

# Transformation of Melodrama in Turkish Cinema from Yeşilçam to the Present: The Films Innocence and Destiny

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## ABSTRACT

Melodramas are dramatic works of art where the detailed character studies dominate the plot. The dialogues used in melodramas are generally emotional, and the characters are often portrayed in stereotypical forms. Melodramas usually focus on emotions like love. As a subgenre of drama films, melodramas carry the mentioned characteristics of this genre; thus, they have plotlines driven by powerful emotions such as love. Content-wise, melodrama films often deal with tragedies like hopeless love stories. Characters must struggle against significant social pressures from their lovers or families. Sacrifice is a fundamental tool for characters in this struggle. Yeşilçam melodramas adhere to the requirements of this genre. They typically revolve around an exalted love that could be noble and spiritual. Characters must fight for this love like medieval knights. The characters in these films are usually unfortunate, and their mistakes turn their lives into hell. Zeki Demirkubuz, an important director of the New Turkish Cinema, continues the tradition of melodrama as an inheritor of its themes. However, he differentiates himself from them in terms of how he approaches the concept of good and evil. This study examines the difference between these two understandings of melodrama through Demirkubuz's films "Innocence" and "Destiny" using content analysis and critical discourse analysis methods. Demirkubuz's two films selected as samples carry the general characteristics of Yeşilçam melodramas such as exaggerated emotions, missed happiness, extremes, bipolar lives, event structures based on cause-and-effect relationships, monologue uses, music uses, while they differ from them at an important point. While Yeşilçam melodramas view humans as ontologically good beings despite their mistakes, Demirkubuz's cinema accepts humans as ontologically evil beings. This study will reveal that, unlike the previous studies' theses, Demirkubuz's cinema places evil at the center of its films through their event structures, dialogues and word choices, and thus turns upside down the approach of Yeşilçam melodramas to evil.

**Keywords:** Melodrama, Zeki Demirkubuz, Innocence, Destiny, Yeşilçam.

## Yeşilçam'dan Günümüze Türk Sinemasında Melodramın Dönüşümü: Masumiyet ve Kader Filmleri

### ÖZ

Melodramlar, olay örgüsünün detaylı karakter çalışmalarına baskın geldiği dramatik sanat eserleridir. Melodramlarda kullanılan diyaloglar genellikle duygusaldır, karakterler ise streotip şeklindedir. Melodramlar genellikle aşk gibi duygulara odaklanır. Dram filmlerinin alt türleri olan melodram filmleri de ismini aldıkları bu türün zikredilen özelliklerini taşırlar, bundan dolayı aşk gibi güçlü duygular tarafından sürüklenen olay örgülerine sahiptirler. Melodram filmleri içerik itibarıyla genellikle umutsuz aşk hikayeleri gibi trajedileri konu alır. Karakterler aşıklarından ya da ailelerinden gelen büyük sosyal baskılarla mücadele etmek zorundadır. Karakterlerin bu mücadeledeki temel mücadele aygıtları fedakarlıktır. Yeşilçam melodramları türün gerekliliklerine uygun olarak mezkûr uzlaşmaları uygularlar. Genellikle ulvi ve manevi olabilecek yüceltilmiş bir aşk üzerindedirler. Karakterler orta çağ şövalyeleri gibi bu aşk uğruna savaşmalıdır. Bu filmlerdeki karakterler genellikle bahtsız olup yaptıkları hatalar onlar için hayatı cehenneme çevirmiştir. Yeni Türk Sinemasının önemli yönetmenlerinden olan Zeki Demirkubuz bu filmlerin temalarının mirasçısı olarak melodram geleneğini sürdürür. Ancak iyi ve kötü meselesini ele alış bakımından onlardan ayrışır. Bu çalışma bu iki melodram anlayışı arasındaki farkı Demirkubuz'un Masumiyet ve Kader filmleri üzerinden, içerik analizi ve eleştirel söylem analizi yöntemini kullanarak ele almaktadır. Demirkubuz'un örneklem olarak seçilen bu iki filmi yeşilçam melodramlarının abartılı duygular, ıskalanmış mutluluklar, aşırılıklar, iki kutuplu yaşamlar, neden sonuç ilişkilerine dayalı olay örgüleri, monolog kullanımları, müzik kullanımları gibi genel özelliklerini taşıırken önemli bir noktada onlardan ayrışır. Buna göre, Yeşilçam melodramları insanı, hataları olsa da ontolojik olarak iyi bir varlık olarak görürken, Demirkubuz sineması insanı ontolojik olarak kötü bir varlık olarak kabul eder. Bu çalışma daha önce yapılan çalışmaların tezlerinden tamamen farklı olarak, filmlerin olay örgüleri, diyalog ve kelime seçimleri üzerinden Demirkubuz'un sinemasının merkezine kötülüğü koyduğunu ve böylece Yeşilçam melodramlarının kötülüğe yaklaşımını ters yüz ettiğini ortaya koyacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Melodrama, Zeki Demirkubuz, Masumiyet, Kader, Yeşilçam.

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## 1. Introduction

The term "melodrama" is derived from the Greek words "melos," meaning song, and "drama," meaning theatrical play. In contemporary theater, melodrama is a genre based on movement and emotional events, constantly attempting to create touching effects and nourished by the emotional elements of romantic music (Axis2000, 1999). Melodrama in cinema maintains these qualities found in theater.

Until the period known as the New Turkish Cinema, Yeşilçam cinema essentially represented a melodramatic cinema. Melodramatic features were prominently used in almost all films. Yeşilçam melodrama, generally regarded as a form of escapism, utilized social issues as background and emphasized love as the central theme. This approach involved excessive emotional tensions and irrational choices and reactions, displaying childish behaviors (Adanır, 1996). As (Abisel, 2005) and (Ryan & Kellner, 1988) pointed out, the melodramatic genre tends to avoid seriously addressing social problems and typically upholds family unity. As Akbulut also noted, melodrama characters are usually unequivocally placed in the categories of good and bad, with the narrative focused on the good characters who never encounter evil (2008). Consequently, the characters are not presented in depth but rather as stereotypes.

Melodrama films primarily revolve around love experiences or emotional intensities, thereby treating class issues and inter-class differences as secondary matters. As Akbulut stated, melodramas exaggerate the conflicts and emotions they address and overlook other conditions and events (2008). The fundamental conflict in melodrama lies between individual desire based on love and social prohibitions, resulting in tension between the individual and society (p. 58). The central motif in melodrama is built upon love. As a result, the melodramatic genre, which focuses on exaggerating a single emotion, is often underestimated. This is because melodramas construct stories around one-dimensional characters, rather than providing in-depth portrayals. Consequently, despite being a genre that brings large audiences to the cinema and entertains them, melodrama is often disdained in terms of artistic reputation and cinematographic language (2008; Özön, 1995).

Melodramas approach themes such as love, separation, and death by exaggerating them through one-dimensional characters. Melodrama not only glorifies suffering but also reveals that there is a certain pleasure in it. Themes such as fear, love, and sorrow occupy a common place in the collective subconscious of humanity, making melodrama valid for all periods and all social groups (Tunalı, 2006). Melodramatic characters confront disproportionate powers, which are depicted as larger than themselves. These powers can be physical, such as fatal illness or accidents; social, like war or poverty; or mental, like intense love or moral decay (p. 84-85). The melodramatic genre centers on love while being built upon contrasts. Usually, these contrasts are explicitly separated, without mingling or merging. These oppositions often manifest as a dichotomy of good versus evil (cited from Rowe by (2008)).

