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## A VIEW OF THE WORKING CLASS THROUGH KEN LOACH

### CINEMA

#### *İşçi Sınıfına Ken Loach Sineması Üzerinden Bakış*

İsmail Taşar\*

#### **Abstract**

*Ken Loach often deals with controversial topics in his films and makes many political references. The class struggle, the problems of workers, and unemployment are the essence of his films. In his films, Loach targets the lack of consciousness of individuals and the excessive capitalism that has led the working class to a dead end. In his films, the individual is in society and his relationship is in a reciprocal state. The problems of people from the lower strata and the workers' problems frequently covered by Ken Loach will be discussed through a literature review and descriptive film analysis method. It is understood that the director specifically mentions these problems, which he often deals with in his films, in almost every film and draws attention to these problems and proposes solutions. Within the scope of this article, the films *Bread and Roses* (2000), *The Navigators* (2001), *It's a Free World* (20007), *Looking for Eric* (2009), *The Angels' Share* (2012), and *I, Daniel Blake* (Ben, Daniel Blake, 2016) will be briefly examined in order to show the typical features of Ken Loach films after the year 2000.*

**Keywords:** Ken Loach, British Cinema, Labor Films, Political Cinema, Realistic Cinema

#### **Öz**

*İngiliz filmlerinin izleyici tarafından sıkıcı bulunması ve sermaye bulma sorunları gibi problemler sonucunda İngiltere film gösterim pazarını Amerikan sinema filmleri ele geçirmiştir. Bu soruna, hükümetin 1927'de Sinema Filmler Yasası'nı (Kota Yasası) çıkartması da herhangi bir çözüm olamamıştır. Ayrıca İkinci Dünya Savaşı da İngiliz sinemacıları olumsuz yönde etkiler. Ekipman yoksunluğu, nitelikli sinema çalışanlarının askere alınmaları ve uygulanan ambargolar sonucunda İngiliz sinemacılar zor durumda kalır. Ardından daha gerçekçi bir sinema ve İngiliz Yeni Dalgasının yolu açılır. Ken Loach filmlerinde tartışmalı konuları sıklıkla işler ve çokça siyasal göndermeleri yapar. Sınıf mücadelesi, işçi ve işsizlik sorunları onun filmlerinin özünü oluşturmaktadır. O, devlet ve din gibi bir takım baskıcı sistemin eline düşmüş insan sorunlarına değinir. Loach filmlerinde, kişilerin bilinç eksikliklerini ve işçi sınıfını açmaza sürükleyen ölçsüz kapitalizmi hedef alır. Onun filmlerinde birey toplumun içinde ve onunla karşılıklı bir ilişki halindedir. Loach, feminizm, toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsel kimlikler ve etnik azınlık sorunlarıyla doğrudan ilgilenmez, fakat kadınların aile sorunlarıyla ilgilenir. Ken Loach tarafından sıklıkla işlenen alt tabakadan kişilerin sorunları ile işçi problemlerine filmlerde nasıl yer verildiği literatür taraması ve betimsel film analizi yöntemiyle ele*

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alınacaktır. Yönetmenin filmlerinde sıklıkla işlediği bu problemlere hemen her filminde özellikle değindiği ve bu problemlere dikkat çekerek çözüm önerilerinde bulunduğu anlaşılmıştır. Bu makale kapsamında, 2000 yılı sonrası Ken Loach filmlerinin tipik özelliklerini göstermesi açısından *Bread and Roses* (Ekmek ve Güller, 2000), *The Navigators* (Demiryolcular, 2001), *It's a Free World* (İşte Özgür Dünya, 20007), *Looking for Eric* (Hayata Çalış At, 2009), *The Angels' Share* (2012), and *I, Daniel Blake* (Ben, Daniel Blake, 2016) filmleri kısaca incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ken Loach, İngiltere Sineması, İşçi Filmleri, Politik Sinema, Gerçekçi Sinema

### Uzun Özet (Extended Summary)

Ken (Kenneth) Loach, 17 Haziran 1936 Nuneaton, Warwickshire, İngiltere doğumludur. Oxford Üniversitesi'nde hukuk okuduktan sonra 1963 yılında BBC'de stajyer olarak işe başlar. Burada çeşitli dizi ve televizyon filmleri yaptıktan sonra sinemaya atılır. İşçi hareketlerinin başındaki iki bela olarak gördüğü Stalinizm ve sosyal demokrasi filmlerinde sıkça işlemiştir (Hayward, 2004, s. 334).

Tolga Yalur'a göre, Ken Loach filmlerinde tartışmalı konular sıklıkla işlenir ve siyasal göndermelere çokça rastlanır. Loach, filmlerinde duyarlı olmaya yönlendirir, izleyicisini düşünmeye zorlar. Sınıf mücadelesi, işçi ve işsizlik sorunları filmlerinin özünü oluşturur. Filmlerinde bireylerin inşası kültürle, tarihle ve çevreyle birlikte dönüşmeleriyle sağlanır. Devlet ve din gibi bir takım baskıcı sistemin eline düşmüş insan sorunlarına değinilir. Loach filmlerinde, kişilerin bilinç eksikliklerini ve işçi sınıfını açmaza sürükleyen ölçsüz kapitalizmi hedef alır. Thatcher ve serbest piyasa ekonomisini hedef alır. Thatcher'in ölümünün ardından, cenazesinin özelleştirilmesini, zira eğer yaşasaydı Thatcher'in da böyle isteyeceğini söylemiştir. Loach filmlerinde birey, toplumun içinde ve onunla ilişki halindedir. Bu sebeple bireyciliğe değil, bireyin kendinin farkında olmasını önemsemiştir. Bu filmlerde varoluşçu bir ateist dünya görüşü hâkimdir. Tinsel yolculuk veya dinsel aidiyet manasızdır. Film karakterlerinin kimsenin ruhsal rehberliğine ihtiyaçları yoktur. Loach, feminizm, toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsel kimlikler ve etnik azınlık sorunlarıyla doğrudan ilgilenmemiştir. Kadınların aile sorunlarıyla ilgilenir (Yalur, 2015).

