



Understanding masculinity in Turkey through the films of male auteur directors

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Abstract

This study focuses the representation of male characters in the films of contemporary male auteur directors in Turkey. *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 2011), *Underground* (Demirkubuz, 2012), and *Big World* (Erdem, 2016) are explored using sociological film analysis. Unlike mainstream cinema, the protagonists in these directors' films do not demonstrate hegemonic masculinity; the supporting male characters that do demonstrate hegemonic masculinity category are not white Turks. Arguably, the male characters embody a new hybrid hegemonic masculinity that combines various masculinities to reproduce patriarchy. It can be stated that "Others" in these films are negatively affected.

Keywords: gender; hegemonic masculinity; auteur cinema; male directors; patriarchy



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Introduction

Hegemonic masculinity refers to certain groups of men with power and wealth that legitimize and perpetuate the social relations supporting this dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel 2004). Hegemonic masculinity reinforces the state's power by subjugating and controlling women and other men (Donaldson, 1993: 655). Serpil Sancar (2009: 30) states that hegemonic masculinity characterizes “Young, urban, white, heterosexual, full-time businessman, reasonably religious, with active bodily performances that are capable of accomplishing at least one of the sporting branches.” Men who do not exhibit these characteristics are marginalized and ignored. However, as Carrigan et al. (2005: 156) emphasize, hegemony is not a jostling between existing groups but is part of the formation of these groups. In other words, it represents a historical situation in which power is won and held. The acquisition of this power in Turkish society requires several processes.

Connell (2005) argues that hegemonic masculinity remarks some males achieve superiority over females and other males in gender regimes. According to Connell, gender psychology commonly assumes that men and women have different characteristics; women and men differ by their character, appearance, interests, and abilities. This categorization encumbers additional responsibilities to different gender roles. While femininity and masculinity are seen as homogenous structures, different femininities and masculinities are not accepted by society.

Gramsci's *The Prison Notebooks* refers to hegemony in explaining how the state power along with the ruling class dominates to gain and retain control and shape society (Donaldson, 1993, Gürkan

et al., 2022). Connell (2005: 246) conceptualizes hegemony in the definition of hegemonic masculinity as the superiority gained in social relations. Hegemonic masculinity is a power consented to by society, not oppression. Connell (2005) emphasizes that different cultures and different periods of history construct gender differently. As Connell (2005) and Kimmel (2004) emphasize, the definition and perception of masculinity can vary from society to society. Cultural values and traditional roles are the main factors shaping the perception of masculinity. No one can speak of a single phenomenon of masculinity in society; it may change from period to period. Still, there is a dominant phenomenon of masculinity.

Connell (2005) conceptualizes masculinities through hegemonic masculinity by separating them into categories. These include (i) “complicit masculinity”, (ii) “subordinate masculinity”, and (iii) “marginalized masculinity”. Connell's classification shows that the masculinities benefiting most from patriarchy are changed, and alternative masculinities are constructed. Complicit masculinity, as stated by Connell, does not fit all the criteria of hegemonic masculinity. Such complicit and subordinate masculinities make specific references to patriarchy in daily life and cooperate with it. Connell emphasizes that complicit masculinity can become oppositional masculinity by refusing this unacceptable situation. Other types of masculinity include subordinate masculinity, based on sexual orientation or gender roles that differ from the dominant one; and marginalized masculinity, exhibiting less male dominance due to class, race and ethnicity (Connell, 2005: 149-157). While complicit masculinity is not as active as hegemonic masculinities in the construction of patriarchy, it also glorifies patriarchy to benefit from women's subordination and oppression. Unlike hegemonic masculinity, complicit masculinity benefits from the patriarchal share. The majority of the members in this group are men. On the other hand, “marginalized masculinities” are disadvantaged compared to complicit and hegemonic masculinity, and these men, in Connell's

theory, are minorities and sub-class men. Subordinate masculinity includes males with sexual orientations other than heterosexuality, who benefit least from the social privileges attending male sovereignty (Bozok, 2011).

Coles (2008) refers hegemonic masculinity and the concept of mosaic masculinities. Mosaic masculinities are formed when men choose some of hegemonic masculinity's values, rejecting and reformulating the rest of hegemonic masculinity. Mosaic masculinities are a strategy for men to ensure their masculine identities in daily life. With this strategy, men feel that their masculinity is acceptable in the context of hegemonic masculinity (Coles, 2008: 246).