Melodrama frequently resorts to repetition and coincidence. The exaggeration in repetition and the unreality of coincidences aim to strengthen the desired emotional intensity. This way, the audience can be continuously held in the desired state of excessive emotional intensity. As a result, the presence of coincidences, unexpected conversations, the last-minute revelation of the truth, and the replacement of cause-effect relationships by coincidences are common in melodrama. As Neale pointed out, melodrama refers to a power beyond the characters' wills, similar to "fate," that determines their lives (1986).

In melodramas, the use of home as a setting is fundamental. As melodramas usually revolve around love, they naturally place the family at the center, and the home serves as the setting where all emotional intensity and explosions occur. Social issues often intervene in the narrative on a secondary level.

The thematic use of music is another commonly employed method in melodrama. Music is used as a storytelling device and substitutes for visuals. Music plays a significant role in creating the atmosphere and emotion of the film. Especially in Yeşilçam melodramas, music surpasses the visual elements and becomes the primary creator and carrier of the atmosphere. This tendency is taken to such an extent that many films are shaped based on the lyrics of songs. Additionally, numerous films carry the names of these song lyrics (e.g., "Seven Ne Yapmaz," "Karagözlüm," "Samanyolu," "Artık Sevmeyeceğim," etc.). The melodramatic tradition, the dominant genre in Yeşilçam and even used synonymously with Yeşilçam itself,

finds its successors in the New Turkish cinema that emerged after the 1990s, with Zeki Demirkubuz being the most prominent among them.

This study will first discuss whether Demirkubuz's cinema is a melodrama or not, and then address the issue of how much this cinema relies on the Yeşilçam melodrama tradition. According to our starting point, Demirkubuz's cinema is a reinterpretation of the Yeşilçam melodrama tradition, in which the treatment of evil is completely reversed while other features are preserved. Previous studies on Demirkubuz have not focused on this issue, as will be discussed in the discussion section below, and have not discussed the difference between Demirkubuz's melodramas and Yeşilçam melodramas. In this sense, this study seeks to answer a question that has been left unanswered in this field before: Can Demirkubuz's films be accepted as melodramas? In which direction do these melodramas differ from Yeşilçam melodramas and in which direction do they show similarity with them?

## 2. Method

Demirkubuz's films "*Innocence*" (1997) and "*Destiny*" (2006) share many of the melodramatic characteristics mentioned above, but they also exhibit distinctive aspects. In this study, the relationship between these two films and Yeşilçam melodramas is discussed primarily using the content analysis method. Content analysis examines the presence of specific words, topics, and concepts within a work, thereby revealing its content and meaning (White & Marsh, 2001). Content analysis employs specific themes and extracts meaning from the text. To achieve this, the text is divided into categories and systematically analyzed (Mayring, 2011). In addition to content analysis, discourse analysis has been utilized to interpret the findings. As (Sözen, 1999) pointed out, discourse, when considered independently, is a meta-act and encompasses processes related to ideology, knowledge, dialogue, narrative style, discourse, negotiation, power, and the exchange of power in language practices. As such, it is interconnected with all aspects of life, including political, cultural, and economic domains. Therefore, discourse analysis is an analytical technique that draws from various disciplines, such as sociology, linguistics, and philosophy, assimilating their perspectives in its examination (Tonkiss, 2006; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

In this article, mixed method approach employing content analysis and discourse analysis is employed to delve into the nuanced exploration of the theme of evil in two cinematic works by Demirkubuz: "*Innocence*" (1997) and "*Destiny*" (2006). The chosen analytical methods are thoughtfully applied to unravel the complexities and subtleties surrounding the portrayal and conceptualization of evil within these films.

Content analysis, as a quantitative tool, serves as the first pillar of our methodology. This method involves systematically quantifying the frequency of words and expressions associated with the theme of evil present in the films. By employing a structured approach to categorize and tally these occurrences, we aim to discern patterns and identify key themes related to evil. This quantitative lens not only sheds light on the prevalence of certain motifs but also allows us to infer the filmmakers' perspectives on evil based on the prominence or absence of specific thematic elements. The quantitative insights garnered from content analysis provide a solid foundation for understanding the explicit representation of evil within the narrative.

Additionally this quantitative analysis, discourse analysis is introduced as the second methodological strand. Discourse analysis, in contrast, adopts a qualitative lens to interpret the deeper meanings embedded in various narrative elements. Elements such as character choices, actions, locations, and the use of music are scrutinized to uncover the nuanced layers of meaning regarding the filmmakers' attitudes toward evil. This interpretative approach aims to elucidate how the cinematic elements contribute to the overall discourse on evil within the films. By considering the subtleties of narrative choices and audio-visual elements, discourse analysis enriches our understanding of the implicit and symbolic dimensions of evil portrayal, offering insights into the filmmakers' broader thematic intentions.

By combining content analysis and discourse analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and multifaceted examination of Demirkubuz's films in relation to Yeşilçam melodramas. The quantitative insights gained through content analysis are complemented by the qualitative richness of discourse analysis, resulting in a more holistic understanding of the films' content, meaning, and cultural

implications. This methodological approach ensures a robust and nuanced exploration of the complex interplay between cinematic form and cultural context in Turkish cinema.

The population of this study are the films of Turkish directors who are influenced by Yeşilçam melodramas. This population constitutes a significant part of Turkish cinema history and includes different themes, styles and periods. From this population, Demirkubuz's films "Innocence" (1997) and "Destiny" (2006) are selected as the sample. This sample represents a subset of the population and is determined according to the purpose of the research. In the sample selection, the purposive sampling method is used. This method allows the researcher to select the sample based on certain criteria. In this study, the criteria for sample selection are the relationship of the films with Yeşilçam melodramas, the place of the films in the director's filmography and the evaluations of the films by critics and viewers. These criteria are the features that distinguish the sample from the population and increase the validity of the research. Additionally, the selection of the research universe and sample is crucial in ensuring the validity and generalizability of the findings. The choice of these specific films and genre allows for a focused analysis of melodramatic characteristics and their evolution within Turkish cinema. The sample selection involves a comprehensive examination of scenes, dialogues, and visual elements from the chosen films, ensuring a representative and in-depth exploration of the content.

The films were selected based on their critical acclaim, influence, and thematic relevance to Yeşilçam melodramas. This selection ensures that the analysis captures not only common melodramatic elements but also distinctive features that set these films apart. The combination of content analysis and discourse analysis, along with a thoughtful selection of the research universe and sample, provides a robust methodological framework for unraveling the intricate relationship between Demirkubuz's films and Yeşilçam melodramas.

### 3. The plots of the films "Innocence" and "Destiny"

*Innocence* (1997) revolves around Yusuf, who chooses to remain in prison despite his release due to having no one outside. The only person he has besides his friend Orhan, whom he befriended in prison, is a mute sister he injured years ago for the sake of honor. When he visits his sister in the city, he meets a couple named Bekir and Uğur at the hotel where he stays. Uğur is a singer and a prostitute with a mute daughter named Çilem. Bekir starts taking care of Çilem while staying at the hotel and gradually falls in love with Uğur, even though his love is unrequited. Uğur, however, is in love with Zagor, a troublemaker who roams from place to place due to his restlessness in prison. Uğur has been following Zagor, traveling with him for twenty years. One night, unable to endure this cycle, Bekir commits suicide. After Bekir's death, Yusuf becomes like him, starting to talk to Uğur just like Bekir and eventually declaring his love for her, just as Bekir did. When Uğur escapes from prison with Zagor, Yusuf is left alone with Çilem. While trying to follow the news that Uğur left behind to deliver her daughter to her mother, Yusuf learns about a conflict in the location and that Zagor killed someone. On that same night, Zagor and Uğur are also killed, but Yusuf doesn't find out about it by coincidence. When Uğur goes to Orhan's house, she encounters his dead body. It's revealed to the audience at that moment that Orhan and Zagor are the same person, but Yusuf is not informed of this.

