NEW 'FILM' OR 'CINEMA' HISTORY: REFLECTIONS ON EMERGING PRINCIPLES, THEORIES AND METHODOLOGIES IN CINEMA HISTORIOGRAPHY
YENİ 'FİLM' VEYA 'SİNEMA' TARİHİ: SİNEMA TARİHİ YAZIMINDA YENİ GELİŞEN İLKELER, KURAMLAR VE METODOLOJİLER ÜZERİNE DÜŞÜNCELER

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This study complies with research and publication ethics

Bu çalışma araştırma ve yayın etiğine uygun olarak gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Film as an artefact has long been the subject of study by "film historians," whether in terms of stylistic authenticity, genre specificity, or "high theory" analysis. Conversely, film history has been written as if films had no audiences (Bitereyst et al, 2012, p. 693). This kind of filmic-textual research tendency lies at the heart of the legacy of film studies discipline. In 1973, Jean Mitry proposed an ideal of film history as simultaneously, a history of its industry, its technologies, its systems of expression (or, more precisely, its systems of signification), and aesthetic structures, all bound together by the forces of the economic, psychosocial and cultural order (Maltby, 2006, p. 80). Humanities-based film studies were first re-conceptualized by the initiatives of International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), during its 1974 and 1978 conferences. Drawing on the methodological stance of the French Annales school's *histoire totale*, participants at the 1974 FIAF conference agreed on new historiographical methodologies for all rather than linear national cinema histories. In 1990, American historian Robert Sklar brought forward three types of "cinema historians" in which only second sub-type might be labeled as 'film historian' which has been emerged from one of the following disciplines: art history, philosophy, literary studies.

The early or silent film period before 1917 was elevated to a popular subject of study at the subsequent 1978 conference. Thomas Elsaesser as one of the conference participants coined the term "media archaeology", which would pave the way for the emergence of "new film historians", such as Gunning and Robert Allen. Within the context of these new theories and histories

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of cinema, "one of the key driving ideas that feeds into media archaeology is something that Elsaesser attributes to Noël Burch: the idea of 'it could have been otherwise' (Parikka, 2012, p. 13). New film historians, as the first media archaeologists, intended to liberate from their straitjacket all those re-positionings of linear chronology that operate with hard binaries between, for instance, early cinema and classical cinema, spectacle versus narrative, linear narrative versus interactivity (Elsaesser, 2016, p. 93). As Robert Allen has argued, cinema history rather than film history, and particularly the history of its audiences, is demographic-social history (Maltby, 2006, p. 87). That's why "cinema historians" coming from different social sciences backgrounds are supposed to integrate research methodologies used in social sciences (such as oral history interviews and participant observations) and paved the way for relocating from film studies to cinema studies.

With the spatial turn in the 1980s, attention paid to the place where films were and are shown and seen (Biltereyst & Meers, 2016, p. 13). From the 1990s onwards, new studies on cinemas and the cinema-going experience were mainly carried out by Anglo-American academics (Richard Maltby, Jackie Stacey). In her empirical study on the cinema-going experiences of the British in the 1930s, Annette Kuhn incorporates theoretical (memory-text) and methodological (oral history) frameworks from memory studies into cinema studies. This was the first time that a 'bottom-up' or 'history from below' approach was used to explore how the personal or the private on the one hand, and the collective or the public on the other, work together and intersect in people's memory of cinema (Kuhn, 2011, p. 85). The implication of "cinemagoer" rather than "spectator" (used by psychoanalytic film theorists) or "audience" (used by Marxist film historians and cultural studies theorists) is crucial in giving agency to those who experienced the cinema as more than just a screened film. Annette Kuhn offers "ethno-historical" approach to re-enact the cinema memory which can be both solitary and communal. A key problem, however, when dealing with ethno-history methodology is not so much how to collect stories, histories and memories, but rather how to analyze and interpret them (Biltereyst et al, 2012, p. 704). That's why Kuhn elaborated on three forms of cinema memory. (1) Remembered scenes or images from films (Type A memories), (2) situated memories of films (Type B memories), and (3) memories of cinema going (Type C memories) are particularly noticeable in early childhood.

