



## Infrahumanization and Dehumanization of Women in Turkish Comedy Films as an Element of Comedy

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### Abstract

This article's goal is to use the ideas of infrahumanization and dehumanization to describe how women are portrayed in Turkish comedies. Dehumanization is the process of describing a person with animalistic or robotic traits. Like dehumanization, infrahumanization is the belief that one's own group has more complex emotions than others, while members of the other group merely have animal-like innate feelings. Turkish women were portrayed as less human in this context, and this study explores whether this impression exists. The narrative analysis method was used to study popular comedy films shot between 1970 and 1979 to arrive at the answer to the query. Twenty Turkish comedy films were analyzed, and it was shown that both dehumanization and infrahumanization occurred.

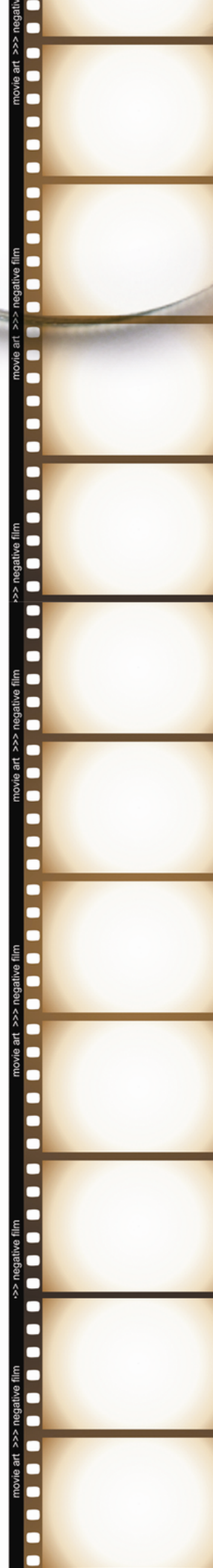
**Keywords:** Film; Comedy; Woman; Infrahumanization; Dehumanization.



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# Infrahumanization and Dehumanization of Women in Turkish Comedy Films as an Element of Comedy

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## Introduction

In cinema, the perspective on women has been masculine based on social perceptions. Women, who are positioned for men in the patriarchal system, are expected to be a good wife, a good lover, a good mother etc. Women are secondary in the cinema, which is dominated by masculine discourse in position and within certain patterns; weak, in need of help, in roles that amuse men, and is often represented as a sexual object (Aslan, 2019, p.119).

The secondary roles attributed to women in cinema have been interpreted and examined with different theories. On the other hand, the ideas of dehumanization and infrahumanization will be used in this study to analyze the roles that are assigned to women. The theorists who put forward these concepts, Nick Haslam and Jacques Leyens, described these concepts as a form of otherization. Otherization of people is the problem that leads to irreparable economic, sociological, political, and psychological results in societies. Otherized people's emotions are hurt, and the misbehavior done to them may hit back at the dominant group (Goffman, 2014, p.123). They took an alternative approach to the otherization problem and referred to this idea as dehumanization

and infrahumanization. Dehumanization is the rejection of another person's complete humanity, along with the resulting cruelty and suffering (Haslam, 2006, p.152). Likewise, infrahumanization is the implicit notion that one's own group is more human than an outgroup (Leyens, 2009, p.807). The crucial aspect is that feminist theorists were able to draw links between them and the world ruled by men.

By seeking to determine if women are portrayed as a component of humor using the two theories, the study adds to the body of existing literature. The research question is “Was there a perception that Turkish women did not have human characteristics in Turkish cinema?”. To answer the question, the comedy films between 1970-1979 were examined through narrative analysis<sup>1</sup>. The reason why the films shot in this year range were selected in the study was that these were the years in which the most comedy films were shot in the history of Turkish cinema and the diversity of the samples<sup>2</sup>. Of the 1643 films shot, 406 were comedy films and it means that the number of comedy films was also quite high (TSA, 2024). However, thematic compatibility is the primary factor in the selection of these movies as examples, since they contain instances that most effectively illustrate the idea of giving women animal traits.

The representation of women in Turkish cinema has been the subject of numerous scholarly research. Studies by Tan (2012), Öztürk (2016), and Öz and Secen (2019) have shown that the

voyeuristic gaze on women in these films constituted a cinematic phenomenon. In the cinematic narrative, women are fetishized or declared criminals and turned into objects forgiven by men. They also found that women are viewed with patriarchal cultural norms and a problematic language was used regarding women. It is also discovered that men are represented as ideal and intellectual characters compared to women. Articles concerning the portrayal of women in comedies have also been written. Öztürk (2016), Mert (2022) and Türkavcı and Şahin (2021) looked at Turkish comedies from various eras and came to the conclusion that the male-dominated style of filmmaking was prevalent here as well.

On the other hand, in that male gaze, the existence of dehumanization or infrahumanisation was not examined in Turkish academic field and how women are portrayed in Turkish comedy films shot between 1970 and 1979. With this article, it was researched whether concepts such as infrahumanization and dehumanization were used in the way women were represented in comedy films between 1970 and 1979, when the most comedy films were shot in Turkish cinema. As a result, these concepts were frequently encountered.

### Theoretical Framework

Dehumanization and infrahumanization are two psychological theories that highlight the way about the issue of seeing a person as less human. Dehumanization occurs when adversaries

believe one another to be less than human and therefore undeserving of moral respect. (Haslam, 2006, p.152). J. Leyens describes infrahumanisation as follows: “It is a process by which people consider their ingroup as fully human and outgroups as less human and more animal like.” (Leyens, 2009, p. 141). The most important point in the infrahumanization theory is that the outgroup is perceived as less human as compared to the ingroup. At this point, infrahumanisation can be seen as a kind of dehumanization.