The film *Destiny* (2006) is the story of the past of Bekir, Uğur, and Zagor, which unfolds while "Innocence" takes place in real-time. The events in "Kader" happen before those in "Innocence," but the films were released in the opposite order.

On a hot summer day, Bekir works at the carpet shop left to him by his father when a girl named Uğur enters the shop. Bekir falls in love with Uğur at first sight, but Uğur is in love with Zagor. Her family is in dire straits, with her father being bedridden, her sister facing harassment while working at a coffeehouse, and her mother living a carefree life with a neighborhood tough guy named Cevat. After Zagor is released from prison, a misunderstanding leads to a fight between him and Cevat, resulting in Cevat being stabbed. Uğur takes off with Zagor. Meanwhile, Bekir has been married off by his family, has a child, but still cannot forget Uğur. One day, he sees the news on television reporting that Zagor has killed two police officers. A few days later, Uğur comes to Bekir and asks for money to hire a lawyer for Zagor. She disappears with the money. After discovering that Uğur works at a club in Izmir, Bekir follows her there.

At the hotel where the two stay, they watch the film "Innocence." While Uğur travels from city to city following Zagor, Bekir follows Uğur. Uğur has been shot once, attempted suicide once, and even been rejected by Uğur, but Bekir keeps going back to Istanbul to be with his wife and children before inevitably pursuing Uğur again. In the end, Uğur is in a new prison in Kars, and Bekir, who has gone to get medicine for his son in a panic, finds himself in Kars. He pleads with Uğur to allow him to stay with her, and after Bekir's heartfelt plea, Uğur silently agrees. The film ends this way, and the subsequent events unfold in the same way as presented in the film *Innocence*.

#### 4. The Melodramatic Language in "Destiny" and "Innocence"

As seen in the plotlines, Demirkubuz's films "Destiny" (2006) and "Innocence" (1997) exhibit the characteristics of Yeşilçam melodramas, as pointed out by (2006), (Özgüven, 2001), and (Atam Z., Women in New Turkish Cinema, 2010). They emerge as inheritors of this genre, showing striking similarities to Yeşilçam melodramas in many aspects, while also distinguishing themselves in some significant ways.

As previously mentioned, due to their melodramatic structures, both "Destiny" and "Innocence" focus on a single emotion, the feeling of love, and revolve their narratives around it. Other emotions and themes are superficially addressed in the films. Fundamental emotions and concepts like fatherhood, the notion of family, motherhood, and fatherhood institutions are not featured. Throughout the films, Bekir's father and mother remain passive characters who are not involved in the plot. They do not interfere with Bekir's actions and passively accept his irrational behaviors. Similarly, Bekir's wife, despite his infidelity and frequent desertions, does not react and internalizes these events. Hence, they do not influence the central theme and narrative of the films. Uğur's family, too, lacks the power to affect Uğur's actions. Uğur remains independent from her surroundings. This allows the melodramatic cycle of love to function on its own. Love and the two individuals at its core move through the world independently, unaffected by their surroundings. External forces cannot interfere with this cycle or diminish it.

Another characteristic that makes these films melodramatic is the theatricality in the acting. The performances are exaggerated, and lengthy monologues are frequently employed. The tradition of monologues in Yeşilçam melodramas continues in "Destiny" and "Innocence." As Suner also states, the monologues are fundamental narrative elements in Demirkubuz's cinema and these films (2006).

Intense and crisis-like fights add to the melodramatic atmosphere. Bekir's storytelling scene amplifies the film's melodramatic ambiance. The frequent and intense fights between Bekir and Uğur reinforce this melodramatic mood.

Another essential aspect that gives these films a melodramatic quality is the presence of forced coincidences in the plots. The most evident example of this is the revelation that Orhan, Yusuf's prison friend, turns out to be the person central to Bekir and Uğur's lives.

Furthermore, the melodramatic structure in the films is supported by the inclusion of films within the films (Özgüven, 2001). In both films, television screens in the hotel lobbies consistently show Yeşilçam melodramas. The films shown on these screens mirror the themes explored in "Destiny" and "Innocence." The following films are shown: "The Driver of the Young Lady," "A Bunch of Violets," "Stamp," and "Is This Life?" Both "Destiny" and "Innocence" draw inspiration from these films and share similarities in themes. These Yeşilçam melodramas focus on impossible loves and lives shaped around a particular love.

In "Innocence," a scene from Orhan Aksoy's film "Is This Life?" is shown on the television in the hotel lobby. The scene depicts two brothers falling in love with the same girl. It is revealed that one of the brothers has cancer, and the girl, despite loving the other brother, agrees to marry the brother with cancer as per the dying brother's will. The quoted excerpt from the film is as follows:

Sertan! Sertan! Don't go, mom! Don't go!  
 Leave me!  
 Please don't go, mom! Don't go!  
 My son!  
 What have you done, my son? Why did you do this?

Forgive me!

I am grateful to you for my happy childhood and youth.

Your milk is hallowed, Aunt Nazlı!

May it be hallowed, my son.

Don't! Don't let this pain separate you.

This was the only thing I could do in the face of your sacrifice. To die. And I did it. If you want my soul to find peace, get married right away. My only wish is this, if you have a son, name him Sertan.

Father!...

My son!...

Mom!... My dear mom! (İnanoğlu, 1972)

The quoted film excerpt ends in this manner, and Sertan dies. In "Innocence," during the scene where Yusuf watches the film with the hotel manager Mehmet, their dialogue is as follows:

Oops!

It's a movie, Mehmet Abi, a movie. They make it up to make people cry.

You can't make things up like that, my brother." (Demirkubuz, 1997)

As shown above, "Destiny" and "Innocence" exhibit various aspects of melodramatic language, making them distinct representatives of the genre. The films' focus on a singular emotion, the theatricality of acting, intense fights, forced coincidences, and the inclusion of films within the films contribute to their melodramatic nature, echoing the tradition of Yeşilçam melodramas.

In both "Destiny" and "Innocence," a story within a story is embedded to strengthen the film's reality. While Yusuf dismisses the event on television as a "movie," he is, in fact, the protagonist of a similar life story. Thus, the film demonstrates that real life is not necessarily happier than what is depicted in films and that emotional intensities are equally present in real life. The melodrama within the melodrama emphasizes that melodrama is indeed a reflection of real life. Through this technique, the meaning is reinforced, and the level of reality is elevated. The narrative approach in both films coincides precisely. In both films, exaggerated emotional expression, impossible love, and monotonous situations characteristic of melodrama are observed. There is no difference in the selection and portrayal of themes in comparison to other melodramas cited in "Destiny" and "Innocence." All these films revolve around exaggerated emotional situations shaped and destroyed by love.

This melodramatic layer within the film also highlights the differences between Yeşilçam melodramas and Demirkubuz melodramas, as mentioned below. The conflict in Aksoy's melodrama arises from the two brothers' love for the same girl, with no possible resolution. The girl will marry one of them, and only one can find happiness through the elimination of the other. This conflict is a kind of capricious twist of fate. In Demirkubuz's film, the conflict stems from the male protagonists' malevolent characters and is directly related to their choices. While Yeşilçam melodramas often conclude with happiness despite all the tragedies, there is no place reserved for happiness in Demirkubuz melodramas.