Loach, Gavin Smith ile olan söyleşisinde, siyasal görüşlerinin tanıdığı ve beraber çalıştığı insanlar ile geliştiğini söylemiştir. Siyasete insanlar aracılığıyla yaklaşıldığını düşünmektedir. İnsanların kendi deneyimlerinin ve kitapların siyasal görüşlerin gelişmesinde tek başlarına yeterli olmadığını düşünmektedir. Yine aynı söyleşide Loach, Fransız Yeni Dalgasından ve Çek sinemasından etkilendiğini dile getirmiştir (Smith, 2015, ss. 75, 79). Loach sıklıkla kendisi gibi muhalif görüşe sahip kişilerle çalışmıştır. Bunlardan biri de Eric Cantona'dır (Éric Daniel Pierre Cantona). Loach, *Looking for Eric* (Hayata Çalış At, 2009) filminde Cantona ile çalışmıştır. Filmde, hayatı dağılmakta olan bir postacının Cantona'yı arayışı konu edilmektedir. Cantona, filmde kendini oynamıştır. Loach, Robert Chalmers ile olan söyleşisinde şirket olarak Avrupa'daki bağlantıları sayesinde ayakta kalabildiklerinden bahseder. Bu bağlantıların olmaması durumunda o zamana kadar başardıklarının hiçbirini gerçekleştiremeyeceğini söyler (Chalmers, 2015, ss. 128-129, 131). Loach, Dave Golokhov ile röportajında Cantona'yı seçim sebeplerinden bahseder. Cantona'nın Cristiano Ronaldo'dan daha iyi bir tercih olduğunu, çünkü Cantona'nın hayranlarıyla ilişkisinin eşsiz olduğunu söyler. Futbolu bıraktıktan on bir yıl sonra bile taraftarların hala Cantona tezahürat yaptıklarından

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bahseder. Loach'a göre, Cantona'nın hayranlarıyla ilişkisi, futboldaki yeteneğinin üzerindedir (Golokhov, 2015, s. 201).

Loach, Hasan Cömert ve Simla Yerlikaya ile yaptığı söyleşisinde, işçi sınıfının yönetmeni olarak anılması gerçekten doğruysa bundan çok gururlanacağından bahseder. İnsanların onu böyle tanımlamasından oldukça hoşnuttur. Yine bu söyleşisinde Amerikalıların filmlerinde kendilerini her zaman ezilmiş, zengin, üstün ve dünyanın hâkimi olarak gösterdiğinden ve kendisinin de buna karşı olduğundan bahseder. Ona göre, Hollywood tarafından tüm dünyaya dayatılan bu bakış açısında bir taraf tutma vardır. Kendisini de karşı tarafta görür ve Hollywood'un bu fikirlerini filmlerinde eleştirir. Ayrıca Kathryn Bigelow'un Oscar gecesi yaptığı konuşmayı, Amerikan askerlerinin bir milyon Iraklıyı öldürmesi, dört milyon Iraklıyı yerinden etmesi ve bunları sadece kendi çıkarları için yapması sebebiyle, eleştirir. Loach, Bigelow'un konuşmasını Amerikan askerlerine değil, bu savaşta ölenlere adanması gerektiğini düşünmektedir. Bir kadın yönetmenin ilk kez Oscar almasının heyecan verici olduğunu fakat Bigelow'un konuşmasının kendisinde hayal kırıklığı yarattığından bahseder (Cömert ve Yerlikaya, 2015, ss. 136-137).

Loach, David Walsh ve Joanne Laurier ile yaptığı söyleşide *Route Irish* (Tehlikeli Yol, 2010) filminin çıkış noktalarından bahseder. İngilizlerin Irak savaşına dâhil olmalarının, kendileri açısından çok önemli ve maalesef üzerinde pek durulmayan bir mesele olduğunu söyler. Loach, filmi eski bir paralı asker üzerinden anlatır. Sempatik olmayan bir kahraman kullanımının filmi zorlaştırdığından bahseder. Batının açtığı savaşlarla ilgili filmlerde özellikle Batının trajedisi izleyiciye gösterilmektedir. Oysa saldırılan tarafın trajedisi mevcuttur. Loach filminde seyircinin Irak'ın trajedisini hissedebilmesi için anne karakteri ve çocukları kullandığını söyler (Walsh ve Laurier, 2015, ss. 141-142). Loach, Kate Muir ile yaptığı söyleşisinde, oyuncu seçimlerinde nasıl bir tutum izlediğinden bahseder. Filmlerinde tecrübesiz oyuncular kullanmaktadır ve bu sayede filmlerinin daha doğal olabildiğini düşünmektedir. Loach'a göre tecrübeli oyuncular karınlarından konuşur. Bu yüzden bu konuşmaları beyinleriyle düşünerek yapamazlar. Amatör oyunculara ise kelimeler tekniğin süzgecinden geçmemekte ve içgüdüsel olarak ağızdan çıkmaktadır. Potansiyel bir oyuncuyu beş altı farklı senaryoda oynatarak test eden Loach, bu sayede dili çok iyi kullanan oyuncuları seçebildiğinden bahseder. Amatör oyuncuların dilbaz olduklarından ve doğal bir ahenkle konuştuklarından bahseden Loach, orta sınıfın ise kendilerini bastırdıkları için bunu başaramadıklarını söyler (Muir, 2015, s.166).

