Benevolent conquerors, besieged homelands, threated state: the reproduction of political myths in cold war Turkey
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INTRODUCTION: Constructing and Deconstructing the Nation

Significance:

On July 24, 2020, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan led the first Friday Prayer in Hagia Sophia, previously a church later a museum converted into a mosque. There were 350,000 people in the congregation, all wearing white facemasks as a precaution against COVID-19. After Erdoğan recited a verse from the Quran, the head of *Diyanet* (Directorate of Religious Affairs), Ali Erbaş, delivered the Friday sermon holding an Ottoman sword as a symbol of conquest and told the kneeling congregation:

> "…O the Almighty Allah, today we are having the joy of the reopening of our Hagia Sophia for worship which we have waited for 86 years… O Allah, may You let our dear nation, which has served humanity in the way of our supreme religion Islam, has become a hope to the hopeless people, a shelter for the oppressed people, and a protector for the lonely people for centuries, live forever and may You let its excellence and strength last forever…O Allah, may You save and make our nation, homeland, army, land, and the world of Islam safe from all kinds of internal and external enemies which are going to damage our peace and brotherhood. O Allah, may You have mercy on all our martyrs from the Battle of Badr to the Battle of Manzikert, from the Battle of Gallipoli to the War of Independence, from the July 15th to today who sacrificed their lives to prevent azans being silenced, our flag from being taken down, our homeland from being divided, and our purity from being violated.[1]

Hagia Sophia, outfitted in turquoise carpets precisely placed pointing to Mecca, is originally a Byzantine church built in the 6th century. Throughout the centuries, as İstanbul changed its rulers, this former Greek Orthodox Christian church had also served as a Roman Catholic church, and then an Ottoman Mosque in 1453. After the declaration of the Republic in 1923, it was reopened as a museum in 1934 and became a symbol of the blending of eastern and western civilizations. However, for Erdoğan, the 1934 decision was an "unjust" and a "betrayal of history." Therefore, he regarded its reopening for prayer as "the second conquest of Istanbul."[2]

The discourse of both Erdoğan and Erbaş constructs a historical narrative by reproducing nationalist political myths. It justifies the Turkish nation's superiority, its

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[1] "86 Yıllık hasret sona erdi," https://www.diyanet.gov.tr/tr-TR/Content/PrintDetail/29717
"Ya Rabb, bugün 86 yıldır büyük bir hasretle beklediğimiz Ayasofyamız'ın ibadete açılmasının sevincini yaşıyoruz… Ya Rabb! Asırlardır yüce dinimiz İslam'ın yolunda insanlığa hizmet etmiş, çaresizlerin umudu, mazlumların sığınağı, kimsesizlerin hamisi olan aziz milletimizi ilelebet payidar eyle, izzet ve kudretini daim eyle Allah'ım Ya Rabb, huzur ve kardeşliğimizi bozacak her türlü dahili ve harici düşmanlardan milletimizi, memleketimizi, ordumuzu, yurdumuzu, ailemizi, İslamı halas ve emin eyle Allah'ım. Ezan dinmesin, bayrak inmesin, vatan bölünmesin, namusumuz çiğnenmesin diye en aziz varlıklarını bu yüce değerler uğruna feda eden Bedir'den Malazgirt'e, Çanakkale'den İstiklal Harbi'ne, 15 Temmuz'dan bugüne bütün şehitlerimize rahmet eyle Allah'ım."
[2] "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan'ın Aya Sofya Açıklaması: Aya Sofya'da kılınacak ilk namazın tarihi belli oldu," *Haber Global*, 10 July 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0Hm2scQQ8g&ab_channel=HaberGlobal

significance in the Islamic world, and its mission to help those in need. Erbaş also mentions how external and internal others threaten both the nation and the homeland. He connects the time of Prophet Mohammed, Anatolian Seljuks, the First World War, and the War of Independence with the attempted coup of July 15, 2016. This narrative reframes official visions of the national past to include July 15. In this context, the reopening of Hagia Sophia is the second conquest of İstanbul confirmed by ultra-nationalist and Islamist circles in Turkey, who had demanded the possibility of praying there for years.[3] Erdoğan is assumed to be the second conqueror, or the Savior, of the Turkish nation. Here, through the reproduction of political myths, the boundaries between past, present, and future are broken down. Consequently, how the past is linked to and represented in the present is taken under control. Hence, political myths legitimize the AKP's policies.

Controlling the past and representing it in such a way as to justify and deal with the present is a significant part of the political programs of nation-states. In part one of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Milan Kundera reveals the link between political power and the reconstruction of the past: "They shout that they want to shape a better future, but it's not true. The future is only an indifferent void no one cares about, but the past is filled with life, and its countenance is irritating, repellent, wounding, to the point that we want to destroy it or repaint it. We want to be the masters of the future only for the power to change the past. We fight for access to the labs where we can retouch photos and rewrite biographies and history."[4] Therefore, the past's recreation or reconstruction has the prize of gaining and maintaining political power in the present and the future. As George Orwell says: "Who controls the past…controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."[5] This is what political myths do. They create a narrative which is integral to nation-building. In fact, the nation is a narration[6] hence as Anthony Smith says, "what gives nationalism its power are myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritage and how a popular living past has been and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias."[7] All these myths meet practical political needs such as enhancing legitimacy and mobilizing public support to government policies.[8]

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[3] Tanıl Bora, "Istanbul of the Conqueror The 'Alternative Global City' Dreams of Political Islam," in *İstanbul: Between the Global and the Local*, ed. Çağlar Keyder (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 48.
[4] Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 34.
[5] George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1983), 33.
[6] Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in *Nation and Narration,* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 1-7.
[7] Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.
[8] Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994): 30-32.

Thus, this dissertation focuses on the reproduction of political myths through nationalist action/adventure films with historical settings produced during the 1950s-1980, which is the golden age of Turkish cinema in terms of production and consumption. The nationalist political myths within this dissertation's scope are the myths about the past, the present, and the nation's future, in addition to the myths about the methods the nation should adopt to fulfill its duties. I examine how these myths reconstruct the past through selected films depicting particular political and historical contexts. My central question is: How do films produce nationalistic ideology through political myths within the frameworks of different political-historical contexts? Here I must state that the films and the changing discourses of nationalism all exist in the same ideological universe making both of them significant for a thorough analysis of the period. In this regard, I analyze what nationalist political myths tell about the past, present, and future of the Turkish nation concerning the 1950s-1980 conjuncture, that could be defined through a rhetorical shift in political balances in favor of the 'common man' versus a military/bureaucratic elite against a backdrop of the Cold War that facilitated the growth of more conservative and anti-communist political discourses in the country.