This study examines the representation of hegemonic masculinity in the films of male auteur directors who are intellectual and artistic powers in contemporary Turkish cinema. The present study defends the films of male auteur directors in contemporary Turkish cinema that fully reflect and represent hegemonic masculinity types and represents those who cannot fully relate to hegemonic masculinity as injured and traumatized. For the purposes of the study, the contemporary period in Turkish cinema refers to the years after 2000.

Masculinity in Film

In film studies, masculinity is considered a dominant patriarchal social value related to marginalized groups. Studies of masculinity in film studies include research interpreting the patterns and masculinity/femininity categories in the cinematic representation of men (Cohen et al., 1993; Kirkham et al., 1993; Penley et al., 1993; Kirkham et al., 1995; Sharrett, 1999; Lehman, 2001; Powrie et al., 2004; Gabbard et al., 2008; Gürkan et al., 2017; Gürkan et al., 2021).

As scholarly studies of masculinity increase in the literature, there is a direct relationship between examination of representations of masculinity in cinema and these representations' identification processes. Tim Edwards (1990) argues that the history of masculinity studies, like feminist studies, can be analyzed in three waves. The first wave coincides with the second wave of feminist studies; here gender practices for men and women are addressed and discussions center on an ideal of masculinity. The second wave coincides with the mid-1980s and discussions of the idea that there is no single masculinity but different masculinities and that men are not always united as beneficiaries of the patriarchal system. Finally, the third wave coincides with the present day, when masculinity studies move into a well-developed and interdisciplinary field integrating literature, media, and culture.

While radical feminists and gay activists create many of the basic ideas of masculinity, concerns about the issue spread. Although the male-dominated ideology does not carry the same depictions in every national cinema, a common problem is eminent when looking at world cinema in general. Central to this is the reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity, which is observed in cultures where masculinity has a social dimension. Confusion occurs when masculinity reaches an impasse. Its dimensions on social life state that all men are bound to be a part of patriarchal, racist, and sexist practices within the broad social reality they represent. Men, who are subjected to many moral and material sanctions by not conforming to gender norms, mainly social exclusion, seek to prove their masculinity to avoid these sanctions. Theorists (Carrigan et al., 2005; Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Wilkins, 2009) argue that men need to 'prove their masculinity' to themselves and those surrounding them. Emphasizing that the crisis of masculinity does not end because this proof is usually not realized, benefits most from patriarchy are changed, and alternative masculinities are constructed.

Masculinity is defined in relation to culture, history, gender, representation, sexuality, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and others. The past two decades have witnessed many academic studies on masculinity in films. These studies cover discussions on issues ranging from the representation of men to ethnic and sexual identities. In the first quarter of the 1990s, Cohen et al. (1993) focused on representations of masculinity in classic and contemporary Hollywood films, reading masculinity through genre films, which are essential components of popular cinema. Kirkham et al.'s 1993 study discussed masculinity through sexuality and ethnicity through examples of representation in Hollywood and British and Indian cinema. Penley et al. (1993) used psychoanalytic and ideological film criticism methods to discuss masculinity issues in classical Hollywood films. Kirkham et al.'s 1995 study examined masculinity in contemporary Hollywood and European cinema from a feminist perspective. Sharrett (1999) later discussed masculinity with social structures with a postmodernist reading. Lehman (2001) used psychoanalysis and discussed concepts such as body and penis through masculinity and homosexuality. Powrie et al. (2004) discussed masculinity through fatherhood and social class issues using examples from Hollywood and European cinema. Gabbard et al. (2008) focused on male identity, friendship, sexuality, inter-racial relations, and parenting in film genres while critically looking at gender and masculinity issues and concentrating on cinematic representations.

