



KADİR HAS UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
CINEMA AND TELEVISION DISCIPLINE AREA

**MANIFESTATION OF LOSS AND MOURNING THROUGH  
EXPRESSIVE SILENCES IN NEW CINEMA IN TURKEY**

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MASTER'S THESIS

İSTANBUL, NOVEMBER, 2018

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Kadir Has University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's/PhD in the Discipline Area of Cinema Television under the Program of Cinema Television.

İSTANBUL, NOVEMBER, 2018

I, BAHAR SARIOGLU;

Hereby declare that this Master's Thesis/Project/Phd Thesis is my own original work and that due references have been appropriately provided on all supporting literature and resources.

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19.10.2018

## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This work entitled **MANIFESTATION OF LOSS AND MOURNING THROUGH EXPRESSIVE SILENCES** prepared by **BAHAR SARIOGLU** has been judged to be successful at the defense exam held on **17.09.2018** and accepted by our jury as **MASTER'S THESIS**.

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## ABSTRACT

SARIOĞLU, BAHAR. *MANIFESTATION OF LOSS AND MOURNING THROUGH EXPRESSIVE SILENCES IN NEW CINEMA IN TURKEY*, MASTER'S THESIS, İstanbul, 2018.

This thesis aims to analyse expressive silences used in the movies about loss and mourning in the framework of New Cinema in Turkey. Different forms of silence in their various ways of functionalities will be examined with references to recent movies especially after 2000s such as *Frenzy* (Emin Alper, 2015), *Behind The Hill* (Emin Alper, 2012), and *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011). The main purpose of this research is to look at how traumatic experiences of the past are articulated through different forms of expressive silences in cinematic representation. It is about how silence is effectively employed to translate traumatic moments, loss and mourning and in which ways unsettling experiences of past can be brought into surface. The significant question is to what extent silence can be effective in the narrative structure and how it redefines the cinematic space, which is unfortunately often associated by visual space rather than auditory one. In this regard, this project aims to show that silence is more than `absence of sounds` as it has been mostly considered in the history of silence studies in cinema and its presence should be reconsidered in relation to representation of trauma and loss.

I will analyse how the use of several types of expressive silences with its specific relation to sound can be applied as a narrational tool with the aim of revealing the moments of encountering with the past, the conflicts between personal and collective memory and the collapse of narrative memory. Embodiment of loss and mourning through silences marks gaps, fractures and breaches in the narrative concerning unaccounted memories of traumatic past. It aims to show how silence goes beyond a theme which is already cultivated in the narrative and become involved in the narration as an aesthetic approach in the articulation of trauma, loss and mourning.

**Keywords:** new cinema in turkey, silence, trauma, mourning, loss

## ÖZET

SARIOĞLU, BAHAR. *YENİ TÜRKİYE SİNEMASI'NDA SESSİZLİKLER ARACILIĞIYLA KAYIP VE YASIN DIŞAVURUMU*, YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, İstanbul, 2018.

Bu tez Yeni Türkiye Sineması kapsamında yaş ve kayıplar hakkındaki filmlerde kullanılan anlatımsal sessizliklere bakmaya amaçlamaktadır. *Abluka* (Emin Alper, 2015), *Tepenin Ardı* (Emin Alper, 2012), *Gelecek Uzun Sürer* (Özcan Alper, 2011) gibi özellikle 2000 sonrası yakın dönem filmleri ele alınarak farklı sessizlik türleri, birbirinden ayrılan özellikleri ile incelenecektir. Bu araştırmanın asıl amacı geçmişe ait travmatik deneyimlerin farklı biçimlerdeki sessizlik kullanımlarıyla sinemada nasıl ifşa edildiğine bakmaktır. Bu tez sessizlik aracılığıyla etkili bir şekilde travmatik anların nasıl ifade edildiği, kayıp ve yasın nasıl dile getirildiği ve rahatsız edici bu deneyimlerin hangi yollarla gün yüzüne çıkarıldığı hakkındadır. Bu noktada en önemli soru sessizliğin anlatı yapısında ne kadar etkili olabileceği ve çoğunluklu işitsel olandan ziyade görsel alanla özdeşleşen sinematik alanı nasıl tekrardan tanımladığıdır. Bu bağlamda bu çalışma, sessizliğin sinema kuramlarında çoğunlukla bahsedildiği üzere sesin 'yokluğu' olarak ifade edilmesinin ötesinde bir öneme sahip olduğunu vurgulamayı ve sessizliğin varlığını travma ve kaybın temsiline bağlı olarak tekrardan gözden geçirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Farklı biçimdeki anlatımsal sessizliklerin ses ile kurdukları özel ilişki çerçevesinde, geçmişle yüzleşme anlarının, kişisel ve kolektif hafıza arasındaki çatlakların ve anlatısal hafızanın çökmesinin ifşa edilmesi amacıyla nasıl anlatımsal bir araç olarak kullanılabileceği analiz edilecektir. Sessizlikler geçmişin henüz yüzleşilmemiş anlarına dair anlatıda çatlakları ve gedikleri işaret etmektedir. Bu tez sessizliğin anlatıya içkin bir tema olmanın ötesinde, travma, kayıp ve yasın açık edilmesinde bir estetik yaklaşım olarak benimsenerek, anlatım biçiminin bir parçası haline geldiğini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** yeni türkiye sineması, sessizlik, travma, yas, kayıp