At this point, I should also state that I do not aim for a class-based analysis. What I mean by the 'common man' is a rhetorical tool utilized by those that defined themselves differently from the foundational military/bureaucratic elite. As can be followed in the dissertation, during the period I am evaluating, some of the industrial, commercial, and landowning bourgeoisie positioned themselves as the representatives of the 'common man' vis a vis the foundational military/bureaucratic elite. Here, the 'common man' is an essentialist discursive construct utilized for political propaganda. This means it does not directly correspond to a group of people narrowly bounded by class. The current dissertation, therefore, does not look for a one-to-one correspondence between the films and the political-historical contexts. Instead, it focuses on nationalist discourses as revealed by political myths reproduced through films regarding political-historical contexts and the ideological universe of the period

Thus, to trace significant political-historical changes that might have influenced the changing discourses of nationalism, I divided the 1950s-1980 into four subperiods. The first is the 1950s, the period of transition to the multiparty system that brought the rhetorical rise of the landowning, industrial and commercial bourgeoisie at the foundational military/bureaucratic elite's expense. The second subperiod of the 1960s-1965 starts with the 1960 coup, which was an attempt by the older elite to grasp power. I have put the 1965-1971 period as the third subperiod. It starts with the 1965 nationwide elections that resulted in the Justice Party's victory (*Adalet Partisi*, AP), which arose as the representative of the former

Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) supporters, including industrial, commercial, and landowning bourgeoisie as opposed to the military-bureaucratic elite. The party adopted a discourse through which it presented itself as the representative of the non-elite 'common man' standing against the privileged elite of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP). This was also a period of social movements and increasing political violence. This subperiod ends with the 1971 military memorandum, which severely suppressed leftist social movements in particular. Finally, the fourth subperiod starting with 1971 and covering up until the 1980 military coup rhetorically strengthened the non-elite 'common man's' position, which was incorporated into the dominant political discourse of the period.

In this regard, I consider cinema to be a realm of everyday life of the 1950s-1980 through which the discursive emphasis on the 'common man' and the rhetorical shift in political power balances in relation to changing discourses of Turkish nationalism can be followed. It is where the unofficial/informal and official/formal constructions of Turkish national identity encounter, intermingle and negotiate. Therefore, the dissertation also reveals the pluralistic and dynamic nature of Turkish nation-building, which continuously evolves by responding to the context. The product that emerges at the end is the cross-fertilization of different imaginings of Turkish identity. Therefore, overall, the study manifests the dominant ideological codes of Turkish political culture over time and how these might have influenced the evolution of the idealized Turkish nation and Turkish citizen through nationalist political myths.

Research Questions:

The departure point of this dissertation is the relationship between political and historical contexts and their cultural products. I argue that there is a link between changing depictions of Turkish nationalism in nationalist action/adventure films with historical settings and the political-historical context between the 1950s and 1980. The Turkish nation's cinematic representation, as revealed through the adoption of political myths, evolved through time into a much more aggressive and militarist one as political power balances shifted at the rhetorical level by challenging to the dominance of the foundational military/bureaucratic elite. This shift happened together with the polarizing of the society shaped around the Cold War ideological atmosphere and changing foreign policy orientation of Turkey. Therefore, my sub-questions regarding the context is: How does the nationalist depiction of the past change through time with the increasing political polarizations in the country?

To clearly explain the relationship between films and the context concerning the questions above, I use political myths about the nation's spatial, ancestral, temporal roots,

present situation, future, and mission. At this point, the most critical question the dissertation deals with is whether the reproduction of these myths has changed over time. To compare and contrast political myths in the films produced in the 1950s, 1960-1965, 1965-1971, and 1970s, I adopt the following questions: Who is the ideal representative of the Turkish nation in the films? How are the national leader and warrior depicted? How are enemies, friends, women, children, the national space, and religion represented as a part of different depictions of the past in the films? How is the national mission defined? The answers to these questions lead to the dissertation's central argument that the depictions of the ideal Turk gradually shifted into a much more aggressive one through time corresponding to the increasing aggressive nationalism, polarizations, and political violence from the 1950s to 1980.

State of The Art:

This dissertation analyzes the changing depictions of the Turkish nation through the 1950s-1980 from the perspective of action/adventure films with historical settings. With its use of movies to understand how political power or the dominant ideologies in the society utilize nationalist myths to legitimize political authority, the dissertation mainly stands at the intersection of the history of political thought, nationalism studies, and cultural history. Therefore, it attempts to contribute to different areas of study through an interdisciplinary approach which allows the reader not only to discover the unofficial/informal/popular varieties of Turkish nationalism but also to take a step towards understanding the *zeitgeist* and how this has been perceived/interpreted by the Turkish citizens as revealed through cultural artifacts.

In my quest, I have examined two central bodies of literature that remain relatively apart. The first is political studies, political history in particular. The sources I utilize are related to the Cold War from Turkey's perspective and have contextualized the films in my sample. The second bulk of the sources belong to film studies and mainly concentrate on Turkish cinema. They enabled me to understand the economic and social dynamics of cinema while at the same time situating nationalist action/adventure films in an enormous pool with a vast number of films. I bring these two groups of sources by asking political questions to cultural products to contribute to the history of political thought literature. To put it very briefly, in my view, cinema, as a representation, talks about both the society and the world we are in.[9] However, the difficult part is that no film is an objective or accurate representation of reality, but reflects or indicates anxieties and desires of both the producers and the society. Films, therefore, are

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[9] Howard Saul Becker, *Telling About Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

convenient sources to comprehend different imaginations of Turkish nationalism. In this vein, nationalist action/adventure films with historical settings represent the past by reconstructing and imagining it after going through a process that includes selection, organization, interpretation, invention, and narration.[10] This process is never independent of historical, political, and social contexts. Thus, my goal is to examine films in relation to the 1950s-1980 political and historical contexts while positioning them in the broader context of Turkey's changing currents of nationalism.

Much of the available literature from the first main body on the 1950s and 1980 focuses on Turkish foreign policy during the Cold War. Among those sources, many significant ones explain how Turkey, as a US ally, acted primarily in terms of its geopolitical position and role in the Middle East.[11] These sources all adopt a political history approach. Besides, there is a extensive body of literature about the political ideologies that dominated Turkey during the period. The rise of political Islam, the development of far-right and leftist movements are the major topics discussed by many recent studies.[12] These studies enabled me to contextualize the films in my sample. However, despite the richness of all, the cultural dimensions of Turkey's experience in the period are mostly missing. This dissertation attempts to explain the impact of all these political and ideological transformations on culture, an area in which the unofficial/popular/informal versions of Turkish nationalism have found their expressions. The addition of the cultural aspect is necessary to create a thorough picture of the varieties of Turkish nationalism.

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[10] Frank Ankersmit, "Historiography and Postmodernism," *History and Theory*, 28 (3), (1989): 137-153; Hayden White, *Topics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); "Historiography and Historiophoty," *American Historical Review,* 93 (5), (1988): 1193-1199; Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Robert Eaglestone, *Postmodernism and Holocaust Denial* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2001); Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Keith Jenkins, *Re-thinking History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

[11] See for example, Bruce R. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey and Greece* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1994); Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin, *Britain and Turkey in the Middle East: Politics and Influence in the Early Cold War Era* (London: IB Tauris, 2007); Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Cold War Context: Formation of the Turkish-American Alliance," in *Turkish-American Relations, 1800-1852: Between the Stars, Stripes and the Crescent,* (London: Routledge, 2015), 118-137; Süleyman Seydi, "Making a Cold War in the Near East: Turkey and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945-1947," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 17, no. 1 (2006): 113-141.

[12] See for example, Cangül Örnek, *Türkiye'nin Soğuk Savaş Düşünce Hayatı: Antikomünizm ve Amerikan Etkisi*, (İstanbul: Can Sanat Yayınları, 2015); İlker Aytürk, "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944-69," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50:5 (2014): 693-719; Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Rethinking Nationalism and Islam: Some Preliminary Notes on the Roots of 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis" in Modern Turkish Political Thought," *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXIX, No: 3-4 (July-Oct. 1999): 350-376, Özgür Mutlu Ulus, *The Army and Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism* (New York: IB Tauris, 2011); Emin Alper, *Student Movement in Turkey from a Global Perspective, 1960-1971*, Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Boğaziçi University, The Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, (2009).