Studies of masculinity in Turkish cinema are extensive. Özgür (2018), in her work, investigated how the representation of paternity was realized in the films made between 1960-2014 and how the representation codes of paternity worked. Oktan (2008) questioned the kinds of masculinity representations and whether these masculinities pointed to a masculinity crisis in the films after the 1990s. Birer (2019) argued that childhood identified with femininity and associated with irresponsibility / imagination equates to hegemonic masculinity, contending that the masculinity crisis, which has also been reflected in Turkish cinema since the 80s, represents the desire to return

to a child(ish) masculinity. Sökmen's *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil?* (2005) focuses on men's films in Turkish cinema, especially in the 1970s, shaping its conceptualization around two fundamental phenomena: (i) How Yeşilçam assumed a masculine identity in the 70s and (ii) how the figure of the Savior Hero can be understood concerning the fears of masculinity. *Bu Kabuslar Neden Cemil?* examines the states of Turkish masculinity through popular cinema. Meanwhile, Yücel (2014) examined the role of "hero" in the 2000s, the representation of masculinity and the different states of mythical masculinity exalted in conservative society. Finally, İri (2016) drew attention to the performativity of masculinity and pointed out that being a man is more than a matter of personality.

Masculinity in Turkey

As Barutçu (2013: 147) states, dominant gender norms vary from society to society. The standards of masculinity in one society may not be the same in another. Nevertheless, the perception of masculinity or femininity is not significantly different from society to society. Gender norms are fundamentally similar though perhaps diversified or limited by local motifs. What does not change is the affirmation and naturalization of male power, as Brittan argues in his book *Masculinity and Power* (1989: 3).

The five primary stages that a man goes through to reach dominant manhood in Turkish society are circumcision, sexuality, military service, having a job, and marriage. The man is expected to have children after the final stage, marriage. A man who has successfully lived through all these stages and has reached fatherhood is entitled to keep his hegemonic position (Selek, 2013; Barutçu, 2013; Kepekçi, 2012; Sancar, 2009; Leach, 1994). Masculinity in Turkey as in other

masculine cultures is shaped by cultural norms (Gürkan et al., 2021). With globalization, masculinities show similar characteristics and carry the traces of the culture they belong to.

The qualifiers for a man to reach dominant manhood in Western societies include heterosexuality, rational thought and behavior, emotional control, economic autonomy, and responsibility for family, (Alsop et al., 2002: 141). Masculinity in Turkey is not much different from that in Western societies. According to Özbay (2013), critical aspects of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Turkey are related to the large-scale political transformation the country has been undergoing. The masculinity inspired by Atatürk, inclining towards Western rationality, science, modernity and the Enlightenment and distant from the East and the religiosity and traditionalism, is in decline.

Socio-political changes framed hegemonic masculinity discourse in Turkey, and as global neoliberalism affects the country a power change is evident. Globally the Islamic masculinity prototype has been abandoned, and Muslim masculinities in Turkey have emerged as increasingly multi-faceted. Sabancı (2018) claims that Muslim men in Turkey have served the world's hegemonic gender order and states that Muslims who follow the secular way of life imitate local-hegemonic masculinity around political power at certain places.

Hegemonic masculinity has been challenged by the political changes and transformations experienced with the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP) government. The military was one of the most influential institutions on masculinity in Turkey before this party rose to power. Now it is not. Militarism, strengthened by masculine domination, became criticized openly in society. The conscientious objector phenomenon emerged. It was different more than the new heroism against militarism. Ironically, all this happened in a country that considers the military process to be one of the most critical stages of a young man's transition to manhood.

Methodology

This research uses sociological film analysis. Film sociology parses the structural moments of film and their impact on social structure and social order (Flicker, 2003; Faulstich, 1989; Gürkan, 2015). Feature films both offer complex access to social reality and construct social reality. Therefore, films offer a medium for socialization, deculturation and social integration. In this sense, the depiction of male characters in the films of auteur directors is not the same as the stereotype of mainstream films. While the male characters in popular cinema are hegemonic, the auteur directors' male characters are complicit and subordinate.

This study identifies what is associated with masculinity and what should not be associated with masculinity through the discourse of the films of Turkish male auteur directors, examining the representation of masculinities and patriarchal discourse in them. Discourse elements include the social organization and control of linguistic variation (Fairclough, 2003: 24). According to Foucault, discourse is a concept related to desire and power and not only reveals desire but also identifies the object of desire. Furthermore, discourse is not only what explains fights or systems of oppression, but also it is the power to be seized (Foucault, 1987: 24). Therefore, discourse communicates and produces power and what is related to the state of power. In this context, social relations and the processes of thinking, understanding and interpretation in social relations can be understood through social cognition (Djik, 1993: 257). Discourse analysis examines the dialectical relationship between discourse and other social practices, helping to reveal discursive practices in film narratives, to interpret the text in this context and to show social practices.