## INTRODUCTION

This research will explore how the unpleasant and disagreeable moments of national history, which are obscured by official discourses, can be manifested via cinematic representation in new cinema in Turkey, through expressive uses of cinematic silences with the help of a video-essay. The research will be based on a formal analysis of silence rather than a thematic discussion since a thematic analysis on a verbal level can undermine the potential of silence in the narration in terms of the manifestation of loss and mourning. In other words, silence will be discussed in a more structured way, as a significant part of the narration of the film, rather than a mere absence of words, as in the way it is mostly examined in a thematic analysis in the case of mute characters or lack of dialogue.

The reason behind the choice of video-essay for examination of silence in a formal way is the difficulty of acknowledging silence through a different medium. The important role of silence for representation of loss and mourning can be better understood with a structural discussion based on formal analysis because the meaning embedded in the silence can only be revealed when the silent moments are juxtaposed. In other words, the common implications of silence in the narration of the movie can only be uncovered through the help of bringing silent parts together in a video-essay. In addition to this, video-essay can move analysis from a thematic discussion towards the acknowledging the close relationship between the sound and silence. A formal analysis is thus necessary to show the potentials and limits of silence in the manifestation of loss and mourning, with its relations to the use of sound.

First, it is important to note that the new cinema in Turkey is taken into consideration as a case study with an aim of showing similarities concerning unconventional usage of expressive silences, especially in the movies related to issues of collective trauma, loss, and mourning. Silence transcends from only being a theme in the narrative in the films of new cinema in Turkey that this thesis deals with and turns into a significant aesthetic element in the narration. For that, these films suggest a new film language in their search for finding a new way to manifest



loss and mourning.

By underlining the importance of expressive silences as aesthetic choices in the narrative structure, this research aims to explore the performative role of silence in representing trauma and loss. Jay Winter argues silence should not be considered as “the absence of sound” but rather “the absence of conventional verbal exchanges” (Winter, 2015, p. 4). In other words, silence should also be considered as an active process within remembering and forgetting (Winter, 2015, p. 3). In the case of encountering a traumatic event, the meaning of narration may collapse, making it impossible to utilize conventional ways of revealing sentiments, such as the use of dialogue. In such cases, silence can be used for revealing feelings in the representation of loss and mourning. For these reasons, I suggest that cinematic silences open a path for revealing loss and trauma by reactivating the relationship between past and present in the active process of forgetting and remembering. Unlike the thematic analysis of silence based on the narrative of the films, this project aims to make a close analysis of silence in formal structure of the films in video-essay form and underline the performative power of silence as an aesthetic choice in the narration, with its great potential for acknowledging what is lost and what translates trauma. There are very few works which analyze the importance of silence with its interplay with sound in cinematic representation, but most of the existing works do not contain formal analysis, do not accept silence as part of the narrative and make a thematic analysis about it. For example, mostly works which study silence in cinema such as G. Khleifi and N. Gertz’s *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory* (2008) or Özlem Güçlü’s *Silent Representation of Women in the New Cinema of Turkey* (2010) analyze silence on a narrative level. They mostly refer to mute characters and the lack of dialogue. In other words, these works are more inclined to make an analysis of silence related to the story on a verbal level. In this regard, I will analyze the formal structures of the films, take the evaluation of silence beyond thematic analysis on a verbal level and demonstrate the structural types of silences embedded in the narrational structure in the movies about trauma and loss.