Leyens expresses his strong preference for the idea of infrahumanization over dehumanization. He sees some distinctions between these two ideas. Perceiving members of the outgroup as less human or animal-like is known as infrahumanization. Dehumanization, on the other hand, asserts that the outgroup's members are no longer human. Therefore, in contrast to infrahumanization, dehumanization is an extreme idea (Leyens, 2006, p.135). The ideas of ingroup and outgroup are crucial to the thesis of infrahumanization. People have a tendency to attribute more human characteristics to their group (the ingroup) and less to the outgroups. People would believe that outgroups are less human than they understand themselves to be (Leyens, 2006, p.135).

It's critical to distinguish between primary and secondary emotions at this stage. Animals and humans alike experience primary emotions. They are like anger, shame, love, joy, alertness,

fear. Secondary emotions are much more complex emotions like skepticism, hate, guilt, envy, despair, self-confidence, creativity, amazement, resentment, and jealousy. They are uniquely human, such as feeling shame (Becker and Wachsmuth, 2008, p.67). Secondary emotions are less visible and intense than primary emotions. Several experiments and tests show that people are quicker to attribute secondary emotions to their own ingroup rather than the outgroups (Demoulin, 1999, p.14).

While secondary and primary emotions are important in the theory of infrahumanisation, the division of animalization and mechanization is important for the dehumanization theory. Haslam divides dehumanization into two, namely *mechanization* and *animalization*. Animalization refers to the denial of uniquely human features, such as morality, intelligence, and other secondary emotions. When groups are denied uniquely human features, they are perceived as similar to animals (Haslam, 2006, p.153). Mechanization can be defined as dissociation from emotions like warmth, curiosity, or emotionality. People who are mechanized are seen as cold, rigid, inert, and lacking emotion and agency (Bastian and Haslam, 2010, p.45).

When a person comes across these concepts, the complete opposite characteristics of human uniqueness can be counted, like “lack of culture, coarseness, amorality, irrationality,

childlikeness.” Also, he/she is described with adjectives like “inertness, coldness, rigidity, passivity, fungibility, superficiality.” (Haslam, 2006, p. 257).

While the concepts of dehumanization and infrahumanization are applied to certain segments of society, they are also concepts that women are frequently exposed to. It should be remembered that the dehumanization of women can take different forms. For example, women can be dehumanized when they are perceived “as commodities or objects for the use of others” (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997, p.49). Furthermore, childlikeness, less civility, and emotional control are also seen as dehumanization forms of women (Ortner, 1974, p.120). It means “denying a person's identity” (Haslam, 2006, p.200).

When women are objectified sexually, it is said that they are not considered human beings. Mechanistic dehumanization can be responsible for not only enabling violence against women but also excusing it (Felig et al., 2023, p. 3). When people pay attention to a woman’s appearance rather than who she is as a person, they ascribe her fewer human attributes. For example, they are thought of as not having a mind or morality (Morris and Goldenberg, 2015, 23).

In conclusion, dehumanization and infrahumanization are complementary ideas. They both focus on how emotions define what it means to be human. When ingroup and outgroup are associated with main and secondary emotions, infrahumanization takes place. The separation of

animalization and mechanization results in dehumanization. Therefore, wherever dehumanization and infrahumanization are observed, it is crucial to diagnose them rather than causing them to clash. Findings about the dehumanization or infrahumanization of women in particular can provide new insights into how women are positioned in society.

### The Underrepresentation of Women in Turkish Comedy Films

Turkish cinema has changed, developed, and transformed within the socio-economic and political conditions of the country since the early years (Sarı, 2024, p.93). The way women are represented also has had some significant changes. One of the problems regarding female representation in Turkish cinema is that women are represented in a patriarchal culture (Öz and Seçen, 2019, p.467). Moreover, film texts are based on male subjects; women have no identity and no function in the flow of the text. So, women are represented as subordinate and guided people (Yüksel, 2010, p.88).

Following the occupying soldiers' entry into Istanbul, the first comedies were filmed in our nation. Many of these movies, which lean toward dark comedy, depend on acting and stories from theaters. (Bayram and Solak, 2024, p.341). Comedy film was a popular social phenomenon from 1918 to the 1940s. They are also weak in terms of social criticism because they are distant from the structure. The sole goal of these movies is to make viewers laugh. They were comedies based



on middle plays and theater plays, with an emphasis on the operetta-musical form. *Himmat Ađanın Evliliđi* and *Leblebici Horhor* are considered the first comedic attempts of Turkish cinema (Özgüç, 1985, p.63-65).

In 1921, the film character that would form the basis of Turkish comedy films was developed. The movie *Bican Efendi Vekilharç*, which includes the Bican Efendi character, is considered the first Turkish comedy film Bican Efendi character is likened to Charlie Chaplin's comedy at that time and he is liked. (Halis, 2014, p.42).

Up until 1940, Muhsin Ertuđrul, a significant director for Turkish cinema, ruled the industry. His comedies were either comedies based on theater plays or operetta-musical comedies. The character *Dümbüllü* came to the fore in comedy films in the 1940s. Known for his quick wit, Dümbüllü later gave life to the character of *Keloglan*. Characters like Pişekâr and Kavuklu, Edi and BÜdü, Memiş and İbiş, and Ali and Veli were created in the 1950s and capture the essence of the period. They were inspired by the well-known Laurel Hardy. (Bayram and Solak, 2024, p.341).