There is a limited number of sources about the cultural aspects of the Cold War in Turkey. A significant one is *American-Turkish Encounters: A Contested Legacy, 1838-1989*, edited by Criss, Esenbel, Greenwood, and Mazzari. The book partly focuses on Turkish-American relations' cultural dimensions from the late Ottoman period to the end of the Cold War. The book's first three parts include articles about American religious missionaries in Ottoman lands, American educational advisers' influence in the Ottoman Empire and the modern Turkish Republic, and American military presence in Turkey. Among the other articles in the final part, titled Cultural and Intellectual Interaction, Gözen's article about how jazz music was used as a propaganda tool by the US is particularly significant for my dissertation. The author mentions some details of the jazz tours organized and sponsored by the US State Department in the 1950s. According to Gözen, the geographical scope of these tours were the Middle East, Asia, and Europe, all those places where the US competed with the SU.[13] This article is a good step in understanding the cultural exchanges created and discovering what might be extracted from cultural products and their creators' stories in terms of high politics.[14]

In the same vein, a significant study that adopts a cultural perspective to the Cold War period is *Turkey in the Cold War: Ideology and Culture,* edited by Örnek and Üngör. In the book, the authors deal with topics such as sports, literature, education to reveal the effect of the Cold War on those areas. Among the articles, two of them significantly helped me evaluate my research materials, which are films. The first belongs to Günay-Erkol and discusses the influence of the Cold War on Turkish literature. The author explains how literature became an area where different political identities were constructed and contested by analyzing significant literary figures from different ideological positions. What Günay-Erkol calls "a panoramic look" reveals the interaction between politics and culture and different ideologies in terms of identity construction.[15] This means that the Cold War ideological universe was not formed by isolated ideological compartments but an interconnected and interacting node of a nexus. Taking this as a departure point, I avoid simply calling the historical action/adventure films 'rightist,' although they are both nationalistic and conservative most of the time and so, clearly very close to the rightist ideological camp. Instead, I try to catch the spirit of the nexus, a banal

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[13] Pınar Gözen, "The Cold War, Jazz and Turkey" in *American Turkish Encounters A Contested Legacy 1833 1989*, eds. Nur Bilge Criss, Selçuk Esenbel, Tony Greenwood and Louis Mazzari (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 331-343.

[14] Similar studies about different geographical contexts: Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Mark Carroll, *Music and Ideology in Cold War Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[15] Çimen Günay-Erkol, "Issues of Ideology and Identity in Turkish Literature during the Cold War," in *Turkey in the Cold War: Ideology and Culture*, eds. Cangül Örnek and Çağdaş Üngör (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 109-129.

and everyday perspective that is based upon ideological connections as reflected on cultural products. Therefore, my sample of films appear as banal, mundane, and most importantly, 'popular' sources, thus appealing to the 'common man,' who could be described as 'ordinary' as I explain in the coming chapters.

The second article from the same book is by Örnek about the promotion of American books in Turkey and how the US aimed to increase its ideological influence with a book translation program.[16] At this point, Pakin's article about the foundation of American Language/Culture and Literature departments in Turkish universities starting with the 1950s is worth mentioning. With an emphasis on the connection between politics and culture, Pakin considers these departments as elements of the US's "soft power."[17] Elaborating on Pakin, Örnek also argues that the spread of American culture through newly translated books nurtured the ideological and cultural basis of the rising populism thanks to those translated literature's emphasis on rural transformations and pre-industrial values.[18] This is very much related to the US' being the largest exporter of agricultural raw materials. Here, although the author does not mention how Americanization might have changed societal values, she inspired me to think about the other side of the coin; not what the literary works might have presented, but what kind of wishes and desires the ordinary men adopted once they had encountered the American cultural influence. I should also state that although the reception of movies was beyond the scope of Örnek's dissertation, thinking or brainstorming about what people might have felt when watching films has been an extremely beneficial method for me to realize the interconnectedness between different ideological camps as revealed throughout my dissertation. Besides, right at this point, my attention was directed towards discovering the possible cultural impacts of Hollywood films released during the same period. However, except for Erdoğan and Kaya's article,[19] there is a lack of critical studies about the subject, and the only available ones are unpublished theses, which present limited and primarily descriptive information.[20] Therefore, I utilized sources about Hollywood's ideology and reception in

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[16] Cangül Örnek, "'The Populist Effect': Promotion and Reception of American Literature in Turkey in the 1950s," in *Turkey in the Cold War: Ideology and Culture*, eds. Örnek and Üngör (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 130-157.

[17] Esra Pakin, "American Studies in Turkey during the 'Cultural' Cold War," *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (Sept. 2008): 507-524.

[18] Örnek, "'The Populist Effect': Promotion and Reception of American Literature in Turkey in the 1950s," 130-157.

[19] Nezih Erdoğan and Dilek Kaya, "Institutional Intervention in the Distribution and Exhibition of Hollywood Films in Turkey," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 22:1, (2002): 47-59.

[20] Müzeyyen Karabağ, *American Cinema and Popular Representations of Women in Early Republican Turkey*, Unpublished MA thesis, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, Ankara, (2013); Gevher Ebru Çelikoğlu, *A Case Study of Hollywood to Yeşilçam Cross-Cultural Film Remakes*, Unpublished MA Thesis, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent

different geographical contexts to enhance my perspective about the film symbols and images as representations of underlying ideologies and, most significantly, constructions of national identities during the Cold War.[21]

Furthermore, *Türk Sağı: Mitler, Fetişler, Düşman İmgeleri* is the other edited book that completes my focus on the culture of the period I am investigating. Edited by Kerestecioğlu and Öztan, the book puts forth the role of anti-communism in constructing the image of the enemy in cartoons, textbooks, children's literature, and some right-wing journals.[22] Its use of extensive material has enriched my understanding of a different variety of sources produced during the Cold War. Özdemir'sarticle in this volume is worth mentioning because of its topic: Islamic cinema in the 1990s and early 2000s in Turkey.[23] The time focus of the article, reveals what has is all but missing in the existing literature analyzing the Cold War period: a critical analysis of the Turkish cinema of the 1950s-1970s. In fact, despite many areas of culture written about, none of the works mentioned above discuss how the Cold War might have influenced what has been represented in the Turkish cinema of the 1950s-1980. Therefore, it would be reasonable to state that even though the Cold War occupied an important place in the everyday life of the 1950s-1970s, because the period coincided with the golden age of Turkish cinema, cinema, and its connections with the political and ideological transformations of the period largely remain underexplored in political studies.

Regarding the second main body of literature, critical studies on Turkish cinema, despite the extensive research on Turkish cinema during the 1950s-1970s, that with a critical historical-political perspective taking cinema as a carrier of political and nationalist meanings is very limited. The lack of critical studies is not the only problem, there is also only a handful of critical sources written in English. Although none of these studies writes explicitly about historical action-adventure films, Dönmez-Colin, Suner, Arslan, Erdoğan, Göktürk, Kaya-

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University, Ankara, (2018). A worth mentioning work is *Remake, Remix, Rip-Off: About Copy Culture and Turkish Pop-Cinema*, dir. Cem Kaya, (2014). This is a documentary film about how Turkish filmmakers of the golden age of Turkish cinema copied and remade best-seller movies from all over the world including the ones from Hollywood. The director meets with filmmakers, actors to reveal the dynamics of copying and remaking in Turkish Cinema particularly in the 1960s and 1970s.

