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Transformation Of The Villain In Hollywood

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Abstract

All kinds of films, from animation to comedy, live on conflict: the conflict between the good and the bad, the old and the new, or between other elements enhances humorous aspects in a comedy whereas the tension in a thriller. Film scenario would neither flow without the element of conflict nor can audience expectation be kept alive. For this reason, villains are required in films as much as heroes. “Villain”, existing since the birth of film, has constantly been in a struggle with the hero. In this fight, sometimes the hero and sometimes the villain seem to be winning. “Villains” are also based on a broad scale; some villains are like that by birth, some become villains due to the conditions, some like being bad, and some just cannot inhibit their instincts. No matter which type, in classical Hollywood narrative cinema – and in Turkish cinema that copied its basic structure from the former – the villain is condemned to lose. However, the weight of the villain in the film has been changing as an increasing trend since the 1960s; sometimes the characters selected as villains are pictured as the protagonists of the film and sometimes they defeat the good and win. Two reasons are pointed out for this increasing trend: the first one is the moderation regarding censorship laws and the second is the transformation in the expectation of the audience. The answer sought by this study is to the question of which one of these two reasons affect the other to what extent. In the study, the transformation of censorship laws since the birth of film is being analyzed specifically within Hollywood, which uses state of the art technology in film production industry, has a leading role in influencing the development of world cinema in addition to having by far the greatest number of audience on a global scale, and also this important transformation observed in villains is being examined. As an example to this transformation, for both its outstanding revenue and the shocking eccentricity of the villain portrait it draws, *The Dark Knight* (2008) will be discussed and interpreted in detailed analysis within the framework of the subject.

Key words: Villain, Hollywood, Film, Character, Representation



Method

In this study, following the examination of censorship applications observed in the American cinema and that of other countries since the birth of film until recent years within a historical context and the analysis of the extent these restrictions narrowed the characterization of the villain, the change of the protagonists of recently shot Hollywood films compared to those in the films shot in the first years of cinema will then be examined with the methods of subject search and discourse analysis.

1. The Pathology Of Evil

The problem of evil has been a matter of interest and curiosity since the ancient times and one of the basic subjects discussed by religions and philosophers. The philosophers interested in the problem of evil considered moral evil as “the wrongdoing or sin resulting from the abuse of human will”. Humans who are free but abuse this freedom or act negligently comprise the basis of moral evil. Moral evil, which emerges as a result of the abuse of human will, caused several objections based on the principle that humans’ responsibility and freedom cannot be reconciled with the power of God and necessitated addressing the divide between humans’ freedom and God’s power (Kocabaş, 2010: 6-7). One of the major questions regarding the problem of evil is related to the perspective towards this concept. Actually, everyone agrees that evil is “not good and unwanted”. However, the question of what the measure to determine what is good and what is bad will be is still disputed (Gelir, 2008: 6).

Disputes over good and evil should be considered within their own contexts. In consideration of the history of religions in particular, it can be observed that the divide between the good and the bad is not as clearly drawn as it is today. While a pagan’s object of worship before Abrahamic religions entirely sustained the worldly life, it aimed at hindering God’s influence through direct intervention for the things he/she had done. Then, along with Abrahamic religions, Gods sustained their relationship with humans indirectly through revelation in our living space, which is the middle earth in the relation of God with this world. With the transition from the pre-Abrahamic era, which had more material and concrete touch, installation of a more symbolic living space was required. In this framework, the meaning of the world needs to be constructed. The question of “what kind of place this world should be?” has come to coincide with the answer that it should be in accordance with God’s command in moral terms. For Saint Augustine, it should be a place where God’s city will be built and inhabited. Therefore, the disputes over good and evil should be analyzed together with the analysis of what the judgments of the era within which they are disputed mean. This is because good and evil comprise a hierarchy regarding our acts when considered as a moral principle (Bergson, 2009:79). Among whom this hierarchy takes place is crucial. Examples can be a clergyman and a slave, a Brahmin and a warrior, a monotheist and a pagan. Therefore meanings of good and evil vary in the hierarchical distinction each of which is designated categorically.