The 1960s were years of increased diversity in cinema in Turkey. Cilalı İbo (Feridun Karakaya), Adanalı Tayfur (Öztürk Serengil) and Turist Ömer (Sadri Alıřık) are some of the most iconic and unforgettable lumpen characters. All these characters are funny in their own way. They

portray poor but cute, honest but cunning and vagabond characters with good manners. (Şahinalp, 2010, p.80).

There are two contrasting cinematic structures in Turkish cinema from the 1970s. There were "sex films" on the one hand and critical political films on the other. Turkish comedy cinema of this period brings social problems to the screen; it invites the audience, consciously or unconsciously, to ask questions about class, economic and political issues. In the 1970s, Turkish comedy cinema focused on Kemal Sunal, Şener Şen, İlyas Salman who were the masters of comedy. (Şen, 2019, p.711). Ertem Eğilmez, who made films that brought comedy characters to life and won the love of the public, is the director of the most important comedy films of the period. He has its own unique approach to the dominant sense of comedy in Turkish cinema. He contributed with a humorous style, took into consideration the social realities and produced films addressing the social problems. He worked with three masters: Kemal Sunal, Şener Şen and İlyas Salman (Makal, 1991, p.12). *Hababam Sınıfı*, directed by Ertem Eğilmez, is a cult hit among Turkish Comedy films. During 1970s, the character of Şaban, acted by Kemal Sunal in these films, has an important place in the history of Turkish cinema. Folk language is used to describe the experiences of common people in these movies. (Şen, 2019, p.711).

It is evident that the comedies produced at the conclusion of the 1980 military takeover addressed societal issues. Among the most well-known actors in comedies are Kemal Sunal, Şener Şen, İlyas Salman, Aydemir Akbaş, Müjdat Gezen, Müjde Ar, and Perran Kutman. (Şen, 2019, p.712). It is important to note that female actors are never featured in the main parts of comedies. However, women have continued to lag behind men who ridicule others in public. It is males who define their roles. For many years, this idea persisted in motion pictures. Women weren't supposed to make communities laugh; instead, they were supposed to be mothers, wives, or lovers. They were able to establish themselves as background comedians by having these attributes. For many years, Turkish comic films have been dominated by men (Arslantepe and Koyuncu, 2022, p.53).

After the 1990s and the 2000s, we see that the actors and directors in many of the prominent comedy films were male. With G.O.R.A (2003), A.R.O.G (2008), Arif v 216 (2018), Cem Yılmaz created characters like Turist Ömer. With Vizontelevizyon (2001), Organize İşler (2005) and some other comedy films Yılmaz Erdoğan and with Recep İvedik film series, Şahan Gökbakar was important Turkish comedy film actors and directors.

In the 2000s, the fact that male actors took the lead roles in Turkish comedy films was somewhat broken, and female actors and directors such as Demet Akbağ, Gupse Özay and Gülse Birsnel became active. As a woman actress, Demet Akbağ plays the leading role in comedy films

such as *Hükümet Kadın* (2013), *Eyvah Eyvah* (2010), *Nadide Hayat* (2015). Although some female actors came to the fore in comedy films in Turkish cinema after 2000, male dominance continues.

### The Theme and Characters of the Movies

In the 1970 comedy film, *Turist Ömer Yamyamlar Arasında*, the rare treasure known as "Buffalo Eye" is the target of a competition between two distinct treasure seeking organizations. Unaware of the situation, Tourist Ömer (Sadri Alışık), has the Buffalo Eye treasure map permanently inked on his arm on the opposite side of the globe. When they discover this, treasure hunters pursue Tourist Ömer while attempting to get Tourist Ömer, a local cabinet chairman, to accompany him to Africa. Tourist Omer is a man who wears a hat in a funny way, does not have a shaved beard, and does not close the top buttons of his shirt. He even lets the waist part of his shirt hang out a little. He wears light-colored, unironed trousers without a belt, wears the backs of his shoes, and wears a chain necklace around his neck. In addition to his disheveled appearance, he frequently uses slang terms in his scathing statements. Because of a tattoo he obtained by accident, he is regarded as a god by African cannibals in the movie. In an attempt to win his favor, the tribe leader presents him with three ladies. "Choose and buy what you like" is the leader's advice for the gift women. Omer is abducted by the opposing tribe, who then wish to wed him to

the goddess. Muella Süer, the Goddess, is very old. Tourist Ömer's comments about this old goddess are: "I don't want this manless female dog-faced woman", "Rather than marrying that woman, I should be cooked in a cauldron and let the cannibals eat me". "Let that coffin maker go away," "I won't marry that cholera-infested woman, I feel sick when I see her." "You should wait for your coffin maker," he adds, "and you are like a blind saw, old woman. "However, a tribal woman declares, "You are my god," expressing her admiration for Tourist Ömer.

In the 1970 comedy film *Darıldın mı Cicim Bana*, the main actor, Osman (Sadri Alışık) is a hilarious figure who lives in poverty and fails at whatever he tries. He also wears somewhat erratic clothing. He has a rumpled shirt and tie. He wears really ancient clothing. He speaks in colloquial terms. He jokes about all the people he sees. The majority of these jokes are about women. For instance, phrases like "I paid a hundred bills for her night, I admired this joy" appear in the lyrics of the song he performs in the film. Osman's wealthy uncle, meantime, summons him to Istanbul and embarks on a journey to start a new life. Another character in the movie, Erol (Yusuf Sezgin), intends to travel to Istanbul in order to locate Yasemin (Mürüvvet Sim), his girlfriend, whom he has only ever known through her correspondence. Osman and Erol travel to Istanbul together in the interim. When Osman visits Yasemin's home to deliver Erol's love letters, he understands that it is the housemaid Hülya (Esen Püsküllü) who writes to Erol instead of