[21] See for example, Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica: The Politics and Ideology of Contemporary Hollywood Film* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990); Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Manchester: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Denise J. Youngblood and Tony Shaw, *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010); Stephen J. Whitfield, "Chapter 6: Reeling: The Politics of Film" in *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 127-152.

[22] İnci Özkan Kerestecioğlu and Güven Gürkan Öztan (eds.), *Türk Sağı: Mitler, Fetişler, Düşman İmgeleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012).

[23] Seda Özdemir, "Modern Müminin Kodları, Simgeleri: Türkiye'de İslami Sinema" in *Türk Sağı: Mitler, Fetişler, Düşman İmgeleri,* eds. Kerestecioğlu and Öztan, 377-406.

Mutlu, and Bayrakdar are prominent scholars who apply critical frameworks to the study of the history of Turkish cinema.[24] However, the general lack of sources makes it difficult to conduct comparative studies. Thus, the current dissertation could constitute a step towards future work.

There are several resources from the field of cinema studies that have directly influenced my dissertation. One such resource is *1960 Darbesi ve Türk Sinemasında Toplumsal Gerçekçilik,* a book by Daldal based on her doctoral dissertation. Daldal follows Lukacs and Bourdieu's footsteps and argues that the realism wave in Turkish cinema has some social and political determinants. She states that specific socio-political changes in society prepared the ground for the emergence of social realist films after the 1960s coup in Turkey. For her, these changes were very much related to class balances and the formation of an urban middle-class coalition involving the military intelligentsia and the manufacturing bourgeoisie, which assumed a 'progressive role' against different segments of the society in the aftermath of the coup.[25] Daldal's critical perspective establishes an elaborate connection between the films and the context makes her work one of the most significant ones in my analysis of the 1960s' political and social atmosphere. The same period is also analyzed by Başgüney in his study, *Türk Sinematek Derneği: Türkiye'de Sinema ve Politik Tartışma*. This book examines activities such as journals and film screenings of the Sinematek Association established in 1965 by westernist cinema followers, mainly the intellegentsia and the youth, who were the members of the urban alliance that Daldal mentions. Indeed, the author historicizes the association's evolution by referring to the impact of the political changes on the artistic agenda.[26] Therefore, the book complements Daldal's argument and has enhanced my understanding of the period. The entire picture, however, is completed by Kaya and Azak's article, which critically analyzes a film titled *Birleşen Yollar* (*Crossroads*, dir. Yücel Çakmaklı, 1970), which the authors take

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[24] Here, it should be also stated that sources in English language are quite limited, too. The available ones, which are also critical not about my films in general: Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008); Asuman Suner, *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory* (New York: IB Tauris, 2010); Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Nezih Erdoğan and Deniz Göktürk, "Turkish Cinema" in *Companion Encyclopedia of Middle Eastern and North African Film*, ed. Oliver Leaman, (London: Routledge, 2001), 533-573, and a collected volume by Deniz Bayrakdar, *Cinema and Politics: Turkish Cinema and The New Europe* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Oxford University Press, 2009). These do not specifically mention the film sample I chose but present a framework for a critical analysis of Turkish cinema. Another very significant study is Dilek Kaya Mutlu, "Between Tradition and Modernity: Yeşilçam Melodrama, Its Stars and Their Audiences," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 46, Issue 3, (2010): 417-431. It analyzes the reception of Turkish cinema in the 1960s and 1970s by its audiences through audience letters written to stars.

[25] Aslı Daldal, *1960 Darbesi ve Türk Sinemasında Toplumsal Gerçekçilik* (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi ve Yayıncılık, 2005).

[26] Hakkı Başgüney, *Türk Sinematek Derneği: Türkiye'de Sinema ve Politik Tartışma* (İstanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, 2011).

as the pioneer of Islamic National cinema.[27] The emergence of this cinema movement happens in the 1970s and fits well into the gradually increasing Islamist emphasis in the subject matters of my sample of films. This article also completes that of Özdemir and situates political Islam in a historical context that makes it work better for that dissertation's purposes.[28]

The other critical study which has widened my perspective is Arslan's *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil?,* a monograph that adds cinematic representations of Turkish masculinities in the 1970s into the picture. By analyzing several melodramas with central male protagonists, the author displays how the representations of masculinities in popular cinema have become an arena for comprehending collective anxieties and desires, and therefore Turkish society's collective psychology.[29] In her analysis, Arslan adopts Açıkel's metaphor of *kutsal mazlumluk* (sacred oppression), a significant building block of the ideology of the Turkish right. This metaphor praises suffering when encountered with the modernization of the country and constructs a discourse that is conservative and nationalist.[30] In this respect, Arslan argues that there is a masculinity crisis in the protagonists of the films in her sample, and this is a reflection of the trauma created by the political and historical context of the 1970s, which was shaped by increasing social inequalities, encounters of the rural with the urban, political oppression caused by the 1971 military memorandum, and economic crisis. The films, therefore, are the products of the societal anger nurtured by the ideology of sacred oppression and longing for a powerful father figure, represented by the protagonists, to save the entire society.[31] Here, although Arslan does not mention historical action/adventure films, her general framework fits well into my dissertation and actually confirms the narratives of historical action/adventure films where the

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[27] Dilek Kaya and Umut Azak, "Crossroads (1970) and the Origin of Islamic Cinema in Turkey," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (2015): 257-276.

[28] There is, in fact, a considerable number of studies about the representation of Islam in Turkish cinema. See for example, Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Women, Islam and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004) for a comparative perspective on the representations of women in the cinemas of Turkey, the Middle East, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and some Muslim East Asian countries; Petra de Bruijn, "Islam Goes to Hollywood: An Explanatory Study on Islam in Turkish Cinema," *CINEJ Cinema Journal*, Vol. 2.1, (2012): 2-41; Özlem *Avcı* and Berna *Uçarol-Kılınç*, "*Islamic ways* of *life reflected on the silver screen*" in *Cinema* and *Politics*: *Turkish Cinema and the New Europe*, ed. D*eniz* Bayrakdar (*Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing,* 2009), 240-257; Bilal Yorulmaz and William L. Blizek, "Islam in Turkish Cinema," *Journal of Religion and Film*, Vol. 18, Issue: 2, (Oct. 2014), Article 8.

[29] Umut Tümay Arslan, *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil?* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2005).

[30] Fethi Açıkel, "Kutsal Mazlumluğun Psikopatolojisi," *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 70, (1996): 153-198.

[31] A parallel study about the reflection of that masculinity crisis in literature is Çimen Günay-Erkol, *Broken Masculinities: Solitude, Alienation, and Frustration in Turkish Literature after 1970* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2016). Günay-Erkol focuses on the representations of masculinity in the novels written in the 1970s, which was a period of political oppression.

Turkish nation is always saved by a nationalist hero that takes revenge from evil others at it is revealed in the following chapters.[32]

At this point, my search for meanings in the films was also supported by a study about a very popular Turkish TV series, which can be taken as a convenient example of the analysis of popular cultural products concerning their specific contexts. Çetin's article, *The Paramilitary Hero on Turkish Television: A Case Study on Valley of the Wolves* is about *Valley of the Wolves*, a TV series telling the story of a paramilitary hero fighting against the mafia, foreign intelligence agencies, and Kurdish militant networks. Çetin argues that the series' massive popularity in the early 2000s was very much related to the social and political context of that time. By taking this as her departure point, she first makes an analysis of reception through interviews with consumers. She also offers a textual analysis which reveals the nationalist and militarist meanings that have emerged through the construction of Turkish masculinity.[33] The study shows that militarism does not always work through the army or military institutions, but also through popular cultural representations. In this vein, Çetin's book urged me to think about the reception of nationalist action/adventure films with historical settings at a time of increasing political turmoil.