Speaking of good and evil is actually imagining that we are considering these two concepts as some sort of opposites. Are these two concepts really opposites of each other? The answer to this question is unclear. “Distinguishing good and evil ... is a dream, the desire to do so is a rather an unreal utopia” (Baudrillard, 2012: 121). For this reason, the problem of evil rather than that of good is the one we struggle with. This is because we believe we will succeed in attributing meaning to the world once we understand evil. In this context, we see serious discussions in the history of philosophy. Especially with the decline of Christianity in the European history, the dispute whether God could be an entity that deceives people emerged. Under close attention, the problem of evil is a process regarding the ability to understand the demands of God. Hence all these processes can even be interpreted as the history of hermeneutics. We think that we will be able to speak more clearly of the existence of God and our teleology within the world once we figure out the source of what we deem evil either naturally or morally in this world. Therefore the question of “how God can let a natural order that causes the innocent to suffer be” has caused considering the evil in God (Neiman, 2006: 14). This process brings along wondering about the purpose of creation and the quest for what human freedom is. However, various answers were given to this question throughout the history of philosophy. So that Leibniz states that God did not create a bad world and the current world is actually the most perfect one among those that could have existed. Yet Kant argues that relating good or evil to God is nonsensical for we cannot account for something like this within the limits of our thinking and the naturally existing cannot be interpreted as punishment. Hence the inner voice of man, his conscience would ask whether he has become disrespectful when he’s on his own. Therefore the thought of attributing evil to God within the created world is tried to be eliminated. Leibniz argues that guilt cannot be attributed to God because the belief that the world could be a better place would include the reference that God is a gigantic criminal (Neiman, 2006: 30). However, still the natural evil in the world needs to be given a meaning. For example, the question of why earthquakes happen and thousands of people die is what actually gives way to the thought of evil that we are curious about. Then the answer to the question of why natural evil (besides we are the ones who attribute the meaning of evil to a natural disaster) happens to humans becomes the moral evil committed by humans. Hence “Bayle argues that history is the history of mankind’s crimes and misfortunes” (Neiman, 2006: 30). Obviously, as a result of natural disasters, the cause of humans’ pain and suffering is no more God but their own evil. It is well known that humans can construct disasters on their own and cause pain and suffering for many others as a result of such disasters (see *Purify and Destroy*). Therefore we take responsibility for our acts and make judgments accordingly. At this point, with the mankind taking responsibility for what it does, the thesis that Gods or God can be bad is eliminated. Only Gods punish mankind’s activities. Hence for Augustine, the principle of “eternal punishment for eternal crime” is at work (Neiman, 2006: 58).

The idea that not the world but actually mankind is bad, meaning that many things can happen for it fails to consider virtue in its acts and God’s command has been disputed for centuries. However, collecting good and evil in oneself is the consequence of a



development specific rather to monotheistic religions. This is because in polytheistic religions, or pantheons, each God has a different characteristic. As a matter of fact, Shiva and Vishnu among Indian gods have such characteristics. Vishnu has a good will towards people and loves them whereas Shiva dislikes people and brings diseases and disasters to them (Eliade, 2012: 255). As can be seen, good and evil emerge as characteristics gods have. However, the good and evil mentioned here is not considered as things to be abstained or as the loss of the world beyond, neither as the reason of many things that can happen to us but rather as the disruptiveness directed at others as a consequence of the characteristics of the one that is deemed evil. In other words, they are not directly gods of darkness that spread the dark as in cartoons. Likewise, the difference between Apollo and Dionysus also comes to the fore in the Greek Pantheon. Dionysus is related to chaos, trance, and war whereas Apollo is the leader of ruled and balanced living (Sennet, 1999: 265). The interpretation made for Shiva and Vishnu is valid for these two gods as well. This is because we are not saying that Apollo or Dionysus, and Shiva or Vishnu is bad. Yet we admit the basic differences between those two. Only as a consequence of their personal characteristics whoever desires can worship these gods. Moreover the consequences would not be bad for themselves.

Here the real problem is whether evil itself is intrinsic to us or not. At least for social constructivists the case is different. This is because that depends on what is considered as the basic characteristic of mankind. If you admit that mankind is a primitive age of innocence, then you should announce that evil is completely extrinsic. You should say that all of our living has caused the construction of evil in us. Hence, for Rousseau “evil emerged in this world through a long lasting and slow development during which mankind became alienated from its own nature. For this reason, evil is extrinsic; it is not esoteric to who we are and includes exactly focusing on the extrinsic rather than essence” (Neimann, 2006: 63). As can be seen, there is also a rather cultural approach claiming that evil emerged through somehow being constructed. However, if one looks closely, all the explanations hitherto, except Kant’s, are attempts to prove the opinion that if there is a god, he can never be an imposter. Kant rather deals with the mind and places ethics within conscience trying to hinder the explanation of it through God (See *Critique of Practical Reason*). Especially with the project of enlightenment, the possibility that God may not exist has been enhanced. Therefore approaches emerged such as even if there is a God he should be an imposter. Hence, De Sade wrote, “you see terrific miracles wherever you look. Moral and natural evil becomes one in his sight since God himself –if he exists- is an entirely bad one just like Descartes was afraid him to be” (Neiman, 2006: 140).