Loach, anlatmak ve göstermek amacıyla tercih ettiğiniz resmin, sizin hangi meselelerle ilgili olduğunuzu gösterir tezini, Frank Barat ile yaptığı söyleşisinde dile getirmiştir. Ezilmenin olduğu bir dünyada hayalperest şeyler yapmanın tamamen bir öncelik meselesi olduğunu söyler. Para kazanmak için büyük ticari filmler yapmak bir şeylerin göstergesidir. Bu siyasal bir tutumdur ve bunun siyasal sonuçları vardır. Sanatta çoğu zaman siyasal bir içerik ve ima vardır. Yine bu söyleşide Loach, aşırı sağın yükselişinin her zaman ekonomik durgunluk, kriz ve büyük çapta bir işsizlikle birlikte olduğunu savunur. Güçlerini korumak isteyen iktidar, halkın gerçek düşmanı olan kapitalist sınıf, büyük endüstri sahipleri gibi gerçek düşmanlarıyla savaşmasını önlemek için günah keçileri bularak halkı yönlendirir. Çoğunlukla da en fakirler, göçmenler ve romanlar günah keçileri olarak ilan edilirler. Ekonomik sistemdeki krizlerin sebebi olarak zayıf ve savunmasız olanı suçlamak sağcı siyasetin her zaman tercihi olmuştur (Barat, 2015, ss. 206-207).

## Introduction

This article will focus on the short historical development of British cinema, the features of Ken Loach, and some of his films which are *Bread and Roses* (2000), *The Navigators* (2001), *It's a Free World* (20007), *Looking for Eric* (2009), *The Angels' Share* (2012), and *I, Daniel Blake* (2016). Because these films will be examined to show the typical features of the director's films. Ken Loach's realistic, communal, pro-public, and independent director will be mentioned. The main sources for these reviews within the scope of the article will be books and films about British cinema and director Ken Loach. The review will be carried out by scanning the relevant sources, watching the director's films many times, and taking notes on the necessary points. The problems of people from the lower strata and the workers' problems frequently covered by Ken Loach will be discussed. It is understood that the director specifically mentions these problems, which he often deals with in his films, in almost every film and draws attention to these problems and proposes solutions. The problems of people from the lower strata and the workers' problems frequently covered by Ken Loach will be discussed through a literature review and descriptive film analysis method. It is understood that the director specifically mentions these problems, which he often deals with in his films, in almost every film and draws attention to these problems and proposes solutions.

## A Brief Look at British Cinema

British cinema developed quite rapidly in the early years of cinema, but then Hollywood cinema dominated British cinema as well as all over the world. On the subject, John Hawkrige believes that British cinema had an effective beginning but then fell into stagnation and decline. In *The Blacksmith's Daughter* (1904), for the first time in history, a double point of view was shot from the location of both the ministers and the subject. Over time, American films, with multi-reel film systems and successful star systems, dominate Britain. Chrissie White, Alma Taylor, and Betty Balfour were the few British stars of the 1920s. British cinema cannot cope with American cinema. Less than 5% of the films released in Britain in 1926 were British films. The reasons

why British cinema could not hold out against American cinema were technical and material impossibilities, the lack of a strong star system, and the monotony of the editing of motion pictures by the audience (Hawkrige, 2008, pp. 162-165).

According to Antonia Lant, cinema with synchronized sound was largely dependent on American technologies such as Vitaphone and Movietone. In addition, American films that subtracted filmmaking costs at home were able to break the price in the international market. British cinema could not establish a presence in the face of the practices of American distributors such as block selling, price breaking, and buying without seeing. Nearly ninety percent of the feature films released in Britain in 1927 were American Films. Following this, the government enacted the Motion Picture Act (Quota Law) in 1927. With this law, practices such as block selling and buying without seeing were prohibited and British cinema was tried to be strengthened. After the advent of sound, there has been an increase in imperial films about the past or colonial period. Films have been made on topics such as patriotism, national honor, monarchy, and aristocracy (Lant, 2008, p. 415, 417). In the 1930s, with the increase in the voice of the mass of the unemployed, the social impact of cinema and its role in class relations began to be emphasized. A cinema begins to form, organized around independent halls and workers' clubs. The outbreak of the Second World War led to a more intense discussion of the social role of cinema. Seeing the impact of cinema on society, the parliament began to interfere in the issues of the films produced. Every scene that would benefit Britain's enemies was censored (Lant, 2008, p. 419, 421).

Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards argue that the Second World War began with misfortunes for British Cinema. With the outbreak of war on September 3, 1939, theatres and sports venues were closed, as were all cinema halls in England. Closure decisions are taken by order of the Council and fears of mass murder in these areas. However, as a result of the immediate recognition of German planes on the horizon and the failure of their attacks, the government relaxed its prohibition decisions (Aldgate and Richards, 2007, p. 2). The Second World War inevitably affected filmmakers negatively. Due to the lack of equipment, the recruitment of qualified personnel, and the



embargo imposed, British filmmakers who needed up to six hundred long film reels a year were left in a difficult situation. The industrial branch of production also suffers from such material deprivations. The government then provides them with various tax advantages to support many studios (Political and Economic Planning, 1952, p. 80). The war period made positive contributions to documentary cinema. But filmmakers have chosen particularly propagandistic documentaries (Aldgate and Richards, 2007, p. 9). However, sometime after the war, the traditions of masculinity required by patriotism and gender roles became questionable. This paved the way for a more realistic cinema and the British New Wave, from the 1960s to the present (Lant, 2008, p. 427, 429). Duncan Petrie states that the British New Wave stemmed from contemporary working-class experiences, Free Cinema, a movement of dissident filmmakers and critics such as Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson (Petrie, 2008, pp. 681-682).

### **Ken Loach, The Voice of Labor Class**

Ken (Kenneth) Loach was born on 17 June 1936 in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, England. After studying Law at Oxford University, he took a job as an intern at the BBC in 1963. After shooting various series and television films here, he was thrown into the cinema. He frequently dealt with Stalinism and social democracy, which he saw as the two troubles of the workers' movements, in his films. The director, who has received many awards for his films, is married to Lesley Ashton and has five children (Hayward, 2004, p. 334).

According to Tolga Yalur, controversial topics are often dealt with in Ken Loach films and political references are common. Loach directs his audience to be sensitive in his films, forcing his audience to think. The class struggle, workers' and unemployment problems are the core of his films. In his films, the construction of individuals is ensured by their transformation together with culture, history, and environment. Human problems that have fallen into the hands of several oppressive systems, such as the state and religion, are addressed. In his films, Loach targets the lack of consciousness of individuals and the excessive capitalism that has led the working class to a dead end. It targets Thatcher and the free market economy. After

Thatcher's death, he said that her funeral should be privatized, because if she had lived, Thatcher would have wanted it that way. In Loach's films, the individual is about society. For this reason, he did not care about individualism, but about the individual's self-awareness. These films are dominated by an existentialist atheist worldview. A spiritual journey or religious belonging is meaningless. Movie characters don't need anyone's spiritual guidance. Loach did not deal directly with feminism, gender, gender identities, and ethnic minority issues. Takes care of women's family problems (Yalur, 2015, pp. 227-238).

In an interview with Gavin Smith, Loach said that his political views evolved with the people he met and worked with. He thinks that politics is approached through people. He thinks that people's experiences and books alone are not enough to develop political views. In the same interview, Loach expressed that he was influenced by the French New Wave and Czech cinema (Smith, 2015, p. 75, 79). In all his films, the director was not influenced by the British New Wave cinema movement. However, it has been stated by academics that the director's film *Poor Cow* (*Düşen Kadın*, 1967) was influenced by this cinematic movement (Badley, PalmerSchneider, 2006, p. 55). This influence has been so intense that it is possible to see them in almost every film by Ken Loach. The films examined within the scope of this research are typical examples of this. For instance, all kinds of labor classes are viewed in his movies. Loach has often worked with dissident people like himself. One of them is Eric Cantona (Éric Daniel Pierre Cantona). Loach worked with Cantona on *Looking for Eric* (2009). The film follows a disintegrating postman's search for Cantona. Cantona played herself in the film. In an interview with Robert Chalmers, Loach talks about how the company has survived thanks to its connections in Europe. He says that without these connections, he would not be able to accomplish any of what he had achieved until then (Chalmers, 2015, pp. 128-129, 131). In an interview with Dave Golokhov, Loach talks about his reasons for choosing Cantona. He says Cantona is a better choice than Cristiano Ronaldo because Cantona's relationship with his fans is unique. Eleven years after he quit football, he mentions that fans are still cheering for Cantona. According to Loach,



Cantona's relationship with her fans is above her talent in football (Golokhov, 2015, p. 201).

In his interview with Hasan Cömert and Simla Yerlikaya, Loach mentions that if it is indeed true that he should be called the director of the working class, he would be very proud. He's quite happy that people describe him that way. In this interview, he mentions that Americans have always shown themselves in their films as oppressed, rich, superior, and the ruler of the world and that he is against this. According to him, there is a bias in this point of view imposed by Hollywood on the whole world. He sees himself on the other side and criticizes these ideas of Hollywood in his films. He also criticized Kathryn Bigelow's Oscars-night speech for killing one million Iraqis and displacing four million Iraqis by American troops and doing so solely for her benefit. Loach thinks Bigelow should dedicate his speech not to American soldiers, but to those who died in this war. She mentions that it was exciting for a female director to receive an Oscar for the first time, but that Bigelow's speech was disappointing for her (Cömert and Yerlikaya, 2015, pp. 136-137).

In an interview with David Walsh and Joanne Laurier, Loach talks about the origins of *Route Irish* (2010). He says that the British involvement in the Iraq war was a very important and unfortunately unconsidered issue for them. Loach narrates the film through a former mercenary. He mentions that the use of an unsympathetic hero complicates the film. In films about the wars waged by the West, especially the tragedy of the West is shown to the audience. However, there is the tragedy of the attacked side. In the film Loach, she says that she uses the mother character and children to make the audience feel the tragedy of Iraq (Walsh and Laurier, 2015, pp. 141-142). In an interview with Kate Muir, Loach talks about his casting attitude. He uses inexperienced actors in his films and thinks that his films can be more natural. According to Loach, experienced players talk about their bellies. That's why they can't have these conversations thinking with their brains. In amateur players, words do not pass through the filter of technique and instinctively come out of the mouth. Loach tests a potential player by playing in five or six different scenarios, so he can select players who use the language very well. Loach mentions that amateur players are diluted and speak with

natural harmony and that the middle class cannot achieve this because they suppress themselves (Muir, 2015, p. 166).