Auteur films are an excellent documentation of changes in social attitudes. It can be claimed that the representations of masculinity in mainstream films are clichés. In these representations

(Gürkan et al., 2021) men are coded as fearless beings who do not hesitate to sacrifice themselves for their family and nation. They are strong. They are leaders and they protect their women. As Aydon Edwards (2015) states, masculinity reflects the traditional values of society and is the basis of modern society's self-determination.

The study answers the following research questions:

RQ1: Are those who are outside hegemonic masculinity negatively affected?

RQ2: While the man is in the center, do women and others occupy peripheral positions in these films?

RQ3: How are male characters portrayed in the films of Turkish male auteur directors?

This study examines contemporary Turkish auteur filmmakers Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Zeki Demirkubuz and Reha Erdem, looking specifically at *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia (Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da)* (2011), *Underground (Yeraltı)* (2012) and *Big World (Koca Dünya)* (2016). These films are selected to reveal similarities and differences in depictions of society, the period. Turkish cinema does not have as long a history as its western counterparts (Akser, 2013: 165), and Turkish cinema has been influenced by Hollywood (Akser, 2013; Akser & Durak-Akser, 2017). For this reason, cinema is a controversial issue in Turkey. Through the films examined in this study it is possible to interpret the changes in Anatolian cinema as art and as mass media. Wollen (1972), who approaches cinema from a structuralist perspective, states that the director's

influence on the film is limited, arguing that film should be evaluated based on visual meaning, tempo, repetitive patterns, and thematic concerns. Language does not exist in auteur directors' films, but is influenced by social, historical, political, and cultural elements, unlike in mainstream cinema.¹

Findings and Discussion

Based on sociological film analysis, this study discusses how male characters, masculinities and patriarchal discourse are represented in the films of contemporary male auteur directors in Turkey. Masculinities in the three films are constructed on a traditional reference to the national masculine identity. In exploring the research questions, the following themes are discussed:

(i) Hegemonic Masculinity

Once Upon a Time in Anatolia begins with a hazy appearance of three men chatting accompanied by alcohol in a car. Unclear dialogues give the impression that a scene will start between this trio. We see three cars crossing barren land. This is the first reflection of the hierarchical order, the cars move to protect social order. The order of the cars indicates the social order within the official organs of the state; the prosecutor is in the front, the police in the back, and the gendarmerie at the rear. A message of hierarchy is conveyed through this scene. Throughout the film, these characters search for a buried body. The dialogues emphasize the pain created by the hierarchy, the fears,

internal conflicts and past suffering that this hierarchy draws out in their lives. This scene reveals the diversity and complexity of masculinities. It also addresses the fact that there can be different masculinities, just there are different hierarchical positions. Finally, this scene also allows us to understand the intersecting and various forms of discrimination, as Dowd (2010: 416) points out. Aiming to transform rather than incite a gender struggle, it calls attention to areas where the dominant gender is harmed outside its benefits.

Ceylan's film *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* reveals not only the social situation of Anatolia, but also the fundamental conflict between masculinities. The film frames the world of bureaucratic men; women are not visible but portrayed as beautiful and guilty. Power conflicts between male characters occurs following social acceptance, hegemonic masculinity, hierarchy, and bureaucracy. While every character crushes the other, every character is also crushed by another more powerful character. According to Connell (2005: 96), we can define authority as legitimate power. The structure of power-hosting gender is located in the central axis of the relationship between authority and masculinity. However, in the second axis, the denial of the authority of some groups of men, or more generally, the establishment of a hierarchy of authority within the basic gender categories, creates a complex and contradictory environment. At this point, the film's masculinity frame demonstrates this hierarchical authority.

Once Upon Time in Anatolia embraces the male world, and the struggle for power in this world is evident. Various scenes in the film demonstrate this struggle. Kenan (Fırat Tanış), drunk at the time of the killing, he cannot find where he buried the victim, especially as the investigation is taking place in the dark of night. Naci the Commissioner asks Kenan where the body is buried but Kenan cannot give a clear answer. This irritates Naci, who yells at Kenan and beats him. Yet Naci meanwhile cannot withstand the prosecutor's power. On the road, Naci criticizes and gossips about

the prosecutor. Arap Ali the driver attempts to assert superiority over Tevfik, another driver, and lead by claiming that he knows the roads better. While the gendarmerie commander yells at his soldier, the prosecutor is trying to win Nusret's favor. These scenes, which convey hierarchical and bureaucratic order, reflect power in the male world.