Evil can actually be interpreted as a process related to the history of Gods. This is because Western philosophy started assuming the consequences of evil in terms of evil being specific to man or bearing the responsibility of his acts. However the limits of evil had been described in the Qur’an. See the following verses: “ones who committed evil and whose self is immersed in the guilt of that (and thus fallen into polytheism) ... (Bakara, 81); “You, who kill each other, cooperate in evil and cruelty against a party



amongst you; who deprive those of their homelands even if it is sinful for you; who paid ransom and saved them when they came to you as prisoners” (Bakara, 85); “how bad it is for them to deny the revelation” (Bakara, 90); “Our Lord! Send them a prophet amongst themselves; let him read them the verses, teach the book and wisdom and purify them of all kinds of evil” (Bakara, 129); “Shall I inform you of those who will be punished more heavily before God? Those are the ones damned by God fell victim to his wrath, made monkeys and pigs come out of those, and who worship the devil” (Maide, 60); “Then we brought good (abundance and wealth) instead of evil (hardship and poverty)” (Araf, 95); “the worst of all before God among the creatures on earth are the deaf and the blind who do not use their reason (cannot see the truth)” (Enfal, 22); “When God wishes evil for a clan, that is irreversible” (Rad, 11); “A bad word is like a bad tree that is detached from the ground, which can no more stand upright” (Ibrahim, 26); “The sea and the land has been distorted because of the acts (evil) of mankind. God will have them taste some of the (bad) consequences of those (in the world) for them to backtrack” (Rum, 41). As can be seen, evil has been exemplified from numerous perspectives. However, these disputes in western philosophical traditions actually find their place in the history of Islam from different perspectives. The subject of fate in particular includes all these disputes. Yet this study will not get involved in such discussion.

Today, global capitalism’s dominant omnipresence might cause changes in the capabilities regarding moral judgment as a result of the world’s transformation into a global village. In this era, which can be seen as some kind of ellipsis, relations of means and purpose have entirely been confused with each other. In consideration of the fact that today consumption has left all purposive relations behind and become a purpose itself, in the art of film, the relation between good and evil has also come to a point where it cannot merely be exchanged. Evil is no more the opposite of good and rather like a consumable material with no symbolic value yet as an object that has lost its power of sanction (Baudrillard, 2012: 12). We are now at a point where we can walk into the supermarket and ask for two kilograms of evil. Therefore in an era when great Gods struggling for good have been forgotten, gods such as Yang, Vishnu and Shiva, Varuna and Mitra, and Ahura Mazda have become objects of consumption. Their validity emerges only at the moment of consumption and then can vanish just like the bubbles in a glass of soda.

In close consideration of today’s societies, especially those in Western Europe, evil has normally vanished within the societies, in which almost everything can be controlled, machines protect everyone from all kinds of danger, and protection has become the real element of threat. This is because for them evil is entirely extrinsic for everything is good and symbolically makes no sense. However, this strategy of entire exclusion of evil is bad on its own for it destroys dialectic. When the dialectic of good and evil vanishes, moral principles have no importance for man in terms of decision-making. Therefore good without an opposite is no different than evil. For this reason, the excerpt below is meaningful in terms of seeing the place of evil within a society in which it does not have an opposite:



“The illusion of removing extreme phenomena is a total illusion. These phenomena will become even more extreme to the extent our systems develop. Fortunately it is as such; because these phenomena are the most developed method that would cure the system. In transparent, homeostatic or homeofluid systems, there is no longer a strategy of the Good vs the Evil, there is nothing but the Evil against the Evil - the strategy of worse” (Baudrillard, 2012: 67).

Today, considering that we have been freed of all kinds of duties in terms of expected moral liability can only be deemed indifference. Therefore as a consequence of the fear that God could be evil as disputed throughout the period of enlightenment, of reserving the entire moral area for the freedom of man with the death of God, and yet everyone continuing to act evil as well as of ethical disputes that even propose the extermination of will, we are now in an era in which we have moved away from all moral codes. We are facing this era as an era of indifferent individualism (Bauman, 2011: 11). Therefore evil has now become indistinct. This is because when everyone is indifferent, there are no valid codes remaining to bond us. In such an era, good and evil have become intertwined, melted within each other and even evaporated.

The problem of evil, evil that is reflected on human behavior, and from what this stems fall into the field of psychology as well as those of philosophy and religion. In his structural model regarding neurotic conflict constructed in order to explain the conflict emerging from Oedipal conflict, Freud divided the unconscious into three: the Id (primitive self) represents the primary, animal instincts innately present in a baby. The Id is a pure instinct that is motivated by the principle of pleasure and interested only in satisfying itself. The power behind the Id is libido, the primary force of life that strengthens every animal with the basic instincts of power, sexuality, and aggression. Vampires are perfect examples of the Id monsters for they get sexual pleasure from attacking the soft throats of their young female victims (Indick, 2007: 27).

A villain that expresses his/her malevolence at a simple level or wants to destroy the world is among the most entertaining characters to be written on paper. The bad that is exempted from all hindrance, ethics, crime, or regret is entirely free to express his/her Id desires and thus the audience likes this villain secretly for they can unchain their own hindrance through this character on an imaginary level and satisfy their own Id desires. A good screenplay writer establishes connection with the Id within himself/herself to construct a robust villain (Indick, 2007: 27).