Loach expressed the thesis that the picture you prefer to tell, and exhibit shows what issues you are related to in his interview with Frank Barat. In a world of oppression, the dreamer says that doing things is purely a matter of priority. Making big commercial films to make money is a sign of things. This is a political attitude, and it has political consequences. There is often political content and implication in art. Also in this interview, Loach argues that the rise of the far right has always been accompanied by economic stagnation, crisis, and large-scale unemployment. The government, which wants to maintain its power, manipulates the people by finding scapegoats to prevent it from fighting its real enemies, such as the capitalist class, and the big industrial owners, who are the real enemies of the people. Often the poorest, immigrants and Roma are proclaimed scapegoats. Blaming the weak and vulnerable as the cause of the crises in the economic system has always been the choice of right-wing politics (Barat, 2015, pp. 206-207).

The Filmography of Ken Loach (Yalur, 2015, pp. 227-238)	
Television	Cinema
<i>Catherine (1964)</i> <i>Z-Cars (1964)</i> <i>Diary of a Young Man (1964)</i> <i>Tap on the Shoulder (1965)</i> <i>Wear a Very Big Hat (1965)</i> <i>Three Clear Sundays (1965)</i> <i>Up the Junction (1965)</i> <i>The End of Arthur's Marriage (1965)</i> <i>The Coming Out Party (1965)</i> <i>Cathy Come Home (1966)</i>	<i>Poor Cow (1967)</i> <i>Kes (1969)</i> <i>The Save the Children Fund Film (1971)</i> <i>Family Life (1971)</i> <i>Black Jack (1979)</i> <i>Looks and Smiles (1981)</i> <i>Fatherland (1986)</i> <i>Hidden Agenda (1990)</i> <i>Riff-Raff (1991)</i>

*In Two Minds (1967)*

*The Golden Vision (1968)*

*The Big Flame (1969)*

*The Rank and the File (1971)*

*After a Lifetime (1971)*

*A Misfortune (1973)*

*Days of Hope (1975)*

*The Price of Coal (1977)*

*The Gamekeeper (1980)*

*Auditions (1980)*

*A Question of Leadership  
(1981)*

*The Red and the Blue:  
Impressions of Two Political  
Conferences - Autumn 1982  
(1983)*

*Questions of Leadership  
(1983/4)*

*Which Side Are You On? (1985)*

*End of the Battle... Not the End of  
the War (1985)*

*Time to Go (1989)*

*The View From the Woodpile  
(1989)*

*The Arthur Legend (1991)*

*The Flickering Flame (1996)*

*Another City: A Week in the Life  
of Bath's Football Club (1998)*

*Raining Stones (1993)*

*Ladybird Ladybird (1994)*

*Land and Freedom (1995)*

*A Contemporary Case for  
Common Ownership (1995)*

*Carla's Song (1996)*

*The Flickering Flame (1997)*

*My Name Is Joe (1998)*

*Bread and Roses (2000)*

*The Navigators (2001)*

*Sweet Sixteen (2002)*

*11'09"01 September 11 (2002)*

*Ae Fond Kiss... (2004)*

*McLibel (2005)*

*Tickets (2005)*

*The Wind That Shakes the Barley  
(2006)*

*It's a Free World... (2007)*

*Looking for Eric (2009)*

*Route Irish (2010)*

*The Angels' Share (2012)*

*The Spirit of '45 (2013)*

*Jimmy's Hall (2014)*

	<i>I, Daniel Blake (2016)</i>
	<i>Sorry We Missed You (2019)</i>

In addition, his films have received awards from many major film festivals such as Cannes, Berlin, and Italy. Some of these award-winning films include (Hayward, 2004, p. 328-333). *Kes*, Crystal Globe (Ken Loach), Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, 1970. *Which Side Are You On?*, OCIC Award (Ken Loach), Berlin International Film Festival, 1985. *Riff-Raff*, FIPRESCI Award (Ken Loach), Cannes Film Festival, 1991. *Ladybird*, Universal Jury Prize (Ken Loach), BUFF, 1994. *Carla's Song*, Italian Senate Presidency Gold Award (Ken Loach), Venice Film Festival, 1996. *My Name Is Joe*, Best British Independent Film, British Independent Film Awards.

### **Films to Analyze**

Within the scope of this article, the films *Bread and Roses (2000)*, *The Navigators (2001)*, *It's a Free World (2007)*, *Looking for Eric (2009)*, *The Angels' Share (2012)*, and *I, Daniel Blake (Ben, Daniel Blake, 2016)* will be briefly examined in order to show the typical features of Ken Loach films after the year 2000.

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### **Bread and Roses (2000)**

The film depicts Mexican and Central American immigrants working as cleaning workers in Los Angeles, United States, organizing to improve their living conditions. The film begins with Mexican immigrants entering the country illegally across the Mexican American border. In this episode, the cruelty of migrants by smugglers and the harassment of female migrants are shown to the viewer. Maya, the main character of the film, lives with her sister (Rosa), and through her, she starts working in a cleaning company. Perez, who hires Maya, wants her to give her first salary in exchange for preparing her documents. Maya encounters Sam, who has sneaked into the company. He then helps Sam escape the company without being caught by security. Sam works on behalf of the cleaners' union, and his purpose in coming to the firm is to warn workers that they must be unionized. Because the hourly

wage of workers in the state of Los Angeles is low and these workers are employed without insurance. In addition, these workers do not have health insurance because their insurance premiums are not paid. However, in the union building in the city center, all cleaning workers work with insurance.