An example supporting this claim is the film "A Disaster of Love in Istanbul" (1922), one of Turkey's earliest melodramas, written and directed by Muhsin Ertuğrul. This film marks the beginning of a long-lasting tradition of melodramas in Turkish cinema. The film's plot is as follows: one of the main characters, Kemal, loses everything for a cunning woman, Mediha, who uses men for her own interests. Later, he sees Mediha with another man, Sadi, a married man with children from the village. Learning of this, Kemal becomes consumed by revenge and, after certain events, kills Mediha and her roommate. However, the murder is attributed to Sadi, who is imprisoned. Filled with remorse, Kemal decides to take the blame. Nevertheless, his act is not approved, and he commits suicide. Leaving behind a suicide note, he confesses to the crime and saves Sadi from prison. The film's main theme is the story of a life destroyed for a woman.

As seen, the story and themes of this film perfectly align with Demirkubuz's films. In "Destiny" and "Innocence," Demirkubuz also portrays lives destroyed for the sake of a woman and a single emotion.

The stories of Kemal and Bekir largely coincide. Both characters fall in love with a woman and ultimately lose their lives for her. As in all melodramas, the driving force behind all events is the emotion of love.

Although beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that in Demirkubuz's film "Fate" (2001), a loosely adapted version of Albert Camus's "The Stranger," the added story is exactly the same as the one in this film. In "Fate," the character Naim murders his wife and child, but the blame falls on Musa. After serving four years in prison, Naim writes a confession letter and commits suicide, leading to Musa's acquittal. The striking similarity between these two stories is quite noteworthy. In the midst of all these similarities, the way evil is portrayed creates a decisive difference in Demirkubuz melodramas, which will be elaborated on in detail below.

### 5. Yeşilçam to Demirkubuz: An Unchanging Tradition – Monologues

In both Yeşilçam melodramas and Demirkubuz films, tirades, as one of the indispensable narrative elements, are utilized to serve the same purpose. In Yeşilçam melodramas, there is always a climax, and at this peak moment, the emotional intensity of the film is elevated by a heroic tirade. For instance, in Osman Seden's 1966 film 'Sana Layık Değilim,' Sadri Alışık delivers an extensive tirade in the form of a one-person monologue, which constitutes the pinnacle moment of the film. In this tirade, Sadri Alışık conveys all the dramatic tension with a highly theatrical and emotionally charged performance. Due to limitations, only the introductory section of the tirade is presented below:

Those were the golden days; we were swift! No piracy; we owned all the hotels, the Galata quay. We put our stamp on every travel company. We got the best cuts. Believe me; it would sometimes reach 100 [liras] in a day. We fixed the façades first, you see, people who don't know us would think we're one of those high society Teomans, right? It was youth, madness; besides, we were bachelors. One day, they said Ali Efendi called me; he was my father's old friend and fellow officer. He knows and likes me, no one's better than you guys. They said his daughter Türkan has to urgently go to Ankara for an exam. I knew Türkan since we were kids. Look, how time flies. He said, 'She's in your care.' You know, you can't really say 'no' to a girl under your protection. So, I took her in the car, and she was gorgeous, really like the moon. We were flying on the way there, but on the way back, we were like turtles. It was like 30-40 kilometers, you know. She asked a few times why it took so long. I said, 'The road was bad, that's why.' I thought I was going to die if the road didn't end, man! Finally, the roads ended, all good. We arrived in Kasımpaşa, she shook my hand and said, 'Let's see each other again.' 'Thank you,' she said, 'I've never met such a sweet, good person like you.' I felt something inside me, like a bullet hitting my heart. Then she waved her hand. Damn it, if it weren't for manhood, I would cry! For 3-5 days, I couldn't come to my senses. My heart aches, man! No steering, rocky turns... Damn it, I see Türkan as a traffic officer, all of a sudden, what's happening? My eyes fill up for no reason. Can't eat, can't drink. Just crying out of nowhere... I'm dying, man!... (Seden, 1966)

As seen, in this film, Sadri Alışık's tirade narrates the whole story, and this scene represents the climax of the film in every aspect. The counterpart of Sadri Alışık's tirade can be found in Demirkubuz films, especially in 'Innocence.' The same situation applies in 'Innocence,' where Bekir's long tirade scene, where he narrates the story of the film, constitutes the peak moment of the film:

Long story, mixed. In Mevlanakapı, his father was a police officer. He was an alcoholic and sick, may he rest in peace, and he passed away early anyway. His mother was poor and miserable. Our salt was short, but my father did something. And there was Zagor. He was the son of our old house's tenant. His father was a filmmaker in Yeşilçam. There were smuggling, illegal trading, all kinds of paths for him. But he was a likable, handsome lad. He had fallen in love with ours. I was a good kid, fooling around in school back then. That's how we grew up. We went through all kinds of crap, and I waited for military service; four years left, three years left... Finally, it came, and we went. Everyone was waiting for this in our neighborhood; once he returned, they stuck to me, fixed the house, found a girl, dowry, and so on... We got engaged, and my father gave two taxis and a shop. I used to sell sofas in the

shop. One day, this bitch appeared. I'll never forget it; when I saw her, my heart sank; she had a printed skirt up to her knees, no socks, an open blouse, all messy... A real diamond, you know. She asked about the prices of some things, making fun of me. She got under my skin that day. Of course, I got obsessed with her, and the next day, an investigation... According to what they said, she had seduced everyone in the neighborhood, but she was interested in Zagor the most. Zagor was in jail at that time. One day, dressed up nicely; she passed by the shop. I followed her, and we ended up in Sağmalcılar; I felt something strange inside, and I understood the plan. She was going to visit Zagor, and I got weird, I even got jealous of the bastard. To cut it short, we got married to the other one, I had no choice, and around that time, Zagor was imprisoned, he got life imprisonment. One day, she suddenly came back to the neighborhood. Zagor was inside, the best of life imprisonments. One morning, I came to the shop, and she was sitting there. I couldn't recognize her at first, but when I did, I felt sick inside. Sick? No, I felt like I swallowed a screwdriver. I collapsed, got weak, and had a white face... But this time, she was a different beautiful bitch. Like the songs of that place. She got up like that, and started talking confidently, saying she needed money, a lot of money. She said she needed it to hire a lawyer for Zagor. She would pay me back later. We're tradespeople, you know, so we asked, 'How?' She said, 'I'll become a bitch if I have to, or I can be your mistress if you want.' Something settled in me, and I started crying, but not just crying! On that day, I truly believed in the bitch, and twenty years have passed since then... (Demirkubuz, 2006)

As seen, these two tirades resemble each other in both form and content. In terms of acting, the actors, Sadri Alışık and Haluk Bilginer deliver similar performances. The tirades found in Demirkubuz films are influenced by the previous tirade tradition of Yeşilçam. The fact that these tirades are the main pillars of the films represents the melodramatic aspect of the films. On the other hand, although these two tirades are similar in many other aspects, the stories they tell differ in terms of their approach to evil. While Osman Seden's melodrama ends with the reunion of Osman and Türkan with a happy ending, in Demirkubuz's melodramas, all the central figures Uğur, Bekir, Zagor die. Similarly, while Osman Seden's melodrama has only one villain figure, and some unfortunate events create unhappiness that can be compensated for, the Uğur, Bekir, Zagor in Demirkubuz's melodramas are inherently dark, they make all their choices in favor of evil, and they are inherently coded as destined for evil. Yeşilçam melodramas often feature a more optimistic resolution, Demirkubuz melodramas incorporate darker elements and tragic outcomes for main characters Uğur, Bekir, and Zagor. This perspective on human nature and destiny, which will be discussed in more detail below, distinguishes Demirkubuz melodramas from Yeşilçam melodramas.