The structure of conscious following the Id is the Ego. “While the Id represents the principle of pleasure, the Ego represents the principle of reality, the necessity of reconciling the individual’s own Id urges and the demands of parents and the society for appropriate behavior. The duty of the Ego in the unconscious is to suppress the Id and, in a similar way, the duty of the hero in the film is to catch the villain and defeat him/her” (Indick, 2007: 27).

The Superego, the last step of the human unconscious, is the subconscious representation of the moral and social traditions indoctrinated to the individual slowly by authority



figures such as the father. As the male infant grows up, aggressive behavior towards the father is replaced with the feelings of respect and appreciation. Male infant, identified with the father who is a role model, internalizes all of his father's moral values and beliefs. Essentially, the Superego is the psychological concretization of the identification of the male infant with his father (Indick, 2007: 31).

All kinds of films address a particular feeling of the audience and make them experience something they have never done before. Also in thrillers this rule is valid from Shanghai to California. With these films, the viewers satisfy two logically incoherent desires: entering into the criminal world yet not paying any costs for that in real life, and moving away from the real world and its problems yet not facing any traumatic or mortal consequences for this (Leitch, 2007: 399). The Ego and Superego are of appropriate nature for behavioral patterns accepted by the society whereas the Id is inclined to display behavior that includes violence and sexuality suppressed by both law as well as by morals and religious principles. The individual, inhibited by law and social pressure, comes closer to satisfy the desire of Id with the villains in films.

2. Film And Villain Under The Snip Of Censorship

Thrillers, one of the most popular genres in the American film are divided into many sub-genres. Private detective films like *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), whodunits such as *The French Connection* (1971), chase movies such as *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) and *North by Northwest* (1959), law movies such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), and slapstick comedies such as the *Police Academy series* (1984-2006) make thrillers a genre that is hard to be classified and defined (Leitch, 2007: 399).

Thrillers, just like films of other genres, have been shaped according to local policies of censorship and the demands of pressure groups within countries, and both good and evil characters have been constrained within rigid stereotypes. An important reason of the heavy self-censorship during the birth and development periods of film is the conservative understanding of the morals in both Western and Eastern societies based on religion in general, and it was too strict to be compared to today's understanding. Even if the producer was not part of such values of the society, this did not allow for the production of a film that remains outside of the general value judgments of the society. Film, which failed to be accepted as a branch of art back then, was considered as a "banal circus act" and theaters were considered to be "nests of indecency"; local governments, the church, and other pressure groups kept the sector under heavy blockade. Hence, a decision of the US Higher Court in 1915 defined movie screening as "a simple job based on profit" and the pressure on film sector was not considered within the scope of the freedom of press (Maltby, 2003: 276). In 1908, New York Mayor McClellan had all the theaters in the city closed for a so-called fire threat.



Film sector was even thrilled over the establishment of the American National Board of Censorship (NBC) in 1909 in order to remove local censorship and pressure yet to remain under central control. British filmmakers followed a similar path and led the establishment of the British Board of Film (BBFC) in 1912. However, these industrial bodies failed to prevent local censorship and the sector chose to predict censorship behavior and avert censorship by getting the jump on those.

A puritan and smooth understanding of the morals had to be at work within the film and villains had to remain as “the other”, be punished, and the good always had to be happy in the end. In a volume dated 1912, *Moving Picture World* harshly criticized a movie that ended with “villains who did not feel regret and were not punished whereas the miserable remained in their old and bad situation”.

The examples of the US and England were soon imitated in the rest of the world. During the early stage of film sector, by the year 1920, censorship rules had already been institutionalized in many countries from Europe to Far Eastern colonies (Maltby, 2003: 277).

Internal control did not really satisfy censorship authorities; American filmmakers established Motion Picture Producers and Distributors (MPPDA) in 1922 in order to keep the sector together against the spreading censorship restrictions varying from state to state. Will Hays, chairman of the committee who made the producers believe that radical decisions were needed to be made to correct their images, formulated the work to be done as such: “Our films must be of such high quality that no sane man would feel the need to apply censorship”. In order to develop the systematized rules which have come to be known as “*the Hays Code*” or “*Production Code*” and led American film sector for decades, strong social institutions such as women’s clubs, churches, guardian-teacher associations were appealed (Maltby, 2003: 278). Although the code limited the sector, this was in advantage of film company owners for the reputation of the sector was being polished and films were controlled at screenplay stage, so films were no longer sent into trash and thus companies were prevented from encountering loss.

The code that was formulated as “Don’ts and Be Carefuls” was in the form of advisory until the 1930s. It was then amended and changed at the beginning of the 1930s and the reactions from the Catholics and Protestants that transformed the Jewish dominance in film sector into an anti-Semitic reason of dissatisfaction were soothed. Will Hays and Jesuit Priest Daniel Lord arranged a new text and elaborated the prohibitions. Three point general principles dictate that the moral standards of audience cannot be lowered, sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing or evil and law, natural or human, shall not be ridiculed.

