his anger by destroying the seedlings. Faik, with his attitude towards the Yoruks, claims to exist behind the hill, and his behavior towards Mehmet shows that he has come here to be a dominant power. However, when he fails to achieve this sovereignty, on the one hand, he pressures Mehmet for his debt.
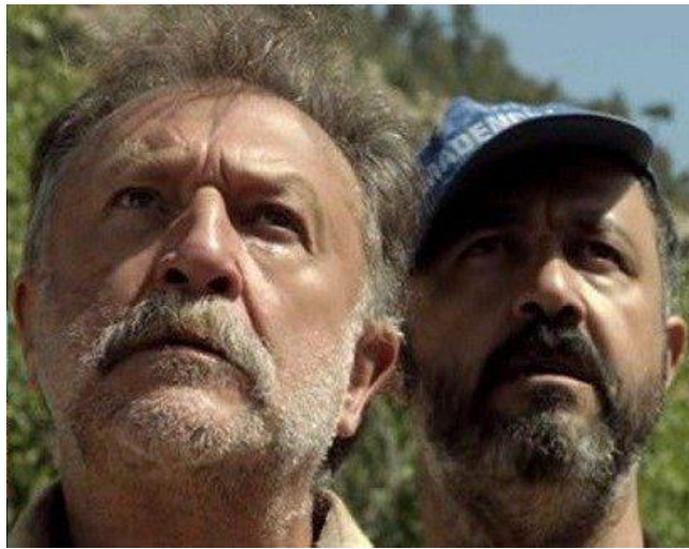
Görsel 1. Tepenin Ardı (2012), Faik ve Mehmet

On the other hand, he claims that the Yoruks are responsible for the events that take place, such as the rocks falling from the hill while he was slaughtering the goat and

the murder of Zafer. However, the figure of the Yoruks never becomes flesh and blood throughout the movie. They are "behind the hill". It is an abstract, abstract yet ambiguous figure. Faik has created an enemy to give context to his sovereign power relations, and he struggles with the enemy in a paranoid state of mind. His assistant Mehmet is aware of the situation. Both his objection to the slaughter of the goat taken from the nomads and his statement that the rocks falling from the hill are not the work of the nomads but due to the season show that Mehmet sees the paranoia in Faik. In the end, however, Mehmet depends on Faik, especially economically. Therefore, even if he disagrees with Faik's claims, he still has to do what he says. Alper said in an interview that the film is an allegory of nationalism: "Of course, it is also possible to read it as an allegory of the Republic of Turkey, since the Republic of Turkey also has an extremely nationalist past, has failed to solve its own internal problems in its history and often blames this on outsiders" (Civan & Yüksel, 2012).

In Tepenin Ardı, it is seen that the director displays an approach in line with the auteur theory. The film is based on the theme of the struggle to become the dominant power. In this struggle, the character Faik creates an enemy to justify himself and places his actions within the framework of this enemy concept, which can be read as an allegory. This approach emphasizes the director's power in Nowell-Smith's (2003) auteur theory to shape the film's meaning and reveal its characteristics.

The character analysis of the film also shows that the director displays an approach in line with the auteur theory. The character of Mehmet can be read as an intellectual character who sees the wrongdoings of those in power but whose hands are tied. The character of Nusret, on the other hand, is an opportunist who takes refuge in his individualism because he cannot find his social identity and believes that everyone is experiencing their own loneliness. The inner characteristics of these characters reflect the director's effort to reveal the characteristic features of the film.

In conclusion, the allegory approach and character analysis in the film "Tepenin Ardı" show that the director displays an approach in line with the auteur theory. The characteristic feature of the film is that it is based on the theme of the struggle to become a sovereign power; in this struggle, creating enemies is treated as an intrinsic part.

Regarding auteur theory, Alper's "Abluka" reflects the characteristic features of auteur cinema, such as rendering time and space meaningless, blurring the boundary between reality and illusion, and focusing on the characters' inner worlds. "Abluka" takes place in a neighborhood blockaded by the police. However, clues as to which neighborhood of which city the events take place in real life are deliberately avoided. In addition, as Deniz Elçin's (2022) description above points out, only the television, motorcycles, and similar equipment give the viewer clues about the time in which the movie takes place. The fact that time and space are left in the background makes it easier to focus on the transitions between reality and illusion, which intensify, especially in the second half of the film. This can be explained by Alper's view of time and space as secondary to the meaning of the movie. This approach emphasizes that the inner meaning of the film is related to the paranoid thoughts that take place in the characters' minds and perceptions and that space or time plays a secondary role.