As Demetriou (2001: 337-338) points out, at this point hegemonic masculinity is the construction of a gendered practice of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and their control over women. Such masculinity can be defined as a hegemony against both "women" and "submasculinities". In Ceylan's film, this theme is conveyed through Nusret the Prosecutor, who exerts superiority over other male and female characters. He represents the power of state authority and is the most prominent character for hegemonic masculinity in the film. Power and the strength are in his hands, yet throughout the film he talks to the doctor about his wife's death and the pain he experiences in coping with this loss. Nusret displays weakness as well as hegemonic masculinity. In other words, Nusret the commissioner produces patriarchy in some way. It is possible to say that this situation refers to a new hegemonic masculinity, a hybrid that unites various masculinities (e.g., complicit- subordinate-marginalized).

The film *Underground* opens with Muharrem, the main character in the film, wandering the streets of the city alone. Muharrem lives alone and hires a charwoman for cleaning and tidying up. One morning upon waking Muharrem sees the woman crying. The charwoman complains about a guy who is both her boss and her homeowner. She says he howls like a dog and the street dogs gather in front of the apartment door. Muharrem is significantly affected by this condition. When he leaves home to go to work, he stops at the door that belongs to the man and raises his voice in a howl. When he gets on the shuttle bus going to work, he continues howling. Other passengers in

the shuttle bus stare at him, astonished and confused. Muharrem reflects that he is fully protecting himself against everything in life. For Muharrem, howling is confirmation that he exists within the order.

Underground, is a loose adaptation version of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1970), which is about an individual in the modern world. Dialogues in the film are essential. In director Zeki Demirkubuz's world Muharrem, has difficulty asserting his existence within the social system, though he works as a clerk in Ankara, where the order² is most felt. The only person that Muharrem communicates with and tries to help is the chairwoman, the only context in which he can demonstrate power. Because in the context of male and female identities, the male power can build the control mechanism on women and Others. This power relation of masculinity claims social continuity. Therefore, while the power is perceived as an object to be shaped, it highlights them as a factor with meaningful value (Foucault, 2015: 105). Muharrem's relationship with the charwoman reflects this aptly.

The character Cevat represents hegemonic masculinity, discussed by Connell (1990; 2005). The others who want to benefit from the power and the interest relations will never mind that Muharrem is right. While hegemonic masculinity achieves superiority over the other males, "the complicit masculinities" not only support this superiority but also accompany the power. According to Sancar (2008: 154), if other masculinities construct hegemonic masculinity, counter-hegemonic masculinities resist this. Thus, there are conflicts between these masculinities.

Big World, the third film of the study, opens with a voice saying 'father' to a goat. Ali is a young man who works in an automobile repair shop. Growing up in an orphanage, Ali tries to find his biological sister, Zuhail, who had been adopted by a family. He goes to her home to see her, but her family prevents them from seeing each other. The father says that Ali and Zuhail are not

siblings; he claims no official record and doesn't allow Zuhale to leave her room. The mother starts crying. Ali cannot see Zuhale. When the father closes the door to Ali's face, he humiliates his wife and curses at her.

From a Freudian perspective, the phallic issue is a severe problem. However, this issue is also so general that it does not have explanatory power. It covers all infertility concerns, addiction, anxiety, sexuality, etc. (Cohan and et al., 1993: 145). In this film, it would not be wrong to say that the father fears emasculation by cursing and swearing to undermine the father's masculinity on his wife and other women (including Zuhale and his daughter).

Afterward, Ali visits a transsexual sex worker to have sex. She is kind to him. Ali tries to match the concept of "mother," a figure he cannot locate in his life, with the transsexual sex worker, who humorously treats him like her son. Ali compliments the woman's hair color. When Ali faces sorrow and difficulty, he seeks out the transsexual sex worker for compassion and asylum, not for sexual satisfaction. Ali is brave enough to commit murder to save Zuhale (his sister) from the abuse of her adopted family. He tries to offer a shelter and a new life to Zuhale while maintaining his social and sexual life, despite struggling with many difficulties. In his life in the forest, he remains connected to the life of the city. He cannot leave the fortune teller, despite promising Zuhale to do so, because the fortune teller makes him feel valuable. Ali fits Connell's category of "complicit masculinity". Although he does not take an active role in the patriarchal order as a hegemonic man, he plays a role in maintaining the order. With these characteristics, Ali, the main character of this film, is not a hegemonic man.