In the details of this self-regulatory code implemented as of 1930, profanity, all sorts of frivolous and obscene nudity, illegal drug trafficking, implication of sexual perversion, white slavery, sexual intercourse between white and black races, sexually transmissible diseases, scenes of giving birth even in silhouette form, children’s genitalia, mocking with clergymen, and any intended act against any nation, race, or beliefs were taken



within the scope of restrictions. Some issues necessitated precaution for removing banality and obscenity as well as for emphasizing good taste. Among those were listed arson, use of firearms, burglary, robbery, brutality, methods of committing murder, smuggling, interrogation methods, sympathy towards crime, the sale of women, rape, scenes of nuptial night, men and women together in bed, the institution of marriage, surgical operations, and lustful kissing (“Motion Picture Production Code”, 2014) Films that did not abide by these restrictions faced both censorship enforcement and the boycott of distributors. Moreover, such films were not nominated for the Oscars (Teksoy, 2005: 87).

Naturally, in films shot within this period there were villains; the three sensational films shot at the beginning of sound cinema (*Little Caesar* [1930]), *Public Enemy* [1931] and *Scarface* [1932]) had a dominant villain profile in common that did not refrain from committing crime no matter what to obtain a goal. However, these villains being the losers at the end of the film were a warning for the audience about the high price of illegality (Lyden, 2003: 153).

Restrictions were strictly enforced between 1934 and 1954. During this period, even the cartoon character Betty Boop had to replace his mini skirt with an old-fashioned dress. However, numerous directors found smart ways to get around the rules. In his film *Notorious* in 1946, Hitchcock placed 3-second scenes of kissing between the actor and the actress and the entire sequence lasted for 2,5 minutes. Since each kiss lasted no longer than 5 seconds, it could not be classified as lustful kissing (“Motion Picture Production Code”, 2014) The same method was used by Billy Wilder in the movie *Some Like It Hot* in 1959.

In *The Wizard of Oz* filmed in 1939, we see the character “The Wicked of the West” who wants to take revenge from Dorothy, the alleged murderer of her sister. This character is one of the leading figures when we consider the concept of “witch” today as well as being an archetype for the “heresy” of humans (“Wicked Witch of the West”, 2014) . The character is pictured as an ugly person with green skin and a long nose. She also has a disturbing, sharp voice and likes terrorizing her environment. Here we see a villain characterization that is fairly “typical” for today.



Photo 1: The Wicked of the West



In the movie *It's A Wonderful Life*, we see a villain that points out the bad within humans. The character of Mr. Potter represents a ruthless rich person who would do anything for gain. George Bailey is someone who is helpful and tolerant and dedicated himself to humanity. He made almost everyone in the town homeowners through the housing and finance company he took over from his father. He had to postpone his own dreams in order to do that. Such a good character could only be faced by such a bad one. When what George Bailey did contravened the interests of rich banker Mr. Potter, he dedicates himself to eliminate Bailey (Şahane Hayat, 2014).

In the movie, Mr. Potter is pictured as someone with a stern face, cold, furrow-browed, and unlikeable. Every move he makes throughout the film is a consequence of greed and an itching palm. In sum, we see a “typical” rich villain in this movie.



Photo 2: Mr. Potter

In consideration of these examples, we can observe that the villains encountered in the early years of film were extremely sharp. This sharpness means the explicit presentation of the “badness” of the characters to the audience. These are “pure evils” that do not care about anyone but themselves in general, terrify everyone around them almost as a duty, and have no charm.

The huge difference between today’s audience and that of the 1930s in terms of use of slang can be seen in the massive reaction to Rhet Butler’s line with simple cursing “*frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn*” in *Gone With The Wind* (1939).

The enforcement of the censorship law radically transformed thrillers as well. Cops, soldiers, and lawyers who were lawmen in the 1920s-30s could either be powerful or miserable and shared visibility on the screen with villains; yet as of 1950, they owned the



silver screen. As in *The Anatomy of a Murder* (1959), and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), they were transformed into prophets and social engineers (Leitch, 2004: 39).

Censorship laws were enforced for protective purposes; no negative influence was meant to be reflected upon children, immigrants, or workers and in countries like England, films were categorized based on age groups. In the US, the epicenter of film, no specific category was assigned to adult films and there was no age limit. In the US, regarding the chain of restrictions, a detachment from the high court decision that allowed for films in contradiction with religious beliefs in the 1950s, and then elements of violence and crime were started to be observed in films within the same year. The abolition of the law criticized for demanding the murder of characters without bloodshed, arguing without cursing, and having babies without sexual intercourse was not before the 1960s (Nowell-Smith, 2003: 556).