In the film, the success of the action of the unions, the workers led by Sam, belongs to Sam, who mobilizes the workers to resist rather than the consciousness of the workers to organize. In his film, Ken Loach proposes a collective consciousness of the working class so that they can prevent the exploitation of their rights. He also draws attention to the importance of being a member of a trade union. In the film, he used the line "Uniforms make them invisible." He shows that the power that will make the workers visible in the film is unionization, collective consciousness, and having a fighting spirit. In the film, it is clearly emphasized that the media is a very important tool in announcing the situation to the public.

### **The Navigators (2001)**

The film depicts changes in the lives of railroad workers in the South Yorkshire region following the privatization of the state-owned British Rails firm in 1995. In a promotional video from one of the first scenes of the film, it is explained that this change in Britain is not just an industrial change. In this promotional video, it is emphasized that there will be a process of change in the cultural sense at the same time as the industrial change. At first, the workers did not take the issue seriously. Ken Loach also featured the family life of two workers in the film to show the audience that British family life was also affected by the changes that were taking place. The film ends with Jim, who works on the railroad, being accepted as a normal thing as his death as a result of being hit by a locomotive. John, Mick, and Paul likened the accident to a classic car crash. Because they are very afraid of being fired from their jobs.

Through the trailer shown in one of the film's opening scenes, workers will no longer be required to work alone, they will also be forced to showcase their talents and succeed. Because the privatization policy demands performance evaluation in an objective way. The workers, who did not take the statements seriously at first, later

realized the seriousness of the incident as a result of the dismissal of some workers. The film also touches on the relationship of some of the workers with their families. The aim here is to convey to the audience how the change that has taken place in the lives of the workers is reflected in the British family order. Because the bond between families is about to be broken and the concept of family solidarity has come to the point of disappearing. While the current system is unscrupulous for all individuals, the way this cruelty is reflected in family relationships is that men who have lost their position are humiliated and left alone by women. In fact, what is wanted to be criticized in the film is the liberal policies that exploit both of these sexes and force them to obey.

### **It's a Free World (2007)**

The film tells the story of Angie, who is trying to take advantage of the labor of immigrants and is also an immigrant herself. Angie is a character who has problems with her son Jamie and his family. Jamie, a troubled student at school, is cared for by his grandfather and grandmother. When Angie is fired from her longtime job, she decides to open her own agency. In the opening and closing scenes of the film, unemployment and poverty in Ukraine and Poland are shown to the viewer. People who have skilled jobs in their own countries want to come to Britain to get their lives in order because of the political problems and unemployment in their countries. But instead of finding jobs for immigrants based on their experience, job agencies, including Angie, exploit them with low-paying and temporary jobs.

In this film, Ken Loach criticizes the system in which migrant workers are subjected to labor exploitation. The film draws attention to the migration to Britain, especially from Eastern European countries, after the Cold War and criticizes the neo-liberal policies that exploit immigrants. The situation of immigrants in Britain, who have received emigration from many countries, is very pitiful. Migrants who are deceived by promises of qualified work and lose their money to agencies stay in camps and are employed in jobs that are not guaranteed with low salaries. In particular, the situation of migrant workers without work permits is even worse. Agencies don't even make the payments they promised these people. It is also possible to make predictions



about social classes based on the film. In the film, it is mentioned that many different groups are stratified among themselves and that each of these groups is open to exploitation. These groups are subjected to labor exploitation by interest groups.

### **Looking for Eric (2009)**

The film depicts many problems in the life of a postman named Eric Bishop. Manchester United football club athlete Eric Cantona played himself in the film. Postman Eric Bishop is a fan of the Manchester United team, and the film intersects the lives of footballer Eric Cantona and postman Eric Bishop. Realizing that Eric Bishop is depressed, his close friends help him as much as they can. Bishop's friend Meatballs wants to apply a passage from the self-help book he found that might be useful to Eric. As Meatballs is written in the book, he asks everyone present to visualize one of the people they most admire. Eric Bishop chooses Cantona because he admires her. After returning home at night, he takes some marijuana without sleeping and starts talking to the poster of Eric Cantona hanging on the wall in the room with the effect of the marijuana he has taken. Later, as the effect of marijuana shows even more strongly, Bishop assumes that Cantona is there. Eric Cantona then begins to help Bishop by guiding him through every stage of his life. In the later scenes of the film, it is understood that Eric Bishop's main problem is his ex-wife Lilly and that the problems between them need to be solved. As Bishop struggles to get his life in order, Eric Cantona begins to overcome the challenges that come his way. In fact, Cantona doesn't really exist. Eric struggles with all the problems alone, thinking about how Cantona can act in the events that happen to him. In one of the following scenes, an argument between United fans and Manchester fans who continue to struggle against privatization shows that the club's origins are actually the continuation of Newton Heath, which was founded by railroaders. Because ticket prices are high, the working class has to do dirty work to watch the games.

The film depicts Eric Bishop's internal conflicts and the struggle of the working class against capitalist ideology through a football-oriented perspective. Football is an activity that allows the working class to relax and readjust to the next process of work.