Moreover, there is a profound academic interest in the representation of the past in Turkish cinema. One point to note here is that it might be intriguing to think about that rising interest in relation to Turkey's current political and social context, but this is beyond the scope of the current dissertation.[34] Nevertheless, many of the studies on films of the period I am scrunitizing are primarily general surveys. This is the first and foremost weakness of the

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[32] In another study *Mazi Kabrinin Hortlakları: Türklük, Melankoli ve Sinema* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009), Arslan raises her argument once again by attempting to understand the reproduction of emotions such as national tears, laughter, and hysteria in Turkish melodramas. By referring to the narratives of several films, she tries to grasp the collective mentality of the society hence the construction of the Turkish national identity. This book has a much wider perspective compared to *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil?* and does not specifically talk about masculinities.

[33] Berfin Emre Çetin, *The Paramilitary Hero on Turkish Television: A Case Study on Valley of the Wolves* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015). The series is also analyzed by Volkan Yücel, *Kahramanın Yolculuğu: Mitin Erkeklik ve Suç Draması* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014). Adopting a structuralist approach and following Vladimir Propp's literary methodology, Yücel analyzes the representation of masculinities through criminal heroes in several popular TV series including Valley of the Wolves. Although the author does not mention the context that these series were consumed, this study, too, inspired me to think about the reception of aggressive and nationalist popular culture products.

[34] The neo-Ottoman nostalgia which glorifies the Ottoman past vis a vis the Kemalist legacy is revealed through various popular TV shows in addition Erdoğan's speeches. This relates to the AKP policies of restoration and reconstruction of a Turkish-Islamic identity as opposed to a Westernized one. A complementary reading of the following articles is significant for understanding the rising interest in the Ottoman past during the AKP era and the reflection of this on popular cultural products. These articles are: Josh Carney, "ResurReaction: Competing Visions of Turkey's (proto) Ottoman past in Magnificent Century and Resurrection Ertuğrul," *Middle East Critique*, 28/2, (2019): 101-120; Umut Uzer, "Glorification of the Past as a Political Tool: Ottoman History in Contemporary Turkish Politics," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, Vol. 9, No. 4, (2018): 339-357.

literature about action/adventure films with historical settings. One of these studies is Makal's *Sinemada Tarihin Görüntüsü*. It is essentially a rough, descriptive survey presenting the history of the films about historydevoid of any substantial analysis of the films.[35] Duruel-Erkılıç's *Türk Sinemasında Tarih ve Bellek* covers an extensive period from the 1950s up until the 2000s, but it does not aim to make a systematic analysis of films about history. One of the chapters is devoted to the subparts of the films of the1950s-1970s. In these subparts, Duruel-Erkılıç provides summaries of some notable films taken as representatives of this period. Since her goal is again to draw a general framework, she does not mention a historical-political context.[36] A similar study is Yüksel and Sancak's article about some of the films that are also a part of my corpus, such as : "Kara Murat, Yandım Ali vd…" The authors aim to mention nationalist messages in those films, but they fail to do this analytically, so their study is primarily a generalization devoid of comparison and context.[37] Gürata's study encompasses the films in my corpus in general. However, he has an entirely different approach than mine, and analyzes the narrative structure of those films by following Propp.[38] İspivery generally mentions the representation of others in films about the past.[39] Finally, Akbaş's *Türk Sinemasında Ortaçağ Tarihi Algısı (1943-2014).*adopts a descriptive approach. That is, instead of providing analysis, it consists of a synopsis of the films accompanied by limited details of the context. Consequently, it could be considered as a review due to its non-comprehensive and non-critical style.[40]

On the other hand, there is a short, yet significant piece written by Arslan as a part of his book *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History*. In his analysis of different genres and how their codes are represented in Turkish cinema, Arslan mentions historical action/adventure films, referring to one of the most prominent films, *Kara Murat Fatih'in Fedaisi* (*Fatih's Guard*, dir. Natuk Baytan, 1972). Although it does not provide historical or political context due to its subject matter, Arslan presents a refined analysis that very briefly includes how the Turkish national identity is constructed in the film in relation to the representation of the enemies and allies.[41] This short piece might be considered as a basic introduction in line with

[35] Oğuz Makal, *Sinemada Tarihin Görüntüsü* (İstanbul: Kalkedon, 2014).
[36] Senem Duruel-Erkılıç, *Türk Sinemasında Tarih ve Bellek* (Ankara: De Kİ Basım Yayın, 2012).
[37] Filiz Uygun Yüksel and Ayşe Sancak, "Kara Murat, Yandım Ali vd…" in *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler-9*, ed. Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2011), 89-98.
[38] Ahmet Gürata, "'Öteki'yle Üçüncü Türden Yakın İlişkiler: Tarihsel Kostüme Filmler ve İkizlik Miti" in *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler-6,* ed. Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2007), 43-56.
[39] Gökçe İspi, "Tarihi Türk Filmlerinde 'İyi ve Kötü Adam Olmak'" in *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler-6,* ed. Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2007), 57-64.
[40] Emel Akbaş, *Türk Sinemasında Ortaçağ Tarihi Algısı (1943-2014)*, (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2018).
[41] Savaş Arslan, "Chapter 5: High Yeşilçam II: Genres and Films," 175-180.

the purposes of the current dissertation. Saydam also establishes the relationship between the films about history until and their historical-political contexts the 2000s. Although this is a significant article because it enables the readers to see the films as connected within the same framework, it still lacks focus on a specific period.[42] Yedidal's analysis of four action/adventure films is also critical due to its references to the literature on nationalism studies and emphasis on the films as representations of national memory. Nevertheless, it still context, so the author's opinions cannot be sufficiently grounded.[43] Maktav's article, "Vatan, Millet, Sinema" from his collection of articles *Türkiye Sinemasında Tarih ve Siyaset*, also presents a general picture. His study is interesting because he connects nationalist action/adventure films with films representing the Turkish army and its soldiers. He claims that Turkish cinema made historical action/adventure films due to its archaic and immature industry. In his opinion, because Turkish filmmakers could not shoot films with a crowded cast, they opted for films that were sometimes almost copies of one another and included few characters such as nationalistic heroes fighting alone. For Maktav, later, the single heroes were all replaced by the depictions of the Turkish army because of the increasing role of the military in Turkish politics with the 1980 military coup.[44] I find this argument a rather simplistic one which eliminates too obviously the influence of the context on the emergence and popularity of nationalist action/adventure films with few heroes. He also ignores the fact that the fading away of those movies is part of societal and political turmoil, which resulted in decreasing cinema audiences due to political violence in the streets. One could add the spread of television to the living rooms of ordinary citizens into the picture. There is also an undeniable continuity between films representing the army and films representing lone heroes, as this dissertation reveals. Maktav also ignores those continuities. Thus, overall, the number of critical studies that approach cinema as a carrier of nationalist meanings and values is limited. There is no comprehensive political-historical analysis of the nationalist action/adventure films in the available literature.