Görsel 2. Abluka (2015), Ahmet

"Abluka" reflects the characteristics of auteur cinema by blurring the boundary between reality and illusion and focusing on the characters' inner worlds. There is no significant cinematographic difference in the scenes of reality and illusion. A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that Alper needs to be more concerned with clearly showing reality and illusion to the audience. In other words, Alper wanted the audience to share in the deterioration of the characters' perception of reality. Thus, he has created a world where the audience cannot decide what is real and what is hallucination. The cinematographic sameness is actually intended to involve the audience in the almost complete intertwining of reality and illusion in the perceptions of Kadir and Ahmet. Alper explains this fiction in his own words as follows: "My concern was more to involve the audience in the distortion of the characters' perception of reality. I wanted not only the characters but also the audience to be unable to decide what is a dream, what is real, what is hallucination, and to be dragged into this paranoid world" (Yüksel, 2016, p. 515).

In the movie Tepenin Ardı'nda, the title of the movie points to Faik's imaginary enemy as a subtext. The same is true for "Abluka". As a subtext, the title of the movie points to how people gradually lose the clear line between reality and illusion due to the political violence and oppression experienced through the blockade and how this loss can even lead to people losing their lives. As a result, the film's characteristic feature and intrinsic meaning are that people experience paranoia and conspiracy thoughts individually. However, they are a substratum of the social events that appear in the foreground. Therefore, when the film Abluka is analyzed in terms of auteur theory, it shows that Alper is a director who reflects the characteristics of auteur cinema.

Unlike his first two films, in "Kız Kardeşler," Alper focuses on women in the context of gender. However, the gender identity in the film is not done by emphasizing the male-female conflict and patriarchal social order but through the direct depiction of women in the foreground. Instead of a male-female conflict, the woman is placed in the context of the urban-rural dichotomy. The institution of 'feeding,' which has a long history in Turkey, can be seen as an allegory that provided a powerful opportunity to establish this equation and helped the urban-rural dichotomy to take on a more class structure. In "Kız Kardeşler," they are given to families living in the city as fosters, but all three of them return to the village for different reasons. The difficulties of adapting to life with the family in the city are especially described through Nurhan. Nurhan thinks that Necati's son's education is lacking because no one gets angry with him, and she wants to fill this gap herself. According to her, education through anger is natural, but in the end, it becomes a reason for being sent back to the village. Yet, none of the sisters are willing to stay in the village.

Görsel 3. Kız Kardeşler (2019), Havva ve Nurhan

The position of men in this equation is also noteworthy. Şevket, the father, especially makes efforts for his youngest daughter to return as a foster child. He is also sad that his middle daughter returns. However, he is reluctant for his eldest daughter to go to Ankara to live with her aunt. The reservation here may be that if all three of them leave, there will be no woman left to do the housework, which implicitly refers to the social position of women.

Furthermore, Şevket's conversation with Necati at the raki table about his youngest daughter is again seen as a pattern of men making decisions for women in the background. At this point, however, a city-country contradiction arises between Necati and Şevket. Necati cannot respond to Şevket's request, stating that he should also talk to his wife. However, Şevket considers the answer he receives from Necati as a foregone conclusion.

One of the common features of Emin Alper's films that helps him to be considered as an auteur is the frequency of cinematographic techniques he uses in his films, especially the use of dim light. The use of dim light significantly affects the atmosphere of the films. This can be seen as an element that strengthens the visual narrative of Alper's films. Cinematographically, the use of dim light inside the house is also striking in "Kız Kardeşler." The dim light in this space, where primarily women spend their time, emphasizes the pessimism of the sisters' stuckness between the city and the countryside and the impression that their dreams of going back to the city are not realistic. In conclusion, "Kız Kardeşler" carries Alper's characterization and inner meaning that although women are depicted with their own hopes and expectations, they are part of the patriarchal order in the background. Moreover, the characters' psychological depth and unique qualities in Alper's films are essential in terms of auteur theory. This is also evident in "Kız Kardeşler". The subtle depictions of the character's inner worlds and social positions can be considered one of the characteristics of the auteur director.

The allegorical structure of the film is also essential in terms of auteur theory. The allegorical narrative style, which is frequently observed in Alper's films, strengthens the central theme and inner meaning of his films. In "Kız Kardeşler," the emphasis on the social position of women and the patriarchal order is an example of Alper's political narratives in his films. In conclusion, the fact that "Kız Kardeşler" bears the characteristics of an auteur director, the effective use of cinematographic techniques, its psychological depth, and its allegorical structure are essential elements when evaluated in terms of auteur theory.