(ii) A male-dominated world

In Ceylan's film *Once Upon Time in Anatolia*, two policemen, and the driver Arab Ali talk about Nusret having a prostate problem. They try to mitigate the psychological effects of another man's power over them by mocking him. The male genital organ symbolizes power connected to masculinity learned by society. It is useful to discuss this scene with the approach of Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu (2014), the established masculine superiority is the determinant of social relations. Masculine domination makes sense of the differences between female and male bodies; the male genitalia is a power element and the body itself is at the center of power relations. The female body ensures procreation and the survival of societies, but male domination and power control have survived by reproducing on the female body (Öztürk, 2012: 275). In the face of the gendered hierarchical order that dominates their body, women fall into the circle of patriarchal norms in different scales within the framework of their relationship with these norms (Köse, 2014: 8). Yet controlling all aspects of the body is the essence of a disciplined society. This surveillance reveals the invisible violence of male domination on the bodies of all living things, apart from hegemonic masculinity. The fact that violence is not visible means that women themselves. Bourdieu (2014) considers the body itself as the materialized surface of the masculine domination practices. The body is already related to society. From this perspective, the diminished feminine and male body is a product of domination and practice. Therefore, in most societies, a male-dominated understanding and attitude that sees women's bodies and sexuality as belonging not to women themselves but the family, tribe, or culture has paved the way for restructuring this belonging and control. In this context, traditions, customs, and social norms can find an area of realization through patriarchal societies (İlkkaracan, 2015: 11-12). This is precisely why Arab Ali jokes about Nusret's body and genitals.

Moreover, during a chat with Arab Ali, the other driver talks about how well he knows the land they search for. Then, finally, the second driver comes to the empty land to shoot.

Arap Ali the Driver: *You should have a gun! You are not going to worry when it is needed, you are going to shoot it in the middle of his forehead!*

(Once Upon Time in Anatolia, 00:26:23 - 00:27:00)

During this dialogue, the camera focuses on the character's eyes full of revenge. He says: "It is like this around here!" According to Demren (2003), the phenomenon of hegemonic masculinity shows its influence and pressure on other masculinities within cultural areas. In the society and the culture Arab Ali inhabits, being a real man requires owning a gun. In other words, the male sexual organ in the Turkish dictionary and the word meaning "gun" are concrete proof of this³. Therefore, it has a strong value. The common ground of blood feud, honor killing in Turkey (and in the film) is a weapon. The father is the head of the family. His repressive, punitive, strict, and harsh attitude dominates the family. The standard symbol of following concepts like winning, heroism, protection, honor, fighting, supremacy, defeat, bravery and triumph is the weapon. In other words, the weapon is found in the shared subconscious, with the pressure coming into the realm of consciousness. Symbols are concrete objects or signs that have the privilege of describing, conveying, and expressing a belief, emotion, thought, quality, property, and supremacy. Therefore, having a weapon is crucial for Arab Ali and other men like him in the society.

As mentioned above, being married is one of the critical features of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey (Selek, 2013; Barutçu, 2013; Sancar, 2009) and in other countries (Connell, 2005). Stopping to rest, the prosecutor asks the doctor whether he is married. One of the most prominent institutions for social acceptance is marriage. According to Connell (2005, 2002), one of the most distinguishing features of hegemonic masculinity is to be heterosexual and to be firmly attached

to the institution of marriage. One of the most obvious examples of hegemonic masculinity is Nusret the Prosecutor.

When the two arrive at the Mukhtar's house, they are gladly welcomed. The Mukhtar brags about his children; one of his sons has become a police officer and his daughter has married a non-commissioned officer. According to Connell (2005), Selek (2013), Barutçu (2013), and Sancar (2009), the heterosexual family is one of the institutions that perpetuates hegemonic masculinity. Mukhtar is proud of his children regarding some themes, such as being a police officer and being married to a non-commissioned officer. These features within the framework of hegemonic masculinity allow for social acceptance.