Fınally, one complementary body of literature that has inspired my analysis deals with comic books in Turkey. In fact, the most popular action/adventure heroes of cinema, such as Karaoğlan and Tarkan, were originally comic book heroes born into Turkey's vivid publishing culture during the post-Second World War era. Therefore, the studies on the comic books of

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[42] Barış Saydam, "Geçmişten Günümüze Türk Sineması Tarihi ve Avantür Filmlerinde Kahraman Miti" in *Biraz Mağrur Biraz Mağdur: Türk Sinemasında Kahramanlar*, ed. Tuba Deniz, (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2017), 35-54.

[43] Hande Yedidal, "Çizgi Romandan Beyaz Perdeye 'Yenilmez Türk' İmajının Yıllar İçerisindeki Dönüşümü" in *Türk Film Araştırmalarında Yeni Yönelimler-9*, ed. Deniz Bayrakdar (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 2011), 99-109.

[44] Hilmi Maktav, "Vatan, Millet, Sinema," *Türkiye Sinemasında Tarih ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2013), 3-31.

the period have contributed to my understanding of the intellectual atmosphere. Among these, Cantek's *Türkiye'de Çizgi Roman* presents a historical survey of comics from the late 19th century until the 2000s. This is not an academic work, and hence does not provide a systematic analysis with a theoretical background and references. However, it is unique in presenting a general overview by putting comics into a global context and historicizing them. There is no other study where one can find a comprehensive chronology of the comics of Turkey. Cantek also briefly mentions nationalist comics that are set in the past. He refers to their common themes, the depiction of the hero, women, and others.[45] His analysis is inspiring yet unsystematic but undeniably significantly contributes to the understanding of the rich world of comic book heroes.

Furthermore, Cantek's noteworthy study, *Erotik ve Milliyetçi Bir İkon: Karaoğlan*, offers an extensive analysis of the available Karaoğlan comic books published between 1963-2002. Adopting a historical approach, the author exploits primary sources to present the details of both Karaoğlan and other characters of different Karaoğlan adventures.[46] Despite the richness in primary sources, the lack of a theoretical framework and a general systematic structure overburdens the reader with details. Nonetheless, the book is still a precursor to later works with its approach to comics as historical sources. In this regard, Gürata's article titled "*Çizgi Romandan Sinemaya*," also analyzes the narrative structure of popular comic books in the 1960s, including those featuring nationalist action/adventure heroes. Although it does not mention the context that gave birth to these comic books, it is still beneficial to comprehend the broader global framework that reveals interconnections between comic books in Turkey and the world.[47] Other studies that could be considered within the same pool are Özkaracalar and Cantek,[48] Çoruk[49], and Tellan.[50] All of these studies start out from the theories of popular culture and history of particular comic books, thus none of them provides a political-historical context. Only in the final part of her article does Karadoğan mention the importance of political and historical context in understanding what meanings the audience derives from both the comics

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[45] Levent Cantek, *Türkiye'de Çizgi Roman* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 169-186.

[46] Levent Cantek, *Erotik ve Miliyetçi Bir İkon: Karaoğlan* (İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık, 2003).

[47] Ahmet Gürata, "Çizgi Romandan Sinemaya" in *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu: Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed. Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 53-65.

[48] Kaya Özkaracalar and Levent Cantek, "Fantastik ve Sado-Erotik Bir Tarihsel Çizgi Roman: Tarkan" in *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu: Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed. Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 84-89.

[49] Hüsnü Çoruk, "Çizgi romanımızda kahramanlık türü" in *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu: Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed. Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 73-95.

[50] Bülent Tellan, "Kara Murat: Çizgi romandan beyazperdeye bir akıncının sergüzeştleri" in *Ayşegül Keskin Çolak'a Armağan Tarih ve Edebiyat Yazıları*, eds. Hasan Çolak, Zeynep Kocabıyıkoğlu Çeçen, N. Işık Demirakın (Ankara: Kebikeç, 2016), 243-258.

and the films.[51] Therefore, although it deals with a different medium, this particular group of studies presents abundant opportunities to understand the intellectual atmosphere of the 1950s-1980.

Given the lack of studies analyzing the interaction between political-historical context and cultural products in addition to the distance to culture in political studies literature, this dissertation aims to reveal a comprehensive political picture of the 1950s-1970s by relying on cultural products, namely nationalist action/adventure films, within a historical setting. This approach also captures different varieties of Turkish nationalism through popular representations of the past and how these are embedded in the common man's everyday ideological mindset. The current dissertation ultimatelyattempts to contribute to the literature on the history of political thought through an exploration of the dynamic nature of Turkish nation-building.

Methodology:

In my research on the reproduction of nationalist political myths through historical action/adventure films, I adopted a qualitative research method and conducted close reading combined with film analysis. This methodology includes the attempt to gain an understanding the deeper meaning of the material under scrutiny.[52] Here, as Brummett and Mikos maintain,[53] films are not simple audiovisual products but are meaningful texts. Giddens states that a thorough understanding of a text becomes possible when "the conditions of (meanings') knowledgeability" are explored.[54] This means the context in which the films are produced, circulated, and consumed needs to be investigated to gain [55]a sense of the text's more profound meaning. In this vein, with all their images, characters, costumes, and narratives[56] -that is *mise-en-scène* and editing,[57] films present symbols determined by a context[58] to the consumers, who

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[51] Rukiye Karadoğan, "Tarihi Çizgi Romanların Yeşilçam Serüveni: Kostüme Avantür Filmler" in *Çizgili Hayat Kılavuzu: Kahramanlar, Dergiler ve Türler*, ed. Levent Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 66-72.

[52] Barry Brummett, *Techniques of Close Reading* (US: Sage Publications, 2010), 9.

[53] Lothar Mikos, "Analysis of Film" in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, ed. Uwe Flick (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2014), 411.

[54] Anthony Giddens, "Action Subjectivity and the Constitution of Meaning," *Social Research*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Autumn 1986): 545.

[55] Pierre Bourdieu, "Principles for a Sociology of Cultural Works," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays in Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 176-191.

[56] Mikos, "Analysis of Film," 409.

[57] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, "The Shot: Mise-en-Scene" in *Film Art: An Introduction* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 112-161.

[58] Mikos, "Analysis of Film," 410-411.

receive all those symbols and construct reality[59] in a context. The context here could be historical,[60] economic, technical, cultural, and social.[61] Therefore, neither the content of the films nor their makers and viewers are independent of what is going on socially and politically in the day's events.[62]

This dissertation takes the relationship between political-historical context and the text as a departure point in its close reading and analysis of films. From this perspective, a text that is a nationalist action/adventure film about a Turkish hero defeating Byzantines must have had intense meaning for both producers and consumers during the 1974 intervention of Turkey on Cyprus. Therefore, the Cold War context of the 1950s-1970s is genuinely significant for conducting a close reading and analysis of the nationalist political myths represented in the sample I have chosen. At this point, I should also state that this dissertation does not aim to present how the audience reacted to the films, but instead what those films represent and what kind of meanings they generate in relation to the context. Following the footsteps of Casetti, I am aware that how consumers interpret texts and how they utilize texts in their everyday lives is also significant for comprehending the true meanings of the text.[63] However, dwelling on the reception of the films is beyond the scope of the current dissertation and could be the subject of another study. Therefore, I focus on the historical contexts of production and consumption to reveal how films reproduce nationalist political myths by contributing to different nationalist discourses.