#### **6. The distinguishing feature of Demirkubuz melodramas: The evil is ontological!**

As seen, the most significant difference between Demirkubuz's melodramas and classic Yeşilçam melodramas is that Demirkubuz's melodramas are malevolent melodramas. In classic Yeşilçam melodramas, good characters are generally dominant, or good and evil characters are balanced. The course of the films always leans towards goodness. However, in Demirkubuz's films, evil prevails, and there are hardly any instances of good characters. Uğur and Zagor represent pure evil. They have deliberately and willingly chosen evil. Zagor's continuous criminal acts stem from his passion for evil. Uğur's misery is the result of the malevolent world he has constructed for himself. Bekir, by choosing to be part of this dark world and opting for a share of evil, becomes a villain by neglecting his responsibilities towards his parents, wife, and child in pursuit of a love that the language of the film also condemns. The plague-like thing he sells is the outcome of his own actions. Bekir's parents are evil because they gave Bekir the right to disregard them, his wife, and his child in this way, or they are not good enough to be just. In Uğur's family, things are even more complicated. Uğur's father is in a neutral position because he is bedridden and cannot exercise the will of goodness or evil. His mother, on the other hand, engages in affairs with different men, disregarding all the norms of the family and siding with evil. Uğur's younger brother also lacks the will of good and evil. The character Cevat in the film has a wretched soul and engages in an affair

with a bedridden husband's wife. When the films are thoroughly examined, it becomes evident that there is no one displaying the will in favor of goodness.

Therefore, Demirkubuz's melodrama is a melodrama that unfolds entirely within the circle of evil, where goodness is entirely excluded. For this reason, just as Abisel rightly expressed in describing Yeşilçam melodramas, in these films, conflicts, complexities, or contradictions miraculously come to an end, and lovers are reunited, and villains receive their punishment (1994, p. 76); in Demirkubuz melodramas, such happy endings are never encountered. The hopeful and bright narrative of Yeşilçam melodramas is never seen in these films. Pessimism constitutes the backbone of emotional intensity. In fact, what sets Demirkubuz melodramas apart and places them in a distinct position is this pessimism and malevolence. While the source of suffering in Yeşilçam melodramas may have some rational reason behind the actions, in Demirkubuz melodramas, evil is instinctive and inherent in human nature, not based on any reasonable cause. While unhappiness in Yeşilçam melodramas is the result of unfortunate events coming together or a character's erroneous choice, usually one they will later regret, in Demirkubuz melodramas, evil is a conscious choice of characters and is constantly repeated in favor of malevolence due to their dark natures. This situation directly affects Demirkubuz's perspective on love.

### 7. The Nucleus of Love: Sexuality

Examining the central theme of love in Demirkubuz's films reveals intriguing results. Throughout the films, all expressions of love, from its inception to its continuation, evoke associations with sexuality. Sexuality lies at the core and foundation of love. Love, in a way, turns into a blockage when it remains unfulfilled, eventually growing into a turmoil that takes one's life hostage. From a Freudian perspective, love is the energy derived from an unresolved fixation on unfulfilled sexuality, which then directs one's life.

This phenomenon becomes evident at several points in the films. In the movie "Destiny," Bekir attempts an unsuccessful rape on Uğur. This act exposes the underlying dynamic of Bekir's love, which is driven by a sexual impulse. Despite chasing after Uğur for twenty years, Bekir fails to experience any sexual intimacy with him, leading to a blockage in his emotions. As evident from the cited passage from the movie "Innocence," Bekir's emotions towards Uğur are entirely associated with sexuality. The description of Uğur, "a skirt up to the knees, no socks, an open blouse, hair..." evokes a sexual attraction in Bekir, prompting him to pursue Uğur with such passion. Additionally, the phrase "I can't even touch my own [wife]" proves Bekir's emotional coldness towards his spouse, a consequence of the love he feels for Uğur. This further confirms that sexuality is the fundamental basis of his affection.

This aspect is also evident in the fabricated fantasy narrative created by Bekir in the movie "Destiny" as an alternative to the real story. This story, which is entirely contradictory to reality, is narrated by Bekir as follows:

At that time, I used to hang out at the shop; the location of Şükran Market was ours. We sold carpets, sofas, and such. One day, I dozed off in the shop. I woke up to find that wretch in front of me, standing there like a piece of candy. A skirt up to her knees, no socks, a lovely blouse, beautiful hair, you get the picture. She asked about the prices of this and that, then started teasing me. I didn't say anything. 'Are you married? Do you have a girlfriend?' she asked, trying to be flirty, but I didn't respond. Of course, we were gentlemen back then, but being a gentleman has its limits, right? I said to myself, 'Why not?' and tried to flirt with her. She refused. 'Is that so?' 'Yes, it is.' I took her to the office and forced myself on her. I was shouting, 'Give it to me, God, give it to me! Can you take it or not?' The more she screamed, the more I became Kara Murat. The more she screamed, the more I became Kara Murat. (Demirkubuz, 2006)

It is evident that this fabricated and unfulfilled story reflects Bekir's primary objective in his fantasy world. Since this story did not unfold as planned, Bekir's life becomes miserable. He remains obsessed with unfulfilled fantasies. This alternative narrative is a form of daydream for Bekir, and its unfulfillment

leads to a psychological breakdown in his life. If the script had taken this fantasy route, Bekir would not have fallen in love with Uğur, and the story would have taken a completely different turn. Bekir's inability to possess Uğur sexually results in a colossal emotional crisis that becomes the foundation of his life. Sometimes an obsession can overpower all other forces in life, and this is precisely what occurs here. Furthermore, in another scene from the movie "Innocence," a dialogue takes place between Bekir and Uğur:

Bekir: Leave me alone! Let me go! Leave me! Leave me alone! You've ruined my life! You destroyed me! You buried me! You've consumed my life! Come here! You give yourself to others, but not to me? Step back, leave me! Are we nothing here? You'll give it to others, so give it to me too! Give it to me! Enough! (Demirkubuz, 1997)

In this dialogue, it becomes evident that Bekir's only desire from Uğur is sexual intimacy. Despite Uğur engaging in sexual relations with many other men, he denies Bekir the same opportunity. Most likely, Uğur's granting of Bekir's request for sexual fulfillment would signify the end of Bekir's libidinal energy and, consequently, the end of his love. Therefore, Bekir remains in a state of sexual dissatisfaction, persistently chasing after Uğur. While classical Yeşilçam melodramas often depict love as a sacred and unattainable emotion, Demirkubuz places unfulfilled sexuality at the forefront of his characters' emotions.

In light of this, it is essential to note that Demirkubuz rarely employs music thematically in his films to enhance the sanctity of love, a common practice in classical Yeşilçam melodramas. Music is seldom used in his films to create or emphasize emotional intensity. Instead, he relies more on the use of posters and visuals. In the movie "Innocence," for instance, there are portraits of Yılmaz Güney and Müslüm Gürses on the wall. In Yusuf's room, there is an album poster of Orhan Gencebay's "You Are Not Alone." The emotional intensity in the films is enhanced through such elements. Demirkubuz's choice not to use music thematically emphasizes the core of his films, which revolves around the malevolent nature of human beings and the support they receive from malevolent fate.