Yasemin. Yasemin is a character that is short and overweight. Despite her wealth, she dresses shabbily and covers up her "ugliness" with a lot of makeup. Saying, "What a foolish girl you are; you talk stupidly," she disparages her servant. She plays the piano loudly and sings loudly. She is portrayed as a rich but stupid character that no one wants to be with. Osman responds to Yasemin's devotion by asking, "What will I do with this Yasemin buffalo?" and "You wouldn't even make her a doormat." "Can buffalos fly?" he asks when Yasemin tells him, "Make me fly." "You are the romantic knight of my dreams," Yasemin tells Osman, but Osman responds, "Your dreams are as scarce as your mind." According to Osman, "I eat women, but I don't eat their money." This sums up his overall attitude toward women. Additionally, Osman feels that the lady he loves ought to extend her hand to assist him. "This cannot be the woman I fell in love with," Erol exclaimed upon seeing Yasemin. Osman responds "Yasemin is the buffalo; the woman you love is Hülya." The movie ends with Erol and Hülya marrying each other.

In the 1970 romantic comedy film *Tatlı Meleşim* is the story of a woman trying to take revenge on the man she loves. Leyla (Türkan Şoray) is a young girl living with her mother. She is very hardworking but not well-groomed. She is an "ugly" girl with her hair tied up well but messy and with thick-framed glasses. (Figure 1). Her mother tries to prevent Leyla from eating so much by saying things like, "Girls today are very curvy." She is a very careless girl who uses rude and slang words. One day, when she goes to her workplace, she learns that she has been fired and an

attractive woman was employed as a secretary. Leyla saw similar situations in various places. She applies for jobs and gets the answer: “With this body, you can only be a scarecrow in the field. Only you can be a wrestler!”. In contrast, Murat (Ediz Hun), an employer, is a highly attractive, well-dressed, and well-liked man. Everyone makes fun of Leyla, but Murat feels sorry for her and hires her. She becomes into a very serious figure after she begins working for Murat as a secretary. She wears dark clothing, produces reports all the time, wears large black glasses, and avoids social interaction. She is far from being appealing, feminine, or sensuous in any way. One day, Murat asks Leyla, "Have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror?" and Leyla decides to become beautiful. When she changes and becomes beautiful, Murat falls in love with her.



Figure 1: Türkan Şoray in *Tatlı Meleğim*.

Source: <https://www.sinemalar.com/film/5506/tatli-melegim> (Date of Access: January 10, 2024)

Nebahat (Fatma Girik) in the 1970 romantic comedy film named *Şoför Nebahat*, is a young girl living in a poor neighborhood. Her mother is a homemaker, and her father drives a taxi. She has a bank officer for a fiancé. Nebahat's fiancée has made the neighborhood females envious of her. Her father passes away after a heart attack one day. In order to pay off her father's debts, Nebahat, who was responsible for her entire household, begins driving a taxi using the vehicle she inherited from him. She initially shows up for work in a dress, but nobody notices her. Consumers attempt to avoid paying the cost by using a variety of justifications, such as "You brought us late." Customers who are men ask, "What is your price? How much am I going to pay? Then, her fiancée leaves her because of her new job. She realizes that she is not respected and cannot have influence by dressing and behaving like a woman. She engages in fistfights when needed and dons a man's jacket. She spends her time with males. She occasionally yells at the other passengers and disobeys driving laws. She is reminded that she is a woman by Bulent (İzzet Günay), who gets into her car one day. Bulent is a successful lawyer who exudes charm and good looks. But he finds this life boring. His admiration for Nebahat stems from his honesty, simplicity, and "fight for life." "You are a wealthy lawyer, and I am a simple driver," Nebahat remarks. Nebahat abandons her manly identity and starts emphasizing her sexual identity after falling in love with Bülent. A happy ending awaits couples after a few adventures.



In the 1971 romantic comedy film *Cambazhane Gülü*, Fadime (Filiz Akın), a young woman, earns her living by acrobatic during the day and singing at nights. Cevriye (Mürüvvet Sim) is the boss of that acrobat. "May God take her life, fat woman," her husband tells Cevriye. Memo (Ediz Hun) visits there one evening in search of employment. Memo and Fadime have the chance to develop a strong relationship. Memo is a courageous figure who protects Fadime and her friends from evil men. "Memo, you have a nobility; you are different from us" Fadime says, describing how Memo differs from others. But on the wedding day, Memo is completely unreachable. After learning about the life of an acrobat, Memo, a writer, traveled there to write a book about it. Memo utilized Fadime as fodder for his book, playing with her feelings. "What were those tricks?" asks Fadik. Were all of your statements false? She goes on to win the lottery. She changes and visits beauty parlors with that money. Memo becomes envious when she presents herself like a princess with lovers in every nation. Memo suggests getting married, and at the ceremony, Fadik seems to be the actual Fadik. Memo expresses regret for the incident and is shocked.

In the 1971 romantic comedy film, *Hayat Sevince Güzel*, Ayşe (Zeynep Değirmenciöglü) is a girl full of goodness. She leaves the town where she grew up and goes to live with her aunt (Semra Sar), who lives in a big city. The rich girls of the town make fun of her and label her as a

peasant. Her aunt buys her new clothes and takes her to the hairdresser. On the other hand, her aunt is a woman who lives alone and has not been able to escape the effects of some unpleasant events in the past. She always wears formal clothes and thick-rimmed glasses. When the man she fell in love with years ago returns, she remembers that she is a woman.