From the beginning of the film, rarely seen female characters symbolize the concept of beauty but besides her beauty, Cemile, the daughter of the Mukhtar, exemplifies purity, innocence, and timidity. The perception of beauty created by the community on women is produced by hegemonic masculinity. Beauty and admiration started to come to the fore as socially essential values, such as controlling, made themselves felt in all social areas. Thus, with the modernization process, while women's identity transcended traditional codes, it remained in the shadow of new forms shaped by the developing socio-economic structures. All individuals in the society began to have value according to their appearance and presentation. In this process, women were judged for their visual appearance compared to men. It is not possible to talk about the independence of the people who adopt the clothes and attitudes that others deem appropriate (Barbarosoğlu, 1995: 51). While the modern woman becomes independent from some of the norms at the center of the life of the patriarchal system, the cultural structure of the new life begins to place the body at the center of personal control (Ecevi and Elçik, 2013: 144). The prosecutor and the doctor, leaving the Mukhtar's house, discuss Cemile:

The Doctor: “*She is such a beautiful girl, being the daughter of the Mukhtar. I’m suprised!*”

The Prosecutor Nusret: “*But the pity is that she will disappear from the face of the earth. The fate of beautiful people is bad, doctor!* (Once Upon Time in Anatolia, 01:09:35 - 01:10:00)

In Demirkubuz’s film, *Underground*, there are two female characters. One of the women is a charwoman and the other one is a sex worker. The charwoman experiences psychological violence from a man who is her landlord and boss. The sex worker’s beloved is her procurer. Women are subordinates managed by men in the framework of the patriarchal order. According to Connell (1991; 2005), men benefit from the submission of women⁴. Women may feel crushed by all masculinities, especially hegemonic masculinity; but they may find hegemonic masculinity more tolerable in that it is familiar. There is a kind of harmony between hegemonic masculinity and prominent women. At this point, with a semiotic approach, it seems possible to define masculinity within a symbolic difference system where men and women are opposed. Thus, masculinity is explained as anti-femininity at this point. This approach shows the correlation between masculinity and gender studies (Kimmel, 2004: 504; Connell, 2005: 68).

In the film *Underground*, men are always in a central position while women are peripheral, visible as charwomen or sex workers. Men are generally represented this way in Turkish mainstream films, but it is possible to see different masculinities in alternative films. The orthodox masculine subjectivity here is a solid male subject who can give an asymptomatic identity to the male viewer. Hollywood cinema⁵ is not a seemingly homogeneous institution assumed by the audience.

In Erdem’s film, *The Big World*, Ali regularly goes to the town, eventually finding a job in the automobile repair shop. He starts to visit the fairground in the city with his friend from work. Ali

and the fortuneteller woman in the fairground become friendly and soon Ali is going to the fairground just to see the fortuneteller. Neither Ali nor Zuhail can protect their mental health in the midst of loneliness and nature. Their hope for life starts to run out and they lose their will to survive. As they sit in the woods, a goat approaches them. The goat equates with the father figure, authority and safe space; the father is important to developing identity. Ali tries to move the goat away. When Zuhail screams “Daddy!”, Ali tries to silence her. He can’t stand seeing Zuhail like this. The film ends with Ali’s repeated call to the goat. In Erdem's films, nature is an ideal refuge from harsh realities and the burdens of life. However, in the film *Big World*, while Ali and Zuhail try to gain a place in nature, they cannot achieve this. Nature contains many dangers.

One of the essential features of Reha Erdem’s films is the use of music and sound to help the audience understand society's characteristics and position in the film. In the film *The Big World*, while the man is in the center and in a position of power, women and other people are positioned in the background. Connell (2005) argues that the superiority of men over women is the basis for the differentiation and hierarchical sorting of the forms of masculinity and femininity. In fact, according to Connell (1991), hegemonic masculinity can hardly be called hegemonic so long as it involves a successful strategy for women. Although it is elementary to equate hegemony in gender relations with class domination, there is a striking structural similarity that cannot be ignored in two periods. Both Gramsci and Connell (Demetriou, 2001) have differentiated internal and external hegemony (hegemony according to their leadership / domination-submasculinities) / women) and prioritized the latter after the first.