By the end of the 1960s, with the end of studio system and the abolition of the Hays Code, the duty of MPAA was assumed by the "Production Code Administration" (PCA). In this system, as in many European countries, a number was assigned for films to denote the age group they are appropriate for. According to this system, "G" means appropriate for everyone, "PG" means children can watch under adult supervision, "R" means for adults and young people, and "X" means only for adults. This new system designated in a form of classification similar to that of the Legion of Decency, which grades the appropriateness of films based on the values of the Roman Catholic Church, gave film producers a broad area of freedom (Leitch, 2007: 323-324). Profane language was also outlawed by the PCA, including "hell," "damn," "Jesus Christ," "Lord" and even "God" (used as an expression of surprise). It also stated that ministers of religion ought not be portrayed as comic characters or villains. (Malone, 2011 :24)

Moderation in restrictions and allowing varying elements of crime based on age gave scriptwriters their freedom back. Villains and women were no more had to be depicted as condemned to lose, banal, and without identity. One of the major breaking points in the depiction of the villain was "*Bonnie and Clyde*" of 1967. This criminal couple with a broad range of crimes from murder to robbery did not have a caricatured villain profile; they loved, hesitated, got angry, worried, and desired to live as they wished; there was no reason for the audience not to identify itself with this couple. Moreover, it was filmed based on a true story, portrayed by good-looking and well-known actors, and became the symbol of a direct resistance against the authoritarian management of the 1960s (Leitch, 2007: 41). Bonnie and Clyde "became the icon of the rise of New Hollywood". Young filmmakers reconsidered and renewed all popular genres during the end of 1960s and gave a new touch to those.

Two important films shot in 1969 and became cult classics followed "*Bonnie and Clyde*": Sam Peckinpah's apocalyptic Western "*Wild Bunch*" and Dennis Hopper's praise for hippiedom "*Easy Rider*". However, the "Godfather" series started in 1972, when the criminal became the star and lawman was only at the level of a walker-on, constructed the most charismatic underground characters acknowledged by then.



“The Apartment”, directed by Billy Wilder and depicted a young man who rented his apartment to his friends’ for their extramarital liaisons, won the best film Oscar in 1960 and this became disputed widely. In 1969, the story of another young man who came to New York hoping for succeeding in male prostitution, “Midnight Cowboy” won the Oscar. This is the best example summarizing the changes that took place within a decade because the Academy Award was given to an X rated film for the first time.

However, small changes in these character structures stand out in the following periods. Rather than being there as a mere object of balance between the good and bad, characters started representing more than pure evil. Moreover, changes in the direct proportionality with badness and ugliness can be observed as well. Western cinema, which wanted us to abhor villains, altered this view in time and wanted us to respect those as much as we abhor.

Especially after the 70s, there are many films that made their mark in the history of film and characters meticulously constructed within those. The majority of the most unforgettable characters of the history of film belong to those films shot in the 70s and later.

Darth Vader, the representative of the dark side, the symbol of evil in black, acknowledged by the entire world and his wife, is still one of the first characters that come to mind today when evil is in question. So, what are the elements that make the character of “Darth Vader”, the design masterpiece of the “Star Wars” series (1977), perfect evil? First of all, we know that the color black means a lot in terms of semiotics. Yet the basic distinction is that the color white represents life whereas black represents death. When we look at Darth Vader, we see a black knight in black from top to toe. This color black reflects all of his characteristics: mysterious, strong, dangerous, but also melancholic and pessimistic. Here we see a sharp line that distinguishes Darth Vader from all other villains. Where does the evil of Darth Vader actually come from?



Photo 3: Darth Vader



This knight existing in the Star Wars universe has 2 sides: the bright side and the dark side. The bright side requires characteristics such as discipline, obedience to commands, and being able to control feelings whereas the dark side contains images such as power, passion, and emotionality. In the film, the event that drags Darth Vader to the dark side is “love” ironically. His commitment and love for his girl made him a “Sith” (knights who entered the dark side). So, the source of evil of Darth Vader, one of the leading villains of the history of film, is actually “love”.

In consideration of all these characteristics, a different structure than those we called “typical” emerges. The audience respects and feels pity for Darth Vader, and maybe even wants to help him in contrast to the situation during the early years of cinema. He makes them admire him with his charisma and almost becomes a role model at the same time.

1980s is a period of “blood bath” when all kinds of violence found its place on the silver screen and was shown with no restriction. During this period, films like “*Natural Born Killers*” that had no purpose, did not distinguish good from bad, and did not have a moral reference were shot (Leitch, 2007: 329-330). Unsentimental and rude characters such as Rambo, Rocky, and the Terminator almost invaded the silver screen. A bad person might have some moral or conscientious values in his/her Id, Ego, or Superego that would restrict him/her, but robots have none of those. Therefore, their cruelty knows no limits. The villain robot in the movie *The Terminator* (1984), revenue champion of the time, is summarized by the character Reese as such: “It can't be bargained with. It can't be reasoned with. It doesn't feel pity, or remorse, or fear. And it absolutely will not stop, ever, until you are dead.” Such a powerful villain could have only been handled with another robot that had the same powers and been directed towards good (Lichtenfeld, 2007: 61). These action films shot during the era of the presidency of Ronald Reagan also reflected the threat of nuclear war and the tension of the cold war between the US and the Soviet Union on cinema (Lichtenfeld, 2007: 125).