The 1971 movie *Turist Ömer Boğa Güreşçisi*, tells the story of Tourist Ömer (Sadri Alışık), who goes to Spain. His friend, the rich singer Rodrigez (Erol Büyükburç), invites him to his house in Spain. Rodrigez is incredibly wealthy and attractive. He employs a large number of servants. Rodrigez summons the female servants to him with a cowbell. Ömer says "Is this a slaughterhouse?" Tourist Ömer fell in love in Spain with a beautiful but foolish woman named Rozalinda (Feri Cansel), who believes whatever Tourist Ömer says. Rodrigez composes and sings incredibly poignant lyrics for his girlfriend, Manolya (Fatma Bergen). Despite his desire to wed her, Manuella (Mualla Süer), Manolya's mother, is against her daughter getting married to a musician. Here, the mother character, Manuella, is old, short, and ugly. She is married to a younger and shorter man. Tourist Ömer makes fun of her and says, "If you weren't ashamed, you would marry the dormouse." The mother character keeps praising herself by saying, "I am young and beautiful." However, Tourist Ömer says, "Your face looks like the ass of a Spanish bull", "We also call people like you toilet knockers". To emphasize the age difference between the husband and wife, he asks, "Did your husband lose his teeth? How old is your husband?", "What are you doing,

mother and son?" In the end, the words of Omer like "Look at me, kokona, you are giving your daughter to me, right?", The movie ends happily.

In the 1973 romantic comedy film, *Hayat Bayram Olsa*, a couple, Ceylan (Hülya Koçyiğit) and Doğan (Kadir İnanır) fall in love with each other. They are from enemy families. The families try to marry them with others. Doğan's bride-to-be, Zarife (İtir Gürdemirel), is quite overweight. The girl's father says that he will accept his daughter's "flaws" and give gifts to the boy's family. Gifts include farm animals. Doğan points to the girl and says, "You don't need to give a cow," and then adds, "Her father will give everything to find a husband for this fat daughter." Her father uses the expression, "My daughter is a flower." Doğan makes fun of the girl by saying, "She is a cauliflower flower." He also inquired, "How did you feed your daughter?" to the girl's family. When the bride remarked, "I'm so happy that I'm going to fly into the air," during the engagement ceremony, Doğan said, "Don't bother; you can't fly with this body." The lovers can get married after a few adventures.

In the 1975 comedy film, *Baldız*. In the movie, Hasan (Kadir İnanır) is a middle-class family's eldest child who goes to work in Germany. His father made an agreement with the rich man of the region without Hasan's knowledge and promised to take Şükrü Arnamus' (Ali Şen) daughter as a bride. Hasan initially objects, but when he sees Naciye (Müjde Ar), he thinks she is

the girl he will marry and agrees. At dinner one evening, Hasan is shocked when he realizes that he will marry Naciye's sister-in-law instead. Naciye's older sister, Fikrîye (İtir Gürdemirel)<sup>3</sup>, is quite overweight. Hasan says, "This calf, Fikrîye, cannot be my wife. Regarding her sister, Naciye tells Hasan, "I will kill myself if you marry that pig." Fikriye's father even calls her a "cow" at times. Hasan flees the town to avoid problems after Naciye becomes pregnant. He cohabitates with multiple women. However, Naciye is experiencing difficulties at home.



Figure 2: İtir Gürdemirel in *Hayat Bayram Olsa*: <https://www.sinemalar.com/film/5506/tatli-melegim> (Date of Access: January 10, 2024)

In the 1975 romantic comedy, *Küçük Bey*, Hülya (Hale Soygazi), a rich girl, and Ahmet (Ahmet Özhan), a flirtatious young man, are about to get married after their families promised

each other, but they don't know each other. Hülya sends an overweight friend to the first meeting. When Ahmet meets this girl, he says, “This woman will eat me. Rather than marrying such a person, I would run away to Africa and return 150 years later. Will I open a butcher shop?” The truth is revealed at the wedding. He understands that he does not have to get married that overweight girl.

The film series *Hababam Sınıfı*, which started to be shot in 1975, are the story of a class that cannot graduate from high school. The class consists of only male students. Mahmut Hoca (Münir Özkul), the newly appointed assistant principal at the school, tries to discipline the class. The school's janitor, Hafize Ana (Adile Naşit), is the only female employee at the school. Her whole life is spent cleaning and cooking at the school. She acts as a mother to the Hababam. She always wears the same apron and chases after students all day long.

In the film series titled *Hababam Sınıfı Sınıfta Kaldı*, shot in 1976, a new teacher is appointed to the school. She is a young woman and the school's only woman teacher (Semra Özdamar). She wears long black skirts and glasses that make her look serious. Hafize calls Semra like a child and does not show the respect she shows to others. Hababam often makes Semra teacher cry, and she thinks of resigning. In the series called "Hababam Sınıfı Dokuz Doğuruyor", shot in 1978, new actors were added to the Hababam cast. A new female teacher started working.

This teacher, whose name is Hürrem (Perran Kutman), is a complete man-hater. She is very serious and never smiles. When Ekrem, the school's physical education teacher, tries to light Hürrem's cigarette, she says, "What do you mean, did you stare at my chastity, I will tear you to pieces," and walks up to her and starts a fight in the teachers' room. She believes that every man is pursuing her, and she is anxious and depressed all the time. "This place has become a madhouse," Mahmut remarks. She says, "My name is Hürrem, I am 35 years old, and I am a girl," as soon as she walks into the classroom. Wild and lonely like an untended rose. I'll defend my virginity; I won't allow anyone to harm me." When Hürrem and Ekrem later begin dating, Hürrem is now content and affectionate. She even starts dressing well and applying lipstick.