Moreover, there are not so many works that analyze the representations of collective trauma and memory through sound and silence. Representations of trauma, loss, and mourning are mostly discussed in visual terms, based on a thematic analysis.

However, loss and trauma transcend from just being a theme in the narrative and flows into the narration as a significant aesthetic element. Films concerned with collective trauma suggest a new film language in their search for finding a way for representation of loss. The issues of representing traumatic past, such as the collective trauma of the Holocaust, World War II, and Vietnam War are mostly discussed through images based on visual terms, yet the importance of utilization of sound with its interplay with silence in the manifestation of trauma or loss has not been paid academic attention. However, mourning, loss and trauma are not only manifested through visual elements. They are also manifested by the distinctive employment of sound and its interplay with silence, especially in the case of the new cinema in Turkey. Silence becomes a part of a new film language in the search for finding a way to represent trauma and loss. It is employed as if it is emerging from fractures, gaps, and hesitations between personal memory and collective memory, and in that way opening a breach in the narrative of official history.

Övgü Gökçe, in her article “(Cannot) Remember: Landscapes of Loss in Contemporary Turkish Cinema” in 2009, writes that there are limited number of films that deal with the issues of loss and trauma. Since 2009, countless films are produced that address the poorly discussed moments of national history in Turkey, focusing on silenced topics related to the issue of ethnic or religious discrimination, assimilation policies, unidentified murders, missing people, conflicts between the Turkish army and PKK, films such as in Özcan Alper’s *Future Lasts Forever* (2011), *Autumn* (2008), *Memories of the Wind* (2015), Zeynel Doğan’s *Voice of My Father* (2012), Tayfun Pirselimoglu’s *Nowhere Land* (2002), Yeşim Ustaoglu’s *Journey to the Sun* (2000) and *Waiting for the Clouds* (2004), Erol Mintaş’s *Berf* (2009), Rezzan Yeşilbaş’s *Silent* (2012), Reha Erdem’s *Jin* (2013), Emin Alper’s *Frenzy* (2015) and *Behind the Hill* (2012), Ceylan Özçelik’s *Inflame* (2017), Bülent Öztürk’s *Blue Silence* (Bülent Öztürk, 2017). All the movies cited above do not only focus on recent events, but they also look at the distant past and seek for a new language to articulate loss and mourning by digging through discursive strata of

official history, personal memory, and collective memory.

This thesis does not intend to explain the political or social causes of the losses. It aims to look at how these stories of loss and the processes of mourning are reflected in the cinematic representation. I argue that the expressive uses of silence in these films provide an empty space to represent counter-memories at both collective and personal level, which cannot find a place in the narrative of official history. Laura Marks defines *intercultural cinema* as a concept characterized by experimental styles which attempt to represent living between two or more cultural systems (...). Intercultural films and videos offer a variety of ways of knowing and representing the world (Marks, 2000, p. 1). Even though Marks uses this term more in the context of Euro-American or post-colonial societies, I find it useful for the analysis of the new cinema in Turkey, since starting from the mid-1990s, there has been significant interest in films that deal with the issues related to the experience of living in a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. These films do not only differ from earlier films in Turkish cinema by their new narratives of identity-crisis and issues of belonging or ethnicity, but they also offer new cinematic forms through the application of new narrative devices such as oral history, asynchronous sound or hybrid form of documentary and fiction. I will analyze different forms of expressive silences in the new cinema in Turkey, which are used in unconventional ways in the articulation of trauma, loss, and mourning.

The first chapter of the thesis debates around concepts of “Loss and Mourning,” “Sound and Silence” and “The New Cinema in Turkey”. Firstly, I will look at the theoretical works related to trauma, loss, and mourning with the intent of exploring the issue of representation of collective trauma and collective loss in cinema in general. Theories of scholars such as Cathy Caruth (2016), David Kazanjian (2003) or Sigmund Freud (1917) on trauma, loss, and mourning will be reviewed in this chapter to reconsider the issue of representation of uneasy moments of traumatic past in cinema. Based on literature on trauma, loss, and mourning, I will look at the ways in which trauma itself is represented in films and to what extent it is possible to access the trauma itself and turn into a coherent narrative. Secondly, the importance of sound and its interplay with silence, especially in the construction of meaning in cinematic representation in terms of time and space will be examined.