We see a composition of the formula of the early period villain and that in post-70s period in the film “*A Nightmare on Elm Street*” shot in 1984. Freddy Krueger is a child murderer who had gone through serious problems when he was a kid. The way his stepfather treated Freddy mentally depressed him and he became a perverted pedophile and child murderer. When the residents of the Elm Street realized the murders he committed, Freddy was locked into a building and burnt. The demons of nightmare came at that moment and made a deal with Freddy, bestowing him immortality and the ability to slaughter people in their dreams.



Photo 4: Freddy Krueger

One of the prominent elements of the character of Freddy Krueger is his scary face. Since his body was entirely burnt according to the screenplay, we naturally see the character in that form in the film. Here there is a return to the villain-ugliness relation. Along with this, Freddy Krueger is a humorous and absurdly dressed character. With his felt hat, black-red striped t-shirt, and unique sense of humor, he is reminiscent of a clown. The underlying reason of this is him being a child murderer; a phenomenon loved by children had been taken and transformed into an element of fear, thus an unreal impact had been created.

We see Freddy Krueger in the Elm Street series in another way as well. In Wes Craven's *New Nightmare* (1994), Freddy overtakes as even more relentless, more serious, more mysterious, and scarier. The creator of the character and director Wes Craven has told that the Freddy Krueger in *New Nightmare* was the real Krueger he wanted to depict. Between these two Freddy Kruegers, having the same powers and being the same characters, again we can even see the distinction between "emulated villain" and "abhorred villain".

Thelma & Louise (1991) shot in the 1990s has been a disputed example with its unique plot centering women, reflecting a feminist gaze on the wave of criminal frenzy on the silver screen (Rafter and Brown, 2011: 153).

The concept of "villain" is not a concept only used for those who want to overtake the world. In many films there are villains who become that way for different ends. In "The Silence of the Lambs", the character of Hannibal Lecter portrayed by Anthony Hopkins can be given as an example. Hannibal Lecter does not aim at overtaking the world yet his personal pleasure of "cannibalism" as well as being extremely smart and sophisticated place him among the best villains ever. However, there is another element that stands out in Hannibal Lecter: he is extremely calm, emotional, and charismatic. Hannibal, who uses



all these characteristics when communicating with people, can even said to be a good person in essence. Such differences seem to stem from the periodic changes in film in general.

The character of Hannibal Lecter actually has a similar formula with the aforementioned Darth Vader. Both have a dark side and a bright one. Both are mysterious, high ranked, and charismatic. Both have a dangerous charm. These two movies being shot within close periods cannot really be a coincidence in this sense. This is a good example to see the change in the structure of the characters.



Photo 5: Hannibal Lecter

Saruman the White Wizard of the Lord of the Rings trilogy that left its mark in the 2000s is one of the best examples of the characters that slip towards evil for having lost their faith in good. The wizards in the universe of the Middle Earth were actually sent there to protect the order. Yet Saruman the White, the senior of all wizards, who thought “participating in evil” could be the smartest decision to be made against rapidly growing evil, deserves to be one of the leading villains of recently shot films.

Saruman the White is physically different then the examples given hitherto. In contrast to Darth Vader’s jet black, Saruman is snow white. The reason is Saruman’s betrayal. We see him like that in the movie for he entered the dark side when he was a wizard of “White” rank, which was the highest.

Yet there is a mysterious side in Saruman. He is mysterious, strong, and charismatic. He almost roars and terrifies all, and can rule his army with discipline. In that sense we can say that he differs from Darth Vader only in terms of color.



Photo 6: Saruman

3. A Charismatic Villain: The Joker Against The Batman

The trend of the villain getting ahead of the hero in the 2000s continued increasingly. In addition to numerous films such as *Sin City* (2005), in which there are only villains, villains facing superheroes became stronger and stole a role from the starring “hero”. A striking and successful example of the latter is *The Dark Knight* (2008). The two Joker characters in Batman movies have been stuck on all minds. The first one is the Joker portrayed by Jack Nicholson in *Batman* in 1989, and the other one is the Joker portrayed by Heath Ledger in *The Dark Knight* in 2008. We see parallel characteristics in these two Jokers thanks to their excellent portrayal.

2008 version of the Batman series, *The Dark Knight*, starts with the appearance of the Joker in the streets of Gotham city, which had been cleared of crime with the cooperation of the Police department and Batman. With Joker terrorizing the streets again, Gotham faces the threat of going back to its old days of chaos. Batman, who has to clear the city from the environment of crime and terror once again, starts questioning himself about whether his existence helps eliminating criminals or it is his existence that causes the emergence of those (“Kara Şövalye”, 2014).

In the movie *The Dark Knight*, the Joker even sweeps over the Batman; and even film posters featuring only the Joker, who is smart and likes surprises, has been produced. The Joker is literally evil; he does not hesitate killing the entire robbery gang he cooperates with, tells lies, and gets a lustful pleasure from what he does.