Although football is an activity that relaxes individuals, it rearranges the tools such as time, rules, hierarchical structure, spatial criteria, which are the determining factors of the labor process. In other words, football prepares people to obey the existing political structure in a disciplined way, both physically and mentally. In short, from this theme preferred by Ken Loach, it can be concluded that football is both an activity and a tool that can be used culturally for the benefit of the working class. In order to emphasize how important football is for working people, the film shows other vital activities such as birth, death, and marriage in the second plan. While Ken Loach movies don't usually have a happy ending, this film has a happy ending. But the happy ending of the film is the result of a collective effort, not an individual effort. In contrast to the protagonists in the film, who solve problems through guns in Hollywood cinema, the solution is realized through the collective solidarity of people. In the film, it is emphasized that the bad will definitely be defeated in the face of the good and it is explained that the real serious problem stems from class conflicts.

### **The Angels' Share (2012)**

The film is set in Scotland, in the north of Britain. Robbie is a criminal who must serve his sentence by working in the civil service. His girlfriend Leonie gives birth, and his son Luke is born. He does not want his son to suffer the same fate as him. Together with Mo, Rhino, and Albert, whom he met while performing his public service duty, they want to rob a whiskey factory. The supervision officer took them to a whiskey factory. During this trip, they become aware of very old and expensive whiskeys. Another thing they learn here is the Angels' Share. Two percent of the whiskey that is barreled flies and enters the air annually. This is called the share of angels. During another whiskey tasting, they learn that there is an invaluable old whiskey to be sold at auction. This whiskey is expected to find buyers at auction for more than a million pounds. The four heads decide to steal this one barrel of old whiskey. They hitchhike on a bus carrying the nuns and set off for the robbery. The robbery is successful, and they sell the whiskey they stole to a buyer. They leave a bottle of the stolen whiskey at the house of the surveillance officers as a gift. Robbie now has a job. The film ends happily with the

winners of those who have always been excluded by society and who have always been losers. Although the story is about four minds, the emphasis is on Robbie in particular. Robbie, a loser throughout his life, was saved by Leonie's love. Everything that has gone wrong until then begins to change with the birth of Luke. In Ken Loach's cinema, issues such as unemployment, poverty, and labor exploitation, in general, are touched upon and in this context, concepts such as rights, justice, and freedom are examined in a class sense. In his films, he processes the stories of the characters he has chosen from among the people. Aiming to emphasize social problems, it is difficult to consider Ken Loach's productions independently of sociopolitical conditions. The director, who has managed to reflect the problems of the working class in many ways, continues to contribute to the formation of world-class workers' films in this context. If a general evaluation is to be made for the films examined within the scope of the article, it can be said that these films hold a mirror to the class problems in society and contain messages. Ken Loach did not hesitate to criticize the system in his films. Many social problems such as exploitation, poverty, and injustice abound in his films.

The camera is located far away from the players. Since amateur actors were not as accustomed to cameras as professional actors, Loach's choice to position the camera at a distance allowed for smoother, more natural acting. Loach makes its films at an affordable cost. So, it doesn't have millions of dollars of digital effects and edits on it. In this way, films look more natural and communicate with the audience more easily. Also, Ken Loach prefers to film his films in real locations. Thus, as in his other films, the reality effect of the film increases in this film. Loach is a director who does not use the flashback technique. In this film, events follow a straight line instead of the retrograde technique. This method allows the viewer to easily understand the events that develop without getting too tired. Perhaps because of Loach's television background or his preference for realistic cinema, the camera was used remotely, in the style of documentary filming. For this reason, the film has a more realistic atmosphere.

**I, Daniel Blake (2016)**

The film tells the story of Daniel Blake, a carpenter who lives in New Castle and spends forty years of his life working many jobs. Blake suffers a heart attack while working in a construction site and is no longer able to work anymore. In order to receive social assistance, he must prove to the bureaucracy that his health condition is not good. But Blake fails to get any help from the authorities and is forced to look for a job again. He forms a relationship with a woman named Katie whom he met at the welfare center to which he applied, and with her children. Katie, like Blake, tries to fight against the corrupt order alone. Thanks to the friendship that begins between the two, two different stories will be able to progress at a single point. Another character in the film is Blake's neighbor China. He dreams of becoming rich by selling the fake shoes he brought from China. One of the remarkable points in the film is the decision-making mechanism that exists in social welfare organizations. In a scene in the film, the scolding of an officer named Ann who is trying to help Blake at the outreach organization by her manager emphasizes the existence of a system in which human beings begin to be robotized over time. An incident that happened to Katie while waiting in line at the soup kitchen is one of the breaking points of the film. He is later caught by a security guard while stealing at a convenience store. This indicates the change that the character has undergone over time. In a dialogue with Blake after the security guard Ivan obligingly accepts the prostitute job he offers, he tells her that he has no choice but to do this job in order to take care of his children. In the next stage, Daniel, who has exhausted his power, decides to carry out his struggle against the decision-making mechanism legally. In the last scene of the film, Daniel Blake, who could not stand the protracted bureaucratic processes any longer, dies as a result of a heart attack.

In this film, Ken Loach critically approaches the problems of the system through the story of Daniel Blake, a working-class man who is an alien to advanced technological gadgets. It describes how both the sick and the elderly are left to die in the wheels of the system trying to complete the procedures imposed by the bureaucratic system in order to receive social assistance from the state. It also witnesses first-hand

how the system concretely neutralizes an ordinary individual. Ken Loach points out the importance of intergenerational empathy, using characters in the same position as the social. Both characters belong to the working class and are unemployed. In addition, the reason why Daniel and Katie are close is the bureaucratic obstacle they face in terms of applying for unemployment benefits, which is also a common problem of the two. Bureaucratic obstacles destroy Katie's hopes and push her to make money on her body due to her livelihood anxiety; It will have consequences so great as to lead Daniel to his death. Today, individuals live with a view that completely obeys the rules, ignoring human values.