The determinant role of sound in the construction of off-screen space will be examined via analyzing significant work of Michel Chion (1994), David Bordwell (1994) and Mary Ann Doane (1980) to explain how silence can also play an important role in the construction of off-screen space. After evaluating the importance of sound in cinematic representation in general, I will delve into the issue of sound, and how it has been in cinema in Turkey briefly to get a broader picture. However, I will mostly elaborate how the utilized use of sound has started to change after the emergence of the new cinema in Turkey, towards a more unconventional use of sound with unusual manipulation of offscreen and onscreen space and the distinctive interplay between sound and silence. Thirdly, I will look at the characteristics of the new cinema in Turkey, with emerging different themes, more complex narrative forms, and new audio-visual styles with changing forms of filmmaking. Movies of the new cinema period characterize significant similarities in the subjects, such as identity crisis, belonging, trauma and loss. Narrative themes are not the only things that have changed with the emergence of the new cinema; a new form of narration has also emerged with an aim of finding a new way to articulate these issues in cinematic representation. Experimenting with the visual styles, such as a mixture of fact and fiction is one of the main characteristics of that period which contributes much to the formation of a new film language, especially in the manifestation of trauma and loss.

I will put forward that, mourning, loss, and remembrance are not only manifested through visual elements in these movies but also with distinctive employment of sound and its interplay with silence, which I will discuss in the last chapter in detail. The second chapter will delve into videographic film studies as a new approach to film criticism and film scholarship and I will elaborate on this choice as a method. The possible difficulties of revealing silences in written form lead to the idea of making a video essay with its great potential of displaying unconventional ways of use of filmic silences in more structural way. Moreover, it is not easy to reveal silences embedded in the movies about trauma and loss and articulate a common language to mark them. For these reasons, different types of cinematic silences through a structured video essay will be manifested by providing an audio-visual

experience. In other words, differences and similarities regarding the use of expressive silences in the narration of the films will be examined with the help of various concepts about silence including Subjective Silence, Spatial Silence, Narrative Silence, Silencing Sounds, Music Silence, Language Silence, Conversational Silence and Almost Absolute Silence. All these concepts imply different tendencies in representing trauma with silence, which I will discuss in detail in the third chapter.

In the third chapter, a close formal analysis of films of new cinema in Turkey such as *Behind the Hill* (Emin Alper, 2012), *Autumn* (Özcan Alper, 2008), *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011), *Frenzy* (Emin Alper, 2015), *Voice of My Father* (Zeynel Doğan, 2012), *Inflame* (Ceylan Özgün Özçelik, 2017), *Snow* (Erol Mintaş, 2010), *In Nowhere Land* (Tayfun Pirselimoglu, 2002), *Jin* (Reha Erdem, 2013), *Memories of the Wind* (Özcan Alper, 2015), *Waiting for Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoglu, 2004) will be conducted in order to reveal similarities and differences regarding the use of expressive silences in manifestation of contested and uneasy moments of traumatic past. In which ways the moments of encounters with incomprehensible traumatic events, loss, and mourning are manifested through silences in these movies, in revealing ghosts of the past that haunts the present will be explored by giving examples of certain scenes in the video essay. In this way, putting together different scenes from several films of new cinema will underline how these films are in dialogue with each other and imply certain tendencies regarding the use of silence in the articulation of loss and mourning. The potential of silence in the manifestation of trauma and loss will be marked by reconsidering the issue of representation of trauma in cinema. In this way, it will be showed that silence is not just absence of sounds and therefore it should not be considered with negative implications; silence carries the potential of revealing trauma and loss, not in a passive or repressing way. On the other side, silence performs an empowering role by implying loss and mourning by marking them.

Silence becomes a narrational device in cinematic representation in the articulation of trauma and loss by opening a new space to speak. It speaks for the traumatic

stories that have not been narrativized in a coherent way. For this reason, how the revelation moments of traumatic events are made through expressive silences and how silence turns become a tool to speak in the narration will be explored with the help of the video essay.



