

Representation of History in Cinema: Comparative Analysis of Turkish Films Based on the Conquest of Istanbul

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Abstract : History, which can be defined as the narrative of the past, is a process of reproduction that takes place in current time. Scientificness of historiography is controversial for reasons such as the fact that the historian makes choices and comments; even the reason for choosing the subject distracts him/her from objectivity. Historians may take advantage of the current values, cannot be able to afford to contradict society and/or face pressures of dominant groups. In addition, due to the lack of documentation, interpretation, and fiction are used to integrate historical events that seem disconnected. In this respect, there are views that relate history to narrative arts rather than positive sciences. Popular historical films, which are visual historical representations, appeal to wider audiences by taking advantage of visuality, dramatic fictional narrative, various effects, music, stars, and other populist elements. Historical film, which does not claim to be scientific and even has the freedom to distort historical reality, can be perceived as reality itself and becomes an indispensable resource for individual and social memory. The ideological discourse of popular films is not only impressive and manipulative but also changeable. Socio-cultural and political changes can transform the representation of history in films extremely sharply and rapidly. In accordance with the above-mentioned hypothesis, this study is aimed at examining Turkish historical films about the conquest of Istanbul, using methods of historical and social analysis. İstanbul'un Fethi (Conquest of Istanbul, Aydin Arakon, 1953), Kuşatma Altında Aşk (Love Under Siege, Ersin Pertan, 1997) and Fetih 1453 (Conquest 1453, Faruk Aksoy, 2012) are the only three films in Turkish cinema that revolve around the said conquest, therefore constituting the sample of this study. It has been determined that real and fictional events, as well as characters, both focused and ignored, differ from one another in each film. Such significant differences in the dramatic and cinematographic structure of these three films shot respectively in the 50s, 90s, and 2010s show that the representation of history in popular cinema has altered throughout the years, losing its aspect of objectivity.

Keywords : cinema, conquest of Istanbul, historical film, representation

Conference Title : ICCSFTH 2020 : International Conference on Cinema Studies, Film Theory and History

Conference Location : Berlin, Germany

Conference Dates : May 21-22, 2020