With this film, Alper has taken his Cinema in a different direction than his first three films. "Kurak Günler" is based on a much more direct narrative than his previous films. Beyond how the characters see themselves and society, the cinematic approach and

metaphors in Alper's film are also important in this sense. The cesspool metaphor symbolizes society's moral decadence and how it leads individuals into a bottomless pit. In addition, the dim lighting techniques used throughout the film create a dark and mysterious atmosphere and emphasize the characters' dark sides. Furthermore, the movie's horror and suspense elements help the audience better engage with the characters' psychology and understand the movie's inner world.

Görsel 4. Kurak Günler (2022), Zeynep ve Emre

The movie is centered around a young prosecutor (Emre) who is assigned to a town suffering from a water shortage. The mayor of the town has developed a populist solution to connect the groundwater to the town despite the environmental board's reports and the public's reactions. He tries to attract Emre to his side. When Emre does not show his side on this issue, the mayor tries to discredit him. Rumors circulate that Emre has a homosexual relationship with journalist Murat. Although the parties in this equation appear on the axis of good and evil, Emre is actually a character with weaknesses, ambition, and arrogance. Therefore, his relationship with the mayor turns into a power game.

Furthermore, while investigating the rape of a mentally unstable Roma woman at a night of entertainment where he was present, Emre shows characteristics other than his "good" status. He was present at the party and is among the possible suspects of the rape because he was drugged and passed out, and when he woke up, he did not remember anything. In addition, he focuses the investigation on two people he disliked from the beginning. In the end, the rape incident is blamed on Emre. As a result of the populist campaign, Emre is lynched by the townspeople. Emre and journalist Murat end up in front of a sinkhole while fleeing from those hunting them.

Alper's film offers a politically sophisticated approach by dealing with the complexities and contradictions in human nature rather than the characters' social positions. Instead of being a prosecutor in pursuit of the truth, the character of Emre is drawn as a character with many intricate and human characteristics, based on the thesis that conscience and many mechanisms that can override conscience are intertwined. These mechanisms also play a role in the public's lynching of Emre. When the public began to see Emre as "harmful" due to his discrediting, they could override their conscience.

From a cinematographic point of view, the sinkhole gains meaning as a symbol of how the moral collapse in society drags individuals into a bottomless pit, which is also the film's characteristic feature and inner meaning. In an unorthodox approach, the final sinkhole scene is shot in pitch darkness, reinforcing the meaning of the sinkhole as a kind of bottomless pit that draws people in. Instead of being a prosecutor in pursuit of the

truth, the character of Emre is drawn as a character with many intricate and human characteristics based on the thesis that conscience and many mechanisms that would disable conscience are intertwined. In fact, these mechanisms also play a role in the public's lynching of Emre. When the public began to see Emre as "harmful" due to his discrediting, they could override his conscience. Finally, Alper says the following about Emre's character: "I always prefer much more complex and problematic identification relationships. I think it is more politically correct and sophisticated, and I also think it has a side that leads people to discuss and think" (Ildır & Büte, 2022).

Auteur theory suggests that a film is linked to its director's unique style, themes and cinematographic techniques. In this context, Alper's unique cinematographic approach, in-depth analysis of the characters, and critical perspective on social issues in "Kurak Günler" led to his recognition as an auteur. Alper creates complex characters in his film while addressing social and political issues, leading the audience to think and discuss. Moreover, the film's use of the metaphor of the sinkhole to describe how moral decadence in society leads individuals into a bottomless pit reflects Alper's cinematographic style. In conclusion, "Kurak Günler" can be considered an example of auteur theory with Alper's unique cinematographic narrative, themes, and character analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Emin Alper is undoubtedly one of the most successful auteur directors of recent independent Cinema. The definition of auteurism is based on the fact that Alper also wrote the screenplay in all of his films, and as a director/screenwriter, he dominates the entire film. In addition, by using metaphor and allegory in all four of the films briefly analyzed above, he has tried to process an inner meaning beneath the apparent meaning. On the other hand, the themes of metaphor and allegory vary from one film to another. In "Tepenin Ardı," they are embodied by the hill, and the hill enables Faik to create an invisible enemy behind the hill. In "Abluka," on the other hand, it is the blurring of the line between reality and illusion that creates allegory. This blurring is a psychology that people living under political violence due to the "Abluka" are subjected to. In "Kız Kardeşler," the allegory is fed by three women who experience urban life. The return of all three to the village is the visible face of the urban-rural conflict on a large scale in the context of the practice of feeding. In "Kurak Günler," the sinkhole is an allegory of moral decadence and the way this decadence drives people to the edge of the abyss. Allegory is an element that reinforces Alper's cinematic style, a style that leaves the outcome to the viewer's own judgment without a clear ending. At the same time, it also sheds light on the audience in terms of tracing characterization and inner meaning.

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