My methodology is very much related to the New Historicism approach, which looks at literary works from a broader historical perspective. Based on Stephen Greenblatt's study of English Renaissance Literature that analyzes how the members of the middle class formulated their identities in the 16th century[64], and influenced by Michael Foucault's ideas on the relationship between holding power and determining what is knowledge, truth at any given time,[65] New Historicism puts forth that the understanding of a work of literature is determined

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[59] Mikos, "Analysis of Film," 413; James Monaco, *How to Read A Film: Movies, Media, Multimedia* (NY, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 262.

[60] According to David Greenham, "Chapter 8: The Adversarial Context," in *Close Reading: The Basics* (New York: Routledge, 2018), the adversarial context which is about which and how historical and political contexts shape the text is one of six other contexts of close reading. The others are semantic, syntactic, thematic, iterative, and generic contexts.

[61] Mikos, "Analysis of Film," 420.

[62] Brummett, *Techniques of Close Reading*, 10.

[63] Francesco Casetti and Federico di Chio, *Analisi del Film* (Milano: Bompiani, 2001), 156 cited in Mikos, "Analysis of Film," 412.

[64] Stephen Greenblatt, "Introduction," *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 1-9.

[65] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, ed. Colin Gordon,* (New York: Pantheon, 1980); *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978)*; Catherine*

by its creator's and readers' environment and conditions. This cultural studies approach seeks to reconnect a cultural product with the time period it was produced and relate it with the historical forces of the time. In this regard, it may assume that each film I am dealing with is the product of the historic moment that created it. As Greenblatt says, a complete cultural analysis that pushes the text's boundaries is the one that reveals the links between the text and the cultural, social, and historical aura in which the text has been produced and consumed. In Greenblatt's words, this approach to literature presents another, wider vision of history.[66]

Thus, I search for the relationship between cultural products and their contexts through nationalist action/adventure films produced between the 1950s-1980. The sample of films I have chosen includes seventy-one action/adventure films taking their subject matters from the past. Consequently, I had to omit many other action/adventure films which reproduce political myths. Thus, my sample does not include films that were produced between the 1950s and 1980 depicting contemporary political issues such as the Korean War and the Cyprus issue. The only exception is those films that devote significant time to the Ottoman/Turkish past simultaneously with current issues. Besides, because there are no box office records or any piece of credible information about ticket sales for each film, I adopted my own criteria while creating my sample. To develop a list of action/adventure films, first, I checked the synopses from *Ansiklopedik Türk Filmleri Sözlüğü* (Encyclopedic Turkish Film Lexicon)[67] prepared by Agah Özgüç, a journalist and cinema historian who contributed much to the development of cinema studies in Turkey. Second, I went over *Türk Sinema Tarihi* (History of Turkish Cinema),[68] authored by Giovanni Scognamillo, a prominent film critic. As the next step, I looked at whether the films in my list are available at İstanbul Atatürk Library, National Library, Boğaziçi University Library, The Foundation for Sciences and Arts (*Bilim ve Sanat Vakfı-BİSAV*), Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Prof. Sami Şekeroğlu Turkish Film & TV Institute and finally the Internet. After finding out the available ones, I briefly watched them to learn their subject matter. I chose the ones that focus on war/conquest, so include a fight between Turks and 'others.' Therefore, my corpus has narratives of combat, war, and conflict. The films' plots are based upon imaginary or actual historical events in the footsteps of Davis,

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Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000); Louis A. Montrose, "Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes, and the Pastoral of Power," *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 10, Number 2, (Spring 1980): 153-182; "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture" in *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory: A Reader,* ed. K. M. Newton (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1997): 240-247.

[66] "Culture" in *The Greenblatt Reader*, ed. Michael Payne (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 11-17.
[67] Agah Özgüç, *Ansiklopedik Türk Filmleri Sözlüğü 1914-2014* (İstanbul: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2014).
[68] Giovanni Scognamillo, *Türk Sinema Tarihi* (İstanbul: Kabalcı Yayınevi, 2014).

who defines the historical film as the one that makes those events central to its story.[69] Therefore, my analysis does not include those that take wars and history as a backdrop. That is, while choosing my sample, I have eliminated those films in which the past serves as a nostalgic setting or backdrop, as Burgoyne does in his analysis of American historical films.[70] For example, *Vurun Kahpeye* (*Shoot the Whore*, dir. Halit Refiğ, 1973), a historical drama set during the War of Independence, is not included because war is only in the background. After creating a list of films, I have grouped them according to the time period they depict. Then, I watched them for the second time and took very detailed notes. Based on these, I created excel tables in which the films were compared according to heroes' life stories, where and when the stories take place and the names of enemies. These tables enabled me to have easier access to some basic information about the films. When I needed, I watched the films or specific scenes for the third or sometimes fourth time. While watching the films, I have tried to understand two things: First, how they represent the past and secondly, how they can be related to the period of 1950s-1980.

The analytical tools I use are nationalist political myths about the nation's spatial, ancestral, temporal roots, present situation, future, and mission. I aim to understand the production of those myths through specific categories of representations. These include main characters, protagonist heroes, their missions, religion, the national space, good others, bad others, women, and children. If relevant, I examine the use of language and costumes. Finally, for each film, I explore how these representations could be compared and contrasted across time between the 1950s and 1980. While doing this, I developed subheadings for a relatively more straightforward reading of the dissertation. These subtitles, however, are not sharply distinguished categories. Instead, they are parts of a narrative that relies on where the most evident and significant political myths in any film come to the fore. Besides, in my analysis, I used official English translations of film titles whenever they are available. After writing the original versions, I have put my own translations in parentheses for those without English titles.

Furthermore, for the current dissertation, which solely centers on the films as a medium and the contexts in which they had been produced and consumed, I omit differences in filmmakers, hence individual directors' or producers' choices. Therefore, I have categorised films according to two criteria. The first is production date, and the second is the historical period they illustrate. In terms of the first, I have categorized films by considering political changes and the impact of those on the depictions of the nation. There are four main

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[69] Natalie Davis, *Slaves on Screen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5.
[70] Robert Burgoyne, *The Hollywood Historical Film* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 3-4.

subheadings here: the 1950s, 1960-1965, 1965-1971, and the 1970s.As the second step, I refer to the historical period the films are talking about. The main subheadings here are pre-Islamic heroes, pre-Ottoman Islamic heroes, and Ottoman heroes. While comparing the four periods in terms of political and ideological transformations, I look at the reproduction of nationalist political myths through cinematic depictions of different periods of history. Thus, the dissertation illustrates the shifts in Turkish nationalist imaginings as reflected in political myths that are reproduced in action/adventure films with historical settings.

Limitations:

First, the films' availability, which is a criterion in creating my sample, could be a limitation of the study. The films in my sample are those that were publicly accessible between 2016 and 2019. There might be films that have been added to the Internet or libraries after this time. However, this is a lower possibility given the legal cases related to copyright issues of Yeşilçam films.[71] Nevertheless, the dissertation already includes a vast number of sources.