In the 1976 comedy film, *Süt Kardeşler*, Şaban (Kemal Sunal) comes to his relative Melek's (Adile Naşit) house after many years. A black woman, Yasemin (Yasemin Esmergül), falls in love with Şaban. Şaban constantly uses expressions like "I'm afraid of this woman, she's a bogeyman" to his friend Ramazan (Halit Akçatepe). Şaban is always uncomfortable with Yasemin staring at him and often expresses his fear.



Figure 3: Yasemin Esmegül in Süt Kardeşler

<https://m.imdb.com/title/tt0253779/mediaviewer/rm532844545/> (Date of Access: January 10, 2024)

In the 1977 comedy film, *Kapıcılar Kırılı*, Seyit (Kemal Sunal) works as a doorman in an apartment building. He is quite alert and intelligent. He sells illegal alcohol in the apartment. He employs his wife and children in different apartments and saves the tips he collects. His wife, Hacer (Sevil Üstekin), cleans the apartment. She has to work constantly and clean the apartment. A woman, one of the residents, is constantly watching people from the window of her house and gossiping. The same woman says to her daughter (İtir Gürdemirel), who is always eating, "Look, the doctor's daughter is flirting with the civil servant's son; you just eat like a March cat." One of the apartment's other residents is an extremely irate man. The entire apartment is agitated when he

beats his wife, who responds, "What do you care? My spouse is capable of both loving and beating me.

The 1977 romantic comedy *Bizim Kız* opens with a cheerful but impoverished girl named Zeynep (Gülşen Bubikoğlu) falling in love with a wealthy young guy. Cevriye (Toto Karaca) is a wealthy yet "ugly" woman in the movie. She is in love with Öztürk Serengil, a man in the neighborhood, but he despises her and calls her names like "Leave me alone, ould" and "Come on, gypsy bundle." This man has an affair with her solely for her money.

In the comedy film *Yüz Numaralı Adam*, produced in 1978, Şaban (Kemal Sunal) is a man who cannot get a job and lives in a slum with his mother and father. When he starts to earn money, his father feels proud of him and keeps calling him a "lion". In the movie, his brothers claim that they will introduce him to a very beautiful girl as a joke and introduce him to an overweight girl (İtir Gürdemirel), and the jokes revolve around this girl.

In the 1978 comedy film *Neşeli Günler*, Kazım Efendi (Münir Özkul) and Saadet Hanım (Adile Naşit) are a husband and wife who live with their six children. Kazım Efendi constantly uses expressions such as "This woman will cause me to become cancer", "You don't know, she is a damn woman", "He annoys the man with his nagging". After the divorce, Kazım Efendi tries to marry Sıdıka. Saadet says, "You say you're marrying a young woman, but she has already



wrinkled." A rivalry begins between the two women. The movie ends with Kazım and Saadet getting married again after many years.

In the 1978 comedy *Sultan, Sultan* (Türkan Şoray) makes a living by cleaning the house and raising her four children. She has no existence of her own; she is a woman like a guy. There, neighborhood relations are fostered. Women in the area fell in love with Kemal since he is a handsome man. In addition, he declares his intention to marry Sultan and wants to enjoy himself with her. Sultan has faith in Kemal. She tries to murder him after she finds out the reality. "This woman had dreams about me; she went crazy when I didn't marry her," Kemal tells his father.

The events that Mülayim (Kemal Sunal) went through are told in the 1979 comedy film *Korkusuz Korkak*. He is a mild-mannered person. He is also quite intelligent and humorous. The house owner, Bedia, always demands the rent. "The woman with the face of the court wall," says Mülayim about her. There are two women he works with at work. While one is quite overweight, the other is thin and attractive. The boss often calls the attractive woman to his office. She gains a position in the workplace by using her femininity. The overweight woman asks, "What am I lack of?". Mülayim says, "You have nothing less than that; you have more." Moreover, Mülayim has the idea that in a marriage, the wife makes just "nagging."

## Discussion

The concepts of dehumanization and infrahumanization highlight the way when some groups are treated less than humans. The concepts focus on different sides of the issue and develop an inner understanding of the people who are insulted. Dehumanization and infra-humanization have various kinds. They can be realized in nations, women, races, and so on. Therefore, one cannot mention just one kind of dehumanization or infrahumanization.

N. Haslam divides dehumanization into two: mechanization and animalization. It is possible to see both types in comedy Turkish films shot between 1970 and 1979. Mechanistic women are represented as unhappy in the films. For example, in the movie *Tatlı Meleşim*, Leyla draws a robotic human profile that does not show her feminine characteristics. Wearing black clothes, not communicating with other people, and being far from emotionality and attractiveness keep her away from both human emotions and femininity. Being far from femininity and taking on a robot-like shape causes her to be ridiculed. The fact that what turned Leyla into a beautiful woman is a man and his love for her. It is meaningful as it shows the importance of men in a woman's life.

In the movie *Soför Nebahat*, there is also a protagonist who loses her feminine characteristics for a period of time. However, she returns to womanhood thanks to her love, which

indicates that a woman will not be appreciated in a mechanical state. Similarly, it is possible to see a woman who has become masculinized and lost her feminine features in the movie *Cambazhane Güllü*. She has behaviors that suit men, such as not following the rules, using slang words, playing backgammon, and being rude. The movie shows these behaviors as behaviors that do not suit a woman. A man will remind this reality of the mechanized woman, who has forgotten her femininity.