The Joker does neither regret for being evil; he even makes fun of this when he is under custody and says: *“I want my lawyer! Oh, that’s right, I killed him too.”* (White and Arp, 2008: 12).

The Joker, even more evil than the evil, transfers the money of the Gotham city mafia, fed up with the Batman on their trail, to another place he considers safe without asking them. He easily stands up against the mafia leaders who disagree and kills them. Even the mafia leaders, who deal with all sorts of dirty business, “cannot figure out what he is”. Both the good and the bad have rules, yet the Joker is a paranoid schizophrenic and his actions are unpredictable. The Joker defines himself as such: *“You know what I am? I’m a dog chasing cars. I wouldn’t know what to do with one if I caught one.”*



Photo 7: The Joker

The Joker is also striking from another perspective other than being evil and appealing to violence for no reason; he places bombs on two different ferries and places the remote control of each bomb on the other ferry. He then contacts the ferries, on one of which there are released prisoners and on the other civil citizens. The Joker suggests the passengers on each ferry to act quickly and press the button to blow up the other ferry to survive; otherwise he would blow up both ferries at 00:00. With this do-or-die game, the Joker predicts that the people will press the button first to survive and tries to prove that all people are actually evil. However, what he predicted does not happen and upon both parties not pressing the buttons the Batman tells the Joker: *“What were you trying to prove? That deep down, everyone’s as ugly as you?! You’re alone.”* He interprets the Joker’s failure as *“This city just showed you that it’s full of people ready to believe in good.”* In the final of the film, upon the death of Governor Dent and the Batman being pointed out as the scape goat and having to run away, Harvey Dent says: *“You thought we could be decent men in an indecent time. But you were wrong. The world is cruel, and*



the only morality in a cruel world is chance.” This is because even if he had been silenced, actually the Joker has won and everything Harvey Dent fought for had been destroyed. The plot does not have a happy ending yet the truth is distorted and hidden from the people of the city thus an illusion of happy ending was created. Director Christopher Nolan continues deconstructing the concepts such as superhero, good, and evil in popular culture research (Civan, 2014).

The Joker has been entitled as the most perfect villain in numerous journals and film magazines for his extremely different nature, for his deep inner world that he opens up to the audience explicitly as if for real despite his fictional character, and for his behaviors most of which we cannot make sense of.

4. Conclusion

Rapidly developing technology in the world has influenced world cinema, Hollywood in particular, to a great extent and continues doing so. It is clearly observed that this interaction experienced in terms of both style and content has also influenced the change/transformation of villains in film. The increase in the weight of the villain within the film in recent years has both cinematic and sociological reasons. The perspective of the people of the modern world towards life and their expectations has completely changed and this change is obviously reflected on the creation of the villain character on silver screen. Moderation period in film censorship and the expectations of the audience are the leading factors that influenced the transformation of the villains.

In terms of screenplay principles and audience expectations, villains are more attractive for creating an unusual play for the audience that would not encounter such in ordinary life as well as for creating a catharsis by motivating the audience for self-comparison and thus enabling self-satisfaction through this comparison. Moreover, the things villain can do has no limit for he/she is free of the laws, conscience, and society’s expectations that restrict the good men. The villain’s space of action is much wider than that of the good and open to surprises from the perspective of the audience. So and so in the final of the *The Dark Knight*, the Joker telling the Batman “*You won't kill me out of some misplaced sense of self-righteousness. And I won't kill you because you're just too much fun. I think you and I are destined to do this forever*” *underlines this fact.*” Villains are also attractive entertainment for comedies in addition to violence movies. They are attractive because what the villain will do is unpredictable and them being in constant conflict with the good enriches the scenario. Under the light of the information given above, the most certain conclusion we can arrive at is that these two elements in the villain characterization of the Western cinema have gone through a sharp transformation; mystery and charisma. With this method, while the early audience supported the good, after the transformation the bad were also given a chance and villains succeeded in winning the audience over. Today, with real life violence all around us, it’s harder to be sure about the cathartic function of films.



In addition to Hollywood, the villain taking over the leading role is an increasing trend also in the Turkish cinema. In consideration of the movies with high revenues and influence in the recent years, it is observed that the leading character is portrayed as selfish, uneducated, inclined to violence, and not hesitating to appeal to illegal ways for self-interest. The movie with the highest revenue in the history of Turkish cinema, the *Recep İvedik* trilogy (2008-2010), is a good “prototype” of this kind. İvedik is uneducated, does not have a profession, drinks almost like an alcoholic, uses profane language, and does not hesitate harming others physically. In the movie *Gora*, Arif portrayed by Cem Yılmaz is a salesman in a tourist area and a pathologic liar, using this characteristic of his for spoofing the tourists. Arif is inclined to violence and selfish yet at the end of the movie he is the one gets to save the planet and take the beautiful girl. Against the bad guys, there is not a usual hero but rather an “anti-hero” (Ercivan, 2014). This is because the good of the silver screen are not strong, smart, and energetic enough to cope with the bad.

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