Second, in my analysis of the reproduction of political myths, I considered only the films' production dates. Some films, however, were exhibited in more than one season over the years or over different seasons in different regions of the country. Moreover, during the 1950s-1980 period, since cinema timetables were only available as programs of some cinemas in İstanbul and were published on an irregular basis, it is impossible to develop a definite picture of what was shown in which cinema on a specific day. Therefore, the release dates and when the films were shown are not definite.[72]

Moreover, the dissertation solely focuses on the ample material provided by the Turkish cinema. Therefore, European, Latin American, and American counterparts and how Turkish

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[71] There are problems with with legal procedures regarding copyright of Yeşilçam films and film music. This reflected on several court cases: "420 senaryosu filme çekilen Önal: Hiç telif verilmedi" *Gazete Duvar*, 5 January 2020, https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/kultur-sanat/2020/01/05/420-senaryosu-filme-cekilen-onal-hic-telif-verilmedi#:~:text=Eser%20sahiplerinin%20telif%20haklar%C4%B1%20i%C3%A7in,hi%C3%A7bir%20%C5%9Fey%20vermeyenleri%20affetmeyece%C4%9Fim%22%20dedi. (Retrieved on 15 April 2021); "Kemal Sunal'ın Ailesi 'Telif Hakkı' Davasını Anayasa Mahkemesine Taşıyor," 19 September 2018, https://www.haberler.com/kemal-sunal-in-ailesi-telif-hakki-davasini-anayasa-11248059-haberi/ (retrieved on 15 April 2021).

[72] At this point, it might be relevant to state that the quite common uncertainty about the release dates was never related with censorship. Many of the action/adventure films with historical setting were not censored except a few scenes including nudity before they were released. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about censored and uncensored versions of the same film exhibited in different times. For more information about censorship in Turkish cinema in the Cold War period: Güldeniz Kıbrıs, "Censoring the Nation: Censorship of Turkish Cinema in the Shadow of the Cold War," paper presented at *Screening Censorship Conference: New Histories, Perspectives, and Theories on Film and Screen Censorship*, Ghent/Brussels, 16-17 October, 2020.

examples relate to them are not explored. This is the case because I aim to reveal the ideological codes of Turkish political culture alone. Therefore, other countries' cinemas are beyond the scope of the current study, but nevertheless merit future work. For example, in my opinion, a study about how these films traveled through the Mediterranean basin and if there were remakes could be an exciting contribution to the comparative histories of cinema in revealing the social and political commonalities between different countries of the region.

Finally, the dissertation only focuses on how the films reproduced nationalist political myths and how these representations might have been related with the political-historical contexts. Therefore, how the films were received by the audience is beyond the limits of that dissertation. However, relying on my extensive archival research besides oral history interviews, I can comfortably say that it might be a topic of future research that is built upon my dissertation.

Organization:

This dissertation mainly aims at comprehending different imaginations of Turkish nationhood in the 1950s-1980. It argues that the increasing rhetorical emphasis on the 'common man,' vis a vis the founding military/bureaucratic elite influenced the depictions of the Turkish nation as revealed in the reproduction of political myths in action/adventure films with historical settings. In this regard, apart from a main introduction and conclusion, this dissertation has been divided into five chapters, each of which has a chapter introduction and concluding remarks section. Besides, each chapter includes some subheadings as political myths. The chapters have not been constructed along with the same headings because I have abundant material and each material has its own distinguishable or prominent category. I want to emphasize these prominent categories. There is also an appendix of filmography that has synopses of seventy-one films analyzed throughout the dissertation. The filmography has been organized alphabetically based on the original titles of the films.

The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical background concerning nationalist political myths. After explaining the significance of political myths, the chapter categorizes them to reveal what each myth narrates about the nation. Here, the first category is constituted by myths about the nation's past, which reveal the nation's spatial and ancestral roots as well as its temporal origins and the golden age. The second concentrates on myths about the nation's present, in particular the myth of decline. The third is about the nation's future, and this category includes the myths of ethnic election and the nation's mission. It also explains the ways in which the nation should realize its mission. Therefore, the myths of the warrior nation, national

warrior, leader, and others are presented. The chapter ends with a discussion of how political myths work as elements of popular culture and cinema's role in disseminating political myths. Throughout the chapter, various examples are provided to manifest the significance of political myths in Turkish political culture and nation-building.

The second chapter analyzes political myths in the films of the 1950s in relation to the beginning of a change in political elites. The chapter also discusses various foreign policy developments which strengthened nationalist, anti-intellectual, and anti-bureaucrat elements of political discourse. These developments include the Korean War, Turkey's NATO membership, and increasing American influence in the country. The chapter also includes the growing body of non-academic sources on the Ottoman past during the period in question, which ultimately influenced the depictions of Turkish nationhood through political myths in action/adventure films with historical settings. The films place either the Ottoman past or the War of Independence at the center. Thus, this chapter attempts to explain how films responded to the context of the1950s'.

The third chapter covers the period between the military intervention of May 27, 1960 and the national elections of 1965. This was when the founding military/bureaucratic elite attempted to take the revenge of the 1950s by rebalancing political power against a backdrop of Turkey's isolation in the international arena due to its Cyprus policy. This situation strengthened the popular reaction against the military/bureaucratic elite, while at the same time prepared for a flourishing nationalism in the post-1965 period. This chapter analyzes how these might have reflected on depictions of the Turkish nationhood as revealed in myths that were reproduced by historical action/adventure films. The chapter is divided into two main parts: the context and the films. Again, the films are chosen from those about wars in the Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence. This chapter acts as a transition to the fourth and fifth chapters, which are about the post-1965 period.

The fourth and fifth chapters are connected in terms of the period they investigate. They are about the increasing aggressive nationalism following the 1965 nationwide elections until the late 1970s, ending with the military coup of September 12, 1980. The latest film I analyze is *Kara Murat Devlet Savaşıyor* (*Kara Murat: The Giants are Fighting*, dir. Natuk Baytan), which was produced in 1978. This date also marks the a reduction in cinema attendance due to the widespread street violence stemming from political chaos and the spread of television, which gave an end to the vast consumption of cinema in everyday life. Given this, the fourth chapter mainly deals with the context in which the rhetorical power of the 'common man' was strengthened in political culture vis a vis the military/bureaucratic elite. This came hand in hand

with the militarist and aggressive atmosphere created by the late 1960s' criminalization of social movements, the suppression of the left with the military memorandum of 1971, and the Cyprus Operation of 1974. The phenomenal consumption and production of cinema also coincided with that period, and the films, of course, cannot be thought of independently from the political and historical circumstances in which they were born into or the dominant ideology of their time. In that respect, these films throw light on the late 1960s and the 1970s. Therefore, I have created two general categories of films that I deal with in Chapter Four and Chapter Five. The first category includes films depicting the defense of Anatolia in the 19th century and those that took place during the War of Independence. Since this group constitutes only a minority, I have put them in Chapter Four to be able to contextualize them better. However, the second category is analyzed in Chapter Five. It includes films manifesting Turkish heroism during various conquests from the 5th to the 17th century by the Hunnic Empire, Göktürks, Anatolian Seljuks, and the Ottoman Empire. In terms of the characters and narratives, these films are generally very similar to each other because most of them are episodes of series completing each other. However, their heroes are much more aggressive in comparison to those of the previous chapter. Lastly, I should add that the fifth chapter is longer than the other chapters, so there is an imbalance between the chapters in terms of the number of pages they occupy. This is because the number of films produced during the last period I am dealing with, 1965-1980, is significantly greater than those produced in other periods.

To make my analysis easily comprehensible, I have put intra-conclusions raising the main arguments due to the variety and extent of the films under scrutiny. The dissertation also includes a filmography as part of an appendix at the end. This section is divided into subsections according to chapters. Each subsection contains the synopses of films analyzed in the related chapter. In this regard, the first subsection is on Chapter Two, which has eleven films; the third section is on Chapter Three and presents five films, the third is on Chapter Four and has twelve films, and the last subsections is for Chapter Five, which gives the synopses of forty-three films. The films in each section have been listed alphabetically based on the original language.