### **8. Fate is the Architect of Evil!**

The most distinctive feature that sets apart "Innocence" and "Destiny" from classic Yeşilçam melodramas is their remarkably pessimistic perception of the world. These films are immersed in misery, adultery, evil, prostitution, alcohol, and all sorts of wickedness, with no trace of goodness. Love is not only the source of evil, but the universe itself is inherently wicked. In fact, the primary evil in the films does not stem from love; rather, the world itself is a dark place, and love is a partaker in this malevolence. The films portray everything as evil. Even noble emotions like parenthood and living an organized life are depicted as malevolent. The streets are filled with wickedness, and homes are full of unhappiness and misery. Uğur has a fight with his mother, and Uğur's mother is someone else's mistress. Uğur's brother and mother fall victim to rape by his father's friends. The word "whore" is used more than 50 times, and the word "faggot" is used about 10 times in these films. This explicit use of vulgar language sets these films apart from Yeşilçam melodramas, which typically refrain from such coarse language, and even the worst characters are portrayed as evil due to their misguided choices.

In these two films by Demirkubuz, there are around 5 murders, 5 cases of assault, about 5 deaths, 1 rape, and an attempted rape. There is never a natural death. There is not a single content and peaceful person in the films. The essence of this pessimistic understanding in the films also has its roots in the director's pessimistic view of life. Demirkubuz expresses his perspective on this matter with the following statements:

I have a malevolent side; I try to find evil even in all good things. I didn't like how 'Innocence' was perceived. Although it is a dark film, people perceived it as a film with hope. They read the film again, but they read it detached from the sense of reality... I am someone who seeks evil in everything and has strange doubts. I decided to question this. Then they started expecting more films like 'Innocence'

from me. While making that film, I didn't think about poverty, love, or class. It was entirely about instincts."

...

Poverty is more than just an unwanted and involuntarily experienced situation for many; it is a form of existence yearned for with passion."

...

Despite all ideals, goods, beauty, truth, you constantly get used to and accept something worse than what you have. Damn it, life, I will f\*\*\* you!

...

Pain is present in everything. All my films revolve around this theme. Dostoyevsky has repeatedly written the same novel by blending pain in different situations and different characters. I, too, try to make the same film over and over again each time. Changing the subject would be opportunistic; it would be something done for political or material reasons." (Demirkubuz, 2019)

As these statements reveal, Demirkubuz's perception of life is profoundly negative, accepting life as a wicked and negative aspect. This perception aligns precisely with the understanding in his films. This pessimism is evident in a scene from "Destiny," where Uğur refuses to marry Bekir despite his insistence and chooses to marry someone else, revealing this view on human nature:

Bekir: Let's go back to Istanbul.

Uğur: What will happen if we go back?

Bekir: I'll make amends with Father, get things back on track. We can live together. If you want, we can get married. Or I can rent an apartment for you. We can take your mother and brother with us; I'll take care of you all. You can visit Zagor too. At least this misery will end, and we can be a little happy.

Uğur: Bekir. I don't like what you're saying. I also believed in your sincerity. I wouldn't have shown it, but it would've been the same with Bekir. I would have liked him being jealous and going insane secretly. People are such filthy creatures! (Demirkubuz, 2006)

The approach of the film towards humanity is centered around this expression: "People are such filthy creatures!" This notion forms the foundation of these films. This is why Demirkubuz's characters are entirely engulfed in darkness, and the source of their darkness is blamed on human nature and fate. However, this raises another problem. Is all evil the act of fate and nature?

### 9. Is Fate the Real Culprit?

As we mentioned, in films, all evil is attributed to fate by the language of the films, but this proposition is open to questioning. Therefore, as also pointed out by Aksoy, in Demirkubuz's films, evil is not a defect but a genuine element in its own right (İnanoğlu, 1972). However, the idea put forth by the film's language that "fate is the perpetrator of evil" cannot be adequately supported by the characters and the plot. When we examine the layered narration of the films, it is seen that the evil chosen voluntarily by the characters is what is presented. In such a way, evil is not an inevitable thing; it is partially possible for the characters to avoid it through simple and willful choices. Here, the blame for surrendering to the impulse arising from the malevolent nature of human beings is attributed to fate, as if individuals deliberately chose evil instead of opting for goodness and this is labeled as fate. The evil assumed to be inherent in the character is dismissed as fate and not thoroughly examined. Here, the film "Destiny" comes to mind as well.

In addition to naming his film "Destiny," Demirkubuz also puts the name "Fate" (Yazgı) on the adaptation of Albert Camus's "The Stranger," revealing the fixation and prejudiced notion of fate. In the film "Destiny," the expression of fate is mentioned twice, and fate is shown as the culprit behind everything. One of the relevant dialogues is as follows:

Bekir: Do you remember Hakan? The son of Uncle Zühtü, the shoemaker.

Uğur: How could I forget? He was studying medicine; he must have become a doctor by now.

Bekir: He's dead too.

Uğur: No way! Why?

Bekir: Traffic accident. I guess he was going on vacation with his friends.

Uğur: He was so young, he was our age.

Bekir: Well, he was about a year and a half younger than me.

Uğur: Wow, Hakan. It's destiny.

Bekir: Yes, destiny.

...

Uğur: What should I say to you now?

Bekir: Don't say anything. Just let me be alone. Look, I promise I won't interfere with anything this time.

Uğur: We've tried how many times, you know that. How can I believe you?

Bekir: I promise, if I don't stop, you can kick me out... Understand now. There's no other way. It's all written, calculated, done. I'm ready for anything, I'm telling you. Say that you're doing good, say that you're doing good deeds. Everyone has something they believe in in this fucking life. Mine is you, what can I do? Last night the child was sick. The medicine had run out, so I went out to buy it. We were desperately searching for a pharmacy open at night. Suddenly, I felt a pang inside me. I missed you so much. On my way back, I saw a tavern. I only remember going inside. And I remember throwing myself into raki. At least four cigars worth afterward. Then I opened my eyes, snowy mountains were passing by in front of me. I opened my eyes again, there was a child next to me, saying, "Wake up, we've arrived in Kars." I got off the bus, started walking. I said, "My God, where am I? What is this place?" Then I barely found this place. I stood in front of the door and thought. I said, "Bekir, this door is the gate to the afterlife... this is the Sirat Bridge. If you cross it again, you can never come back. Think well," I said. I thought, I thought... but it didn't work, I couldn't come back. Then I said to myself, "My son, you will endure this. There is no use rebelling! This is the punishment, my son, this is the punishment. Whom does the judge break his pen for, have you ever thought about it? Whom do they whip with a falaka? Whom do they starve to death, those sons of bitches? Whom shoots a bullet into their brain without blinking an eye? Who just stands like sheep to be slaughtered? The bastards who sell their lives for a pittance for their miserable order? Tell me, who?" (Demirkubuz, 1997)

As seen here, the role of fate is considered equal to Bekir's voluntary journey due to a traffic accident. The claim that Bekir's choice is fate is conveyed, presented just like a traffic accident. This situation is also evident in Yusuf's uncle's story, as examined from another perspective above.

Again, here, Yusuf's uncle accepts the earthquake as fate while rebelling against his wife's malevolent behavior. However, the director equalizes these two events and declares fate as the culprit for both. Attributing the blame to fate in a wholesale manner and thereby freeing humans from evil is a metaphorical approach. This situation cannot be confirmed as, contrary to the assertion in melodramas, the characters in "Fate and Innocence" are not convincingly presented as victims; they pay the consequences of their own actions as a result of their own weaknesses. Despite the director's efforts to present fate as the perpetrator in order to justify his own beliefs, the idea of fate as a perpetrator remains forced and ineffective, and consequently, it is not embraced by the Turkish audience and fails to succeed at the box office.