In the second decade of the 2000s, Richard Maltby coined the term "new cinema history" to refer to an intellectual movement preoccupies with the distribution, exhibition, programming and cinema-going experiences rather than film-centric historiography. The new cinema history offers a counterproposal to the assumption that what matters in the study of the audience experience should be restricted to 'reception' (Maltby, 2011, p. 9). The triangulation method in historical audience research, which takes Kuhn's ethno-history approach as a starting point, is widely used by new cinema historians. This three-layered research design is a combination of critical political economy analysis of

the film exhibition market, programming analysis, and oral history interviews about cinema-going experiences. It is not to say that new cinema history projects are supposed to be 'monocentric' in which a single city, neighborhood or cinematic venue has been under investigation, following triangulation methods. These micro-history projects might be operated as one branch of a larger whole, in order to reveal larger trends, factors or conditions explaining differences and similarities in cinema cultures (Biltereyst & Meers, 2016, p. 13).

Digital humanities methodologies have also been used in new cinema history projects. Jeffrey Klenotic's 'grounded visualization' (Maltby, 2011, p. 30) framework is constructed on use of geographic information systems, to map out cinematic venues, digitize the paratextual materials, such as cinema programmes, and film posters. Digital databases, such as History of Moviegoing, Exhibition and Reception Network (HoMER), CineBelgica or Cinema Context has been great exemplary on how transnational, comparative, multi-methodological research designs might be developed. For a prospective, comparative research design, new cinema historians are inclined to follow one of the four modes: (1) multiple places/spaces/sites with multiple methodological frames, (2) single place/space/site with multiple methodological frames, (3) multiple places/spaces/sites with similar methodological frame, (4) single place/space/site with similar methodological frame (Biltereyst & Meers, 2016, p. 23). First and third mode of comparative research designs are quite popular in digital databases. John Sedgwicks's *POPSTAT Index of Film Popularity* which has also been aligned with new cinema history priorities might be exemplary of third mode. It should be noted that film popularity is key metric for new cinema historians, rather than its artistic valorization. Recently, multiple places/spaces/sites with multiple methodological –first mode- comparative research has been conducted within Flanders and Mexico City. A large portion of new cinema history projects in Turkey might be exemplary of fourth mode of research which has been applied to a single place/space/site, except Aydın Çam and İlke Şanlıer Yüksel's triangulation research designs –mode 2- on Adana region.

In general terms, emerging audiences have transitioned from mass media within industrial society to niche audiences and terrestrial and digital media within post-industrial society (Wessels et al, 2022, p. 146). Cinema as a textually disintegrated phenomenon experienced through multiple and unpredictably proliferating sites and modalities (Allen, 2011, p. 44). As Perks writes, content flow has also now become viewer-directed and viewer-contained (Perks et al, 2023, p. 133). This means that the relocation of filmic experiences predominantly in miniplexes/multiplexes and streaming platforms are also subjects of study. Even a virtual watch party can be regarded as a research site for new cinema history. New cinema historians explore this blurred distinction between tele-viewing and film-viewing by tracing the communal and solitary nature of viewing experiences. They investigate how temporal and spatial dimensions of viewing have changed and had an impact both communal and solitary experiences. Wessels et al (2022, p. 150) postulates that there are

emerging five types of audience experiences articulated in new cinema history research: individualized audience experience, group audience experience, venue-specific audience experiences, global audience experience, digital audience experiences.

To sum up, I would like to express that there is still a possibility of writing cinema history from below. These are the key offerings of new cinema histories that have drastically changed cinema and media historiography: (1) its emphasis on cinema as a social event, (2) multi-methodological/mixed research methodologies (i.e. triangulation in historical audience research), (3) comparative, collaborative, transnational project structure, (4) memory studies glossary as theoretical backgrounds, (5) integration/use of geographical information systems for digital databases, (6) contextualization of cinema studies (distribution, exhibition, programming) as social science rather than film studies in the grip of humanities, (7) offering a history from below, alternative historiography giving voice to minority groups, agency, (8) contextualization of cinema studies (distribution, exhibition, programming) as social science rather than film studies in the grips of humanities.

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