In the movie *Sultan*, the female character devotes her whole life to her children. She does everything from chopping wood to cleaning the stove. She is a man-like woman who has forgotten her femininity. A man will remind her that she is a woman. Moreover, in the movie, *Hayat Sevince Güzel*, the actress playing the role of an aunt, portrays the image of a woman who lives alone, wears formal clothes, and wears thick-framed glasses, which does not reveal her femininity. The aunt will return to her femininity thanks to the man she falls in love with. Another actress who hides her femininity can be seen in the movie *Hababam Sınıfı*. Wearing long black skirts and glasses that make her look serious, the school's only female teacher tries to make people forget that she is a woman. Hafize Ana, in these film series, also plays the role of a mother who is devoted to the school rather than a female role. She always wears the same apron and protects the students.

In the episode *Hababam Sınıfı Dokuz Doğuruyor*, the character named Hürrem is very serious, wears formal clothes, and tries not to highlight her femininity, but her mind is on marriage and men, showing that the only thing a woman needs to be happy is a man and marriage. As a matter of fact, after her engagement, Hürrem became more affectionate and started to take care of herself and become more beautiful. Therefore, it is not difficult to see the emphasis that women who have become mechanized or who have somehow forgotten or tried to hide their femininity can achieve real happiness through the love of a man. In films that portray the idea that one cannot be happy without a man or without love, they try to explain that feminine clothing and make-up are the only ways that can make a woman look beautiful.

Animalization, another type of dehumanization that Nick Haslam draws attention to, can also be clearly observed in Turkish comedy films of the years between 1970 and 1979. It is seen that women, especially those who do not meet the beauty criteria of the period, are named with various animal names. It can be concluded that these insulting statements humiliate a certain female identity. For example, in the film titled *Turist Ömer Yamyamlar Arasında*, Omer uses the statements such as "female dog-faced woman left without a man", "cholera microbe woman". Expressions such as these fall directly into the animalization group. Moreover, jokes about women in films are humorously exaggerated, particularly in this film.

Moreover, the quotes used in the movies *Tatlı Meleşim* and *Darıldın mı Cicim Bana?* such as “You can't even be a doormat”, “You are like a buffalo.” directly animalize women. In this context, it is understood that the aim is to make the audience laugh by using the physical characteristics of women. These jokes, made with the female body rather than the male body, take the female identity from its human dimension.

Furthermore, Fadik, another objectified heroine, does not initially identify with human characteristics. After winning the lottery in this movie called *Cambazhane Güllü*, Fadik, who beautifies herself with various treatments, turns into a woman who can be “loved”, and Memo thinks that he has met a woman he can love for the first time in his life. These films, which are based on the narrative that it is impossible to fall in love with a woman who is not beautiful. These films do not give the right of happiness to women who cannot comply with the concept of beauty of the period.

In the production called *Turist Ömer Boęa Güreşçisi*, women are again paired with animalistic features. As a matter of fact, in the bell that Rodrigez used for his female servants, Turist Ömer's comparison of the woman's face to “the butt of a Spanish bull” or his description of the woman as a “knef mallet”, gives the idea that these humiliations against women of the period were in accordance with the norms of the period.

In the movie *Hayat Bayram Olsa*, expressions directly using animal names for women can be seen. The adjective "flower" cannot be attributed to Zarife because she is overweight; insults such as "cow" and "cauliflower flower"; the use of expressions such as "pig" and "calf" for an overweight woman in the movie *Baldız* is like a proof that women are directly sacrificed to animalization. Similarly, the jokes about "opening a butcher shop" used for an overweight woman in the movie *Küçük Bey* and the jokes that animalize the woman and say that such a woman can eat a man are meaningful in terms of showing the level of comedy and the level at which women are positioned. In the movie *Süt Kardeşler*, the overweight black woman is referred to as a "bogeyman" and is constantly feared, Using expressions such as "card rooster" and "gypsy bundle" for the overweight and "ugly" woman in the movie *Bizim Kız*. In the movie *Korkusuz Korkak*, the overweight female employee is not respected. It is important in terms of showing how the understanding of beauty of the period was widespread. It would not be wrong to say that these films served to establish the understanding that thin or thin women are beautiful.

If the issue is looked at from J. Lerner's point of view, it is also possible to realize the parallels between the theory of infrahumanisation and Turkish films. In the films, it is easy to see that despite the existence of a few secondary emotions, mostly the primary emotions are assigned to the women. For example, in the movie titled *Darıldın mı Cicim Bana*, Orhan says to the girl who is rude, singing loudly and making noise with the piano, "Your dreams are as scarce as your

mind," and mentions that the girl cannot have deep and complex thoughts. Therefore, complex emotions that may belong to a person will not exist in this girl.

In the movie *Tatlı Meleşim*, the treatment of Leyla by her surroundings, who is shown as a girl without deep feelings and thoughts, denies the fact that Leyla can also have feelings. As a matter of fact, Murat says, "Haven't you ever looked in the mirror?". The words were said without calculating that Leyla would be offended. Another movie in which women's feelings are ignored is *Soför Nebahat*. The fact that male customers hit on Nebahat with words such as "What is your price? How much will I give you?" arises from the idea that Nebahat's emotions do not exist and, therefore, she can be objectified.

In the movie *Baldız*, Naciye's feelings are also disregarded, but it is shown that Hasan can do whatever he wants. In the film, female characters are portrayed as either beautiful, but passive or ugly and stupid. In *Neşeli Günler*, Kazim Efendi's use of expressions such as "She will pester the man with her nagging" shows that he ignores his wife's feelings and does not create a secondary emotional state in his mind for a woman.