These two films, experiencing significant failure at the box office, also set themselves apart from Yeşilçam melodramas in this way. Unlike Yeşilçam melodramas, which have achieved great success at the box office, including the examples mentioned above, these films did not resonate well with the audience. Perhaps, unlike Demirkubuz, the audience believes in the notion of evil portrayed in Yeşilçam melodramas. According to this perspective, although there may be unfortunate events and wrong decisions that lead to significant consequences, overall, goodness prevails, and ultimately, life is a beautiful.

## 10. Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the findings and claims that we have put forward above based on previous studies. There are many studies on Demirkubuz cinema, each focusing on a different aspect of it.

However, as Suner (2006) pointed out and this study also agreed, Demirkubuz employs the narrative form of melodrama, although he is more of an art cinema director. Suner reveals the commonalities between Demirkubuz's films and the general melodrama genre and Yeşilçam melodrama, except for the difference that we have presented in our study. Accordingly, the features inherited from the melodramatic style are the repetitive and closed narrative structures, the stories shaped by inward rather than outward action, the stagnation and cycle that form the structure of the story, the extremes and emotions that are at the core of the stories, and the elements of coincidence that appear in all films. As also mentioned above, monologues are central elements of the narrative in Demirkubuz cinema, as Suner also observed. In almost all films, the flow of events is interrupted by a monologue, usually a long one, at some point. These monologues are not a means of conveying past events, but a performance of the present day in which the character makes a judgment of the past, according to Suner's (2006) expression. In this respect, monologues are a kind of self-consciousness purge. All researchers largely agree on these points. This study has no objection to them and shares the same views. In this sense, there is a consensus that Demirkubuz continues the Yeşilçam melodrama tradition. However, these studies did not focus on the difference between Yeşilçam melodrama and Demirkubuz melodrama. They also misinterpreted the nature of the evil that would emerge from this focus.

For example, Suner (2006) categorizes the films *Innocence* and *The Third Page* as black melodrama. According to this, the central characters of the films are men who try to solve the mystery of a mysterious and dangerous woman while preparing their own destruction. Thus, the ambitious female characters direct the films, while the genre characteristics of melodrama are used excessively. However, when the plot and script of the films are examined in detail, it is seen that the first ones to be destroyed are women. The first victim of the film *Innocence*, the first person who destroyed himself, is Uğur. What Suner calls mystery is Uğur's obsession, which has almost turned into a kind of belief in evil. If this is to be called a mystery, *Zagor* has more of it. As Bekir follows Uğur, Uğur follows *Zagor*, who constantly commits crimes and wanders from prison to prison.

Similarly, according to Güler's (2012) study, fantasy has a central role in Demirkubuz cinema. Demirkubuz's characters show how they desire women through fantasy. This leads to an impossible relationship. In Demirkubuz cinema, women are the product of male fantasy, in this context, women do not exist in a concrete sense. Women are objects of male desires. Women are presented as an impossible dream that is chased after. Men, on the other hand, remain as victims of the uncanny female figures that they cannot control even with violence. Güler's inferences also ignore the same network of relationships. Uğur chases after *Zagor* more than Bekir chases after Uğur. This does not allow for a sexist reading, but rather puts forward a questioning or a claim about the essence of human beings, regardless of whether they are male or female, and about the evil in this essence.

In this respect, as many others have also participated, according to Özhan's (2019) study, one of the important elements of the melodramatic imagination in Demirkubuz's films is the opposite poles, which manifest themselves as the clash of different emotional states such as alienation, loneliness, meaninglessness and love, human relations, the meaning of life. The most dominant emotion is a dense hopelessness. We can interpret this hopelessness as a kind of limbo. However, while limbo is in the middle of good and evil, heaven and hell, Demirkubuz's limbo is in the middle of hell itself. In this sense, it is worth thinking about Susam's (2015) claim that Demirkubuz cinema looks inward, rather than dealing with solutions and answers, and explores the depths. According to him, this cinema does not give answers, but only asks questions. These questions are related to the individual, not to the society. However, these questions are already answered questions about the human potential for evil. In this respect, Demirkubuz cinema's approach to evil has been discussed in many studies.

According to Aksoy (2009), evil is not an incidental thing but an essential thing in Demirkubuz's films, and thus it presents itself as the only real element. The actions and consequences of the actions of the evil characters in the films manifest themselves as a value in themselves, apart from the characters. Suner also approaches the representation of evil in Demirkubuz cinema in a similar way. According to Suner's (2006) observation, Demirkubuz's characters in all his films are built around characters who feel trapped and stuck in a deadlock. These characters struggle helplessly in the conditions of the world that surrounds

them and never find a way out, no matter what they do, and return to where they started. However, what is striking is that this helplessness arises not from external conditions, but from the imposition of the characters' inner worlds. As Pay (Pay & Afat, 2009) also stated, these characters are scattered human beings, living in poverty in a universe without shelter or roof. According to Selvi's (2013) study, Demirkubuz addresses the dark aspects of human beings in a way that corresponds to Freud's unconscious. In this respect, crime and evil are constructed as a constitutive element in Demirkubuz's films. According to Selvi, the people and the evil attributed to them are presented as extraordinary.

According to the conclusion reached by Işıklar (2017) in his study, Demirkubuz cinema has a nihilistic essence, and the characters constantly repeat a cycle based on meaninglessness, worthlessness and passivity. Existential distress, hopelessness, inner emptiness are the characteristics that determine all the characters. While agreeing with all these interpretations, we have to add the claim that this study takes as its center and differs from them, that Demirkubuz cinema's characters are conditioned to evil unlike the characters in real life.

In this respect, Kabil (2009), who tries to combine this individual evil in Demirkubuz cinema with the social one, makes a hasty interpretation. Indeed, according to him, the source of individual evil is social evil. However, according to Maktav's more accurate observation (2001), Demirkubuz depicts the poor of Turkey like Yılmaz Güney, but Demirkubuz's poor are introverted, distant from the idea of rebellion. To complete what Maktav left out, Demirkubuz's characters do not think of rebelling because they have chosen the situation they are in. Even if life has been very generous to them, as in Bekir's case, even if they have no material problems, they have voluntarily consented to evil and even acted for evil. In this respect, Demirkubuz's coding of the characters' evil choices as fate also covers up the evil caused by class inequality, and suggests that evil is instinctive and a kind of curse. This prevents looking at society in a realistic way, and ignores that coping with evil is actually to eliminate class inequality and meet the needs of society.

In this context, it can be said that Demirkubuz's characters are nihilistic, angry at the world, and the films focus on inner conflicts, as Pösteki (2012) also stated. Saydam (2009) takes this interpretation further and argues that Demirkubuz's characters try to make sense of human beings in the void that arises from the threat of living individuals in society and the disconnection between tradition and today. However, it can be accepted that Demirkubuz cinema presents a dense mixture of pain, resentment, defeat and indifference, nihilism, rather than a search for meaning, as Kabil also pointed out (2009). For, as Suner (2006) also described, Demirkubuz's film characters are not active subjects who have the will to choose, decide, act and direct events, but rather negative subjects who erase themselves and are directed by events. However, what Suner describes as a passive subject is actually a subject who chooses to be passive, who acts for his own destruction in a way.