### **Conclusion**

Within the scope of this article, the historical development of British cinema and the characteristics of Ken Loach's films are mentioned. Firstly, it has been seen that British cinema has made an effective start, but then it has fallen into a state of pause and decline. As a result of problems such as British films being found boring by the audience and problems finding capital, American films have taken over the British market. The government's enactment of the Motion Picture Act (Quota Act) in 1927 proved to be no solution to this problem. The Second World War harmed British filmmakers. Due to the lack of equipment, the recruitment of qualified personnel, and the embargo imposed, British filmmakers were left in a difficult situation. But sometime after the war, the traditions of masculinity required by patriotism and gender roles became questionable. The way for a more realistic cinema and the British New Wave has been opened.

Ken Loach, who stands out with his more militant attitude than British New Wave directors, often dealt with controversial topics in his films and made many political references. The class struggle, the problems of workers, and unemployment form the core of his films. Human problems that have fallen into the hands of several oppressive systems, such as the state and religion, are addressed. In his films, Loach targets the lack of consciousness of individuals and the excessive capitalism that has led the working class to a dead end. Again, in his films, the individual is in contact with

society. Loach did not deal directly with feminism, gender, gender identities, and ethnic minority issues, but with women's family problems. He expressed his influence on the French New Wave and Czech cinema.

In Ken Loach's cinema, issues such as unemployment, poverty, and labor exploitation are touched upon and in this context, concepts such as rights, justice, and freedom are examined in a class sense in general. In his films, he processes the stories of the characters he has chosen from among the people. Aiming to emphasize social problems, it is difficult to consider Ken Loach's productions independently of sociopolitical conditions. The director, who has managed to reflect the problems of the working class in many ways, continues to contribute to the formation of world-class workers' films in this context.

If a general evaluation is to be made for the films examined within the scope of the article, it can be said that these films hold a mirror to the class problems in society and contain messages. Ken Loach did not hesitate to criticize the system in his films. Many social problems such as exploitation, poverty, and injustice abound in his films. Ken Loach's films can be evaluated within the framework of both mainstream and radical left film theories. These films, which include the characteristics of movements such as the Czech New Wave and Italian New Realism, show the contradictions in society with a critical style.

When we look at the six films of the director taken as a sample, it is understood that a critical question of globalized late capitalism is made in each film. In these films, the experience of the working class is dealt with at various levels. One of these films, *The Navigators*, deals with the privatization of railways, one of the most basic public services, and the process of subcontracting this service. He draws attention to the negative effects of the transformation of labor into a precarious, unorganized, and even unskilled quality on the lives of railway workers. It also states that the business culture of the new times does not lead to the kind of efficiency or an increase in the quality of services that are brought forward by the discourse of the dominant ideology. While *The Navigators* draws attention to the condemnation of railway workers from secure labor



conditions to a system of flexibility that can in a sense be called a new kind of wage slavery.

*It's a Free World* focuses on the exploitation of migrant workers, who will perhaps be put into competition with them even in this sector in the future. It shows that immigrants who come to England, especially from Eastern European countries, in order to achieve an acceptable standard of living, are employed here with low wages and short-term contracts, and sometimes migrant workers are defrauded by not even paying these low wages. This issue is not conveyed from the perspective of the workers, as in *The Navigators*, but through the life of a woman who is dressed as a labor dealer. Looking for Eric touches on a symbolic level of the resistance of both postmen and fans against the privatization of the British Postal Service and the globalized commercialization of Manchester United.

Loach uses inexperienced actors in his films, which he thinks can be more natural. He tests a potential player by playing him in five or six different scenarios so that he can select players who use the language very well. In *The Angels' Share* (2012), Loach positioned the camera away from the actors. His choice to position the camera at a distance paved the way for smoother, more natural acting. Loach is a director who does not use the flashback technique. In this film, instead of the technique of going back, events followed a straight path. Thus, the viewer can understand the events more easily without getting too tired.

In conclusion, although Ken Loach acts in a realistic tradition, he transcends the classical realistic form on both the narrative and visual levels. From the point of view of the films in the sample, there can be no question of a central main character, nor of a balance peculiar to the classical narrative, of a new state of equilibrium. In *It's a Free World*, although there is a central main character, instead of directing the audience to identify with the main character, it alienates the viewer from the character. Similarly, the film conforms to the three-act structure of the classic narrative. The problem that is usually raised by not including a new equilibrium state that resolves the conflict is left unsolved.

Looking For Eric differs slightly from the director's other films. Looking at the narrative structure, the balance reached towards the middle of the film is immediately disrupted, and the main character's actions to restore the balance are inconclusive. As mentioned above, the unexpected happy ending of the film is not really the kind of ending typical of the classical narrative. The film emphasizes a collective attitude rather than an individual victory. Subjective shots are not included in films, and angle and counter-angle shots are rarely used from subjective shots. The camera is almost always observant, and moreover, there is almost no room for objectifying close-ups, which is one of the most distinctive features of classical narrative on a formal level. In addition to making visible the contradictions in the economic and social structure, Loach also breaks away from the classical realist form, and in this context, it is seen that Loach's aesthetics and policy are in harmony.

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