Similarly, in the movie *Sultan*, Kemal does not think that Sultan can exist and be broken as a human being. At this point, it should be remembered that in the movie *Cambazhane Gülü*, Fadik's feelings were disregarded, and she was used as a guinea pig. This understanding is also

evident in the movie *Korkusuz Korkak*. Mülayim's opinion about marriage is given as "nagging" and the woman's feelings and thoughts are ignored, and she is reduced to a nagging creature. Ignoring women's emotions and prevailing the idea that their emotional state is only primary, that is, simple emotions that exist in all living things, also brings about the objectification of women. When women cannot have the complex emotional state that a human being should have, they become equivalent to animals or other objects.

As a matter of fact, Nick Haslam calls the withholding of secondary emotions from a group or person as animalization. The animalistic woman becomes an object, and it is possible to see the objectification of women in many movies. For example, in the movie *Tourist Ömer Yamyamlar Arasında*, giving Ömer many women and telling him to "pick and take the one you like" is nothing more than treating women as objects. It can be thought that these films, where the scripts are written by men and the directors are men, may also be interesting in terms of showing men's ideas.

Ignoring women's feelings in similar ways strengthens the understanding that they are considered a separate group. While women are the outgroup, men are the ingroup in films written and directed by men. In no movie, men are animalized, bad words are used about them, and they are ridiculed or insulted because of their physical differences. Men are praised in movies, the best



example of which can be seen in the movie *Turist Ömer Yamyamlar Arasında*. Expressions like "You are my god", and "My strong man, my beautiful man" were used for Ömer, and in "Cambazhane Gülü", the words "lion, hero" was used for Memo, as well as repeating that he had nobility. The only animal that men can be compared to is the "lion". As a matter of fact, the phrase "my lion son" is used in the movie *Yüz Numaralı Adam*.

Male characters are loved and admired, even if they do not always portray a gentleman. For example, even though Tourist Ömer someone who does not shave properly, does not close the top buttons of his shirt, lets the waist part of his shirt hang out a little, wears his unironed trousers without a belt, and steps on the back of his shoes, no one would use a derogatory animal name about him. He even tries to appear sympathetic to the audience with the slang words and derogatory jokes he says.

The protagonist in the movie *Tatlı Meleşim*, is a handsome, well-dressed man who is followed by all the women. Women are proud to be with him. In the movie *Soför Nebahat*, the male character is a handsome, charismatic lawyer. Similarly, in the movie *Baldız*, Hasan is well-dressed and so handsome that even the girls passing by stop when they see him. However, it is not possible to see any woman in movies as a charismatic businesswoman. Female characters who become beautiful and can be loved because they become beautiful are under the shadow of

charismatic men. Although Leyens thinks that it is not necessary to praise those in the ingroup, the male ingroup in Turkish films prefers to praise and glorify themselves. At this point, it would not be wrong to think that the woman accepted this way of thinking and saw her objectification and animalization as legitimate.

## Conclusion

Considering the connections between Haslam and Lerner's theories, it is possible to find traces of both theories in Turkish films of the period. At this point, it should not be forgotten that depicting a woman stripped of the emotions that make her human means a kind of animalization. In this context, when direct animalization, mechanization, objectification, and lack of secondary emotions are taken into consideration, it has been concluded that mechanization is not as intense as animalization in the comedy and romantic comedy Turkish films shot between 1970 and 1979 and animalization and objectification are applied more towards women. It has also been determined that women are treated as an outgroup. The existence of secondary emotions in women is ignored, and men glorify themselves as an ingroup.

In short, the perception that women can only exist with their physical beauty, the reduction of women who are not "beautiful" or "overweight" to the level of animals, and the use of direct expressions to this effect; shows that animalization status of women in Turkish films was high, at

least for the period between 1970-79. In this animalization, outgrouping the women and excluding any secondary emotions from them makes this animalization easier. As a result, expressions that marginalize and dehumanize women were used quite frequently in the comedy films shot in the mentioned years, and women were seen as elements of comedy.

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## ENDNOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Narrative analysis method is about how the way stories are conveyed and how the audience interprets them. This method will mostly address the following questions: Who are the story's heroes? What do they do, what actions do they take and why do they do these actions and what the repercussions are in the story ? (Sandıkçıoğlu, 2014, p.10).

<sup>2</sup> The films are as follows in order: *Turist Ömer Yamyamlar Arasında* written and directed by Hulki Saner, *Darıldın mi Cicim Bana* directed by Atıf Yılmaz, *Tatlı Meleşim* directed by Mehmet Dinler, *Şoför Nebahat* directed by Süreyya Duru, *Cambazhane Gülü* directed by Türker İnanoğlu, *Hayat Sevince Güzel* directed by Temel Gürsu. *Turist Ömer Boğa Güreşçisi* directed by Hulki Saner, *Hayat Bayram Olsa* directed by Orhan Aksoy, *Baldız* directed by Temel Gürsu, *Küçük Bey* directed by Hulki Saner, *Hababam Sınıfı* series directed by Ertem Eğilmez, *Süt Kardeşler* directed by Ertem Eğilmez, *Kapıcılar Kıralı* directed by Zeki Ökten, *Bizim Kız* directed by Türker İnanoğlu, *Yüz Numaralı Adam* directed by Osman Seden, *Neşeli Günler* directed by Orhan Aksoy, *Sultan* directed by Kartal Tibet and *Korkusuz Korkak* directed by Natuk Baytan.

<sup>3</sup> She acted in different films in the same role like *Hayat Bayram Olsa*, *Kapıcılar Kıralı* and *Baldız*.