As Atam (2011) also stated when describing the characters in *Innocence*, these characters can be said to be completely aimless people who live in a dominant communicationlessness and hopelessness, completely detached from the production and struggle conditions of life, having nothing to hold on to in life. Suner (2006) also agrees with the same comment and gives Yusuf's character in *Innocence* as an example. Yusuf's passive surrender has reached the point where he is even reluctant to leave prison. Gürle (2012) also confirms this comment by saying that Yusuf lives his life in a passivity that will deny his own existence and that he is one of those who miss life. Similarly, the film *Destiny* is also, according to Atam's (2011) observation, essentially a story of a pursuit of a passion, a ruin of a life, a self-consumption, an obsession. What all these comments leave out along with their correct aspects is that this passivity is a passivity that requires excessive effort and action. As examined through the characters of *Innocence* and *Destiny* films in this study, Demirkubuz's film characters choose not the easy one, but the hard one, for example, Bekir chooses not the comfortable life, the happy home, the house, the children that his father prepared for him, but Uğur, stabbing, migration, humiliation. Looking at it, if Bekir's passivity was him letting himself go with the flow of life, he should have chosen the life that his father offered and advised him. However, Bekir chooses the hard and destructive way instead of a kind of evil desire. In this sense, although the language of the film calls it fate, Bekir, Uğur, Zagar and the others always choose the hard evil, not the easy good, and show a strong will and action at this point.

Thus, as Susam (2015) also stated, evil emerges as the counterpart of the inner meaning, which is one of the three main features of the auteur theory, in Demirkubuz. This is confirmed by looking at the topics of evil, fate and defeat that Demirkubuz based on in his subject choices. The founding basis of Demirkubuz cinema is the evil that he prejudicially accepts as existing in the essence of human beings.

Susam (2015) also argues that a nihilistic perspective dominates in Demirkubuz cinema. According to this, the world is a purposeless and inconsequential place, which leads to nothingness and absurdity. The natural consequence of this is the floating of existence in the void. In this sense, there is no salvation in any way. There is no external intervention that will disrupt the inner deep and dark processes of the characters. In addition to Susam's claim, we can say that Demirkubuz presents this introverted state of defeat, accepted grief as a kind of ritual, worship or sanctification. All emotional states such as inner constriction, boredom, nausea also accompany this sanctification, this ritual. In this sense, Demirkubuz cinema can be accepted as a kind of praise for the lives wasted for nothingness.

For this, as Susam (2015) determined, the potential evil in human beings is Demirkubuz's main interest. He focuses on this topic obsessively. This potential surpasses all other potentials and becomes the essence of human existence. In this sense, rather than the evil that is ready to sprout inside the human being, as Susam stated, we can talk about the evil that has completely filled the human being and is only restrained by social laws. In this sense, according to Demirkubuz cinema, human beings are ontologically evil and the melodrama is created by the human desire to be good despite this evil. In this sense, Demirkubuz has inverted the Yeşilçam melodrama. In Yeşilçam melodrama, evil emerges because unlucky, unfortunate things happen to good people, while in Demirkubuz melodrama, evil people, like Uğur and Bekir, deliberately choose evil even though they have the opportunity to choose good, and they do not mourn for the goodness they leave behind, but sanctify their choice. There is a deliberate missing, a kind of resistance to the meaninglessness of life with evil. Therefore, in Demirkubuz melodramas, as seen in the examples of *Innocence* and *Fate*, instead of characters who try to compensate for the lost opportunities of goodness or regret them, there are characters who constantly choose evil, who prefer the worst moment of evil to the good. In this sense, fate, which is seen as the cause of evil, is only the name that the characters give to their evil desire. According to Susam's (2015) expression, in Demirkubuz cinema, human beings are nothing thrown into the world, and Demirkubuz's characters, contrary to Susam's claim that the characters are seduced by evil, choose evil consciously, willingly, and take revenge from this nothingness. This revenge is also a kind of revenge for God's not preventing them from evil, and moreover, it can be said that it is actually a prayer in this direction. Since God exists, why does he not reach out to his servant who constantly does evil to himself in the midst of nothingness? Demirkubuz keeps this question constantly up to date through his characters. But he tempts his characters with a great passion, usually love, that will lead them to destruction, and no other emotion can prevent them from destruction. In fact, this destruction can also be considered as a kind of purification, self-torture and reference to the religious essence. Demirkubuz's characters try to reach transcendence through evil. But they wake up when they find themselves in a state of ecstasy at the bottom of a bottomless abyss in ruins. This can also be read as their choice to be characters who are struck and thrown away by the wind of transcendence with great emotions, rather than being helpless and unenlightened small people who are caught up in the ordinary flow of life.

## 11. Conclusion

Zeki Demirkubuz's films "*Fate*" and "*Innocence*" are rooted in the tradition of Turkish melodrama, but what sets them apart is the excessive pessimism and malevolence portrayed in these films. Additionally, the value attributed to sexuality is deeper and more emphasized in these works. Despite having all the characteristics of melodrama, these two films can be considered representatives of the old melodrama tradition in New Turkish Cinema. The one-dimensional nature of the characters, the portrayal of love, and the clear distinction between good and evil support this notion.

However, the claim presented in these films that human wickedness originates from fate is not substantiated by their plotlines. The characters consistently choose evil over good, which they present as the result of fate. The source of evil in the films is not fate, but rather the characters' inclination towards

it. Demirkubuz's attempt to place destiny on the defendant's seat is hindered both by the melodramatic language he chose and his efforts to impose a preconceived judgment onto the characters. As a result, the true depth of the characters is not fully revealed, and the overt message the film aims to convey is contradicted by its layered narrative.

While the film's language attributes the source of evil to fate, the characters' actions make them the true originators of evil. When viewed in its entirety, Demirkubuz's film universe leaves no chance for characters to be good; the world is constructed entirely of wickedness. There is a path leading from everything to evil, and Demirkubuz's characters always follow that path. Despite trying to place the blame on fate, it is actually an intentional choice. Thus, Demirkubuz presents his prejudice about human existence through the characters' choices, labeling it as fate.

However, as detailed above, the mismatch between the defendant and the culprit causes the films to stumble in terms of story, message, and language. The fact that Demirkubuz's films have achieved relatively low box office success can also be attributed to this. The characters he creates based on the assumption of human malevolence go beyond being convincing by challenging reality. On one hand, they eliminate all possibilities of identification with the audience, and on the other hand, they remove the story from a plausible world and transport it into a fictional and contrived realm of evil, lacking persuasiveness. In this context, it can be argued that Demirkubuz's cinema is attributed to the assumed malevolence in human nature.

In conclusion, Zeki Demirkubuz's films "Fate" and "Innocence" belong to the Turkish melodrama tradition with their emphasis on love and character portrayal. However, the excessive pessimism and portrayal of malevolence distinguish them from classical Yeşilçam melodramas. While the films attempt to attribute human wickedness to fate, the characters' deliberate choices reveal that evil stems from their own volition. This discordance between the films' message and narrative weakens their overall impact. Demirkubuz's depiction of characters, driven by assumed malevolence, challenges realism and hinders audience identification. As a result, these films achieve limited commercial success, highlighting the need for a more nuanced portrayal of human nature to resonate with a wider audience.

#### **Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı / Conflict of Interest**

Çalışmada herhangi bir kurum veya kişi ile çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.  
There is no conflict of interest with any institution or person in the study.

#### **İntihal Politikası Beyanı / Plagiarism Policy**

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Bu çalışmada Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi kapsamında belirtilen kurallara uyulmuştur.  
In this study, the rules specified within the scope of the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive were followed.

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