(iii) Masculinities in various depictions

Within the patriarchal system, the hegemonic man defines himself as a being that is not woman and constantly reaffirms his characteristics (Direk, 2018: 187); this re-affirmation is possible through his continued efforts to conform to the hegemonic rules of masculinity. The main characters (men) in mainstream films are affirmative in this context but the main characters (men) in the films included in this study are coded as negative subjects. They are desperate, without courage and ideals (Elmacı, 2012). These characters (e.g., Ali in *Big World*; Muharrem in *Underground*; Commissioner Naci, Kenan, and Cemal in *Once upon Time in Anatolia*) are not glorified. The films of Turkish male auteur directors do not depict hegemonic characters, elevated and idealized. These films describe male crises and depict characters in crisis. In *Big World*, for example, the male character (Ali) lacks a father figure and feels deadlocked by the situation caused by this deficiency; he needs a father figure. The male character (Muharrem) at the center of the narrative in *Underground* does not speak and does not show himself as a reliable and valuable individual (subject). In *Once upon Time in Anatolia*, rarely visible female characters serve to personify the concept of beauty. In this film the Mukhtar's daughter Cemile, who represents society's perception of the ideal woman, stands out with her purity, innocence, and timidity. The hegemonic masculinity perpetuates the perception of beauty that the community expects of women.

Conclusion

Unlike the main characters of mainstream cinema, the main characters in the films of male auteur directors do not fit the hegemonic male category. In contemporary Turkish films, the male

characters praise love and manage to overcome obstacles and challenges in pursuit of it. However, in these films, it is possible to see lost characters unable to find a way out of lonely environments. In addition, while father-son and family relations are valuable in mainstream films and are essential building blocks of masculinity, such relationships in the films of this study have either not developed at all or are considered inferior. The the main characters in the films of (male) Turkish auteur directors are driven by a crisis of non-hegemonic masculinity. These films depict their male characters as defeated, and these characters are not represented as successful in fulfilling many features associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Regarding the first research question of the study: in the films of Turkish auteur directors, men unable to relate to hegemonic masculinity are negatively affected, cast out, “othered”. The films of these auteur directors contribute to the continuity of the patriarchal order by recognizing and legitimizing hegemonic masculinity. Regarding the first research question of the study: in these films, male characters occupy the central position, while women and others are peripheral. In Ceylan’s *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, unlike mainstream films, the main character does not fit the category of hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, the film does offer characters who represent hegemonic masculinity, contributing to the continuity of patriarchal order. Demirkubuz’s *Underground* presents a narrative in which males are dominant. In this film the main character Muharrem does not fit the category of hegemonic masculinity, but the film does offer secondary characters who represent hegemonic masculinity, contributing to the continuity of hegemonic masculinity. Erdem’s *Big World* presents a narrative that positions the male character at its center. Its main character, Ali, does not fit the category of hegemonic masculinity. On the other hand, the film does offer secondary characters who represent hegemonic masculinity, contributing to the continuity of hegemonic masculinity.

Male characters in these films highlight new hybrid masculinity that combines various masculinities to reproduce patriarchy. Hybrid masculinity refers to the combination of men's performances and identity values and relates to marginalized masculinities, subordinate masculinities, and women. The hegemonic characters Nusret in *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia*, Cevat in *Underground*, and the father in *Big World* exhibit hybrid masculinities and are depicted as symbolically distant from hegemonic masculinities. The directors of these films produce films that help people accurately perceive the dimensions of the masculinity crisis. Though these films are often criticized for contributing to perpetuating hegemonic masculinity, they can be considered as contributing to a multi-faceted representation of masculinity in general.

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ENDNOTES:

¹ Mainstream cinema uses certain high-concept elements to reach broader audiences.

² Ankara is the capital city of Turkey and the seat of state power. Here state power is most keenly felt. Ankara also represents order and a systematic life. Given the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and government bodies, Ankara as the setting of this film is a considered choice.

³ In the film *Full Metal Jacket* (Stanley Kubrick, 1995), there is a typical relationship between gun and male sexual organs: “This is my rifle. This is my gun. This is for fighting, and this is for fun.”

⁴ It is useful to mention Laura Mulvey’s approach. Mulvey (1975) discusses the male gaze and the representation of women in classical narrative cinema from the perspective of psychoanalysis. Women have long been objects of desire in classical narrative (mainstream) cinema. Hegemonic masculinity assumes dominance over women in real life and mass media such as mainstream films.

⁵ Here we can address the Turkish mainstream cinema.