## CHAPTER 1

# LOSS AND MOURNING, SOUND AND SILENCE AND NEW CINEMA IN TURKEY

### 1.1. LOSS AND MOURNING

We decided to sit at Galatasaray square at the same hour on every Saturday quietly. I don't remember who came up with this idea, maybe it was from Nadire or everyone said one thing. One person said, "let's sit", another one said "Galatasaray", the other one said, "every week" and another one said, "let it be silent". (Ayşe Günaysu 2014)

A group of mothers, whose children disappeared under police custody, started a sit-down strike on Istiklal street on 27 May 1995. The phenomenon of Saturday Mothers was proposed by the media and mothers of the lost ones refused this concept because using the term 'mother' seemed to sentimentalize the situation. What interests me in these lines is how the upcoming idea of the public protest movement concerning missing people is fragmentedly revealed by uttering of some words without any consensus about what should be done and why silence is accepted as the main principle of the protest. In one of the protests, Saturday mothers declared: "When the words are not enough to tell, being silent is the best answer." (Ayşe Günaysu, 2014). Can this saying be applicable to cinematic representation as well? Do the silences in cinema have much more meaning than just being an absence of words? Saturday Mothers embody the issue of loss, which is mostly obscured by national discourse and poorly discussed. They reconstitute the cultural memory that is repressed by the official discourse and create an alternative narrative through revealing personal memories. They question their losses in an active process of mourning, in this way they push the limits for recognition of loss and open the way for a new understanding of its articulation. Silence is their main strategy for manifesting loss and its remains. The reason behind the choice of telling this specific event as an introduction to this chapter is to show how the process of loss and mourning resulting from incomprehensible traumatic events of the past



haunts the present in different forms, how the survivors or witnesses are trying to deal with it and to what extent it is impossible to access the source of suffering, the trauma itself. As these silent protests for the missing people show, loss and mourning, which cannot be fully represented might be manifested through silences. When the process of loss and mourning are contextualized in time, it cannot be said that past is “over,” it could not be left behind because tragic events of the past have not accounted for yet. In this situation, the past is brought to present each time in the practice of mourning.

Based on Walter Benjamin’s concept of “historical materialism,” David L. Eng and David Kazanjian explain that to mourn the remains of the past hopefully, is to establish an active and open relationship with history (2003, p. 1). The active process of mourning, as in the case of Saturday Mothers, brings past to present and establishes an ongoing dialogue with loss and its remains. “By engaging in continuous encounters with loss, melancholia constitutes an ongoing and open relationship with the past— bringing its ghosts and spectres, its flaring and fleeting images, into the present” (Kazanjian and Eng, 2003, p. 4). Although mourning is a process, which comes to an end after a certain period of suffering pain, following a loss, melancholia, can be more pathological in the sense that need for a closure is never met. In his article “Mourning and Melancholia”, Freud argues that “mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.” (1957, p. 243) However, he describes melancholia as an enduring devotion to the lost object by ego itself. Melancholia, which means a mourning without end derives from the inability to resolve the grief and ambivalence precipitated by the loss of the loved object, place, or ideal (Freud, 1917, p. 250). In this regard, long lasting processes of mourning, as in the case of Saturday Mothers, can turn into an enduring state of melancholia because of impossibility to find any reason for consolation. Another important question regarding how to deal with loss is, in which ways the experience is revealed afterward and what are the reactions. In her book *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, E. Ann Kaplan discusses the concept of collective trauma by giving specific examples from the streets and daily lives of ordinary people, on what happened after



the attacks of 9/11 in the USA. She talks about images of missing people hung on the walls of different buildings all over the buildings close to the ruins of Twin Towers. Kaplan writes: "These rows of images of lost people overwhelmed me. They hung there as appeals, as desires that the one imaged not be dead, that he or she turns up having escaped. They made visible the need for closure, the awfulness of not knowing if a loved one is dead, and if dead if one would ever have a body to mourn over." (2005, p. 7). Saturday Mothers perpetuate sit-down strike on Istiklal for the very same reason; they need a closure about their loved ones, who have been missing for a long time. Ann Kaplan explains the whole nation dealt with suffering after losses, by being united and mourning altogether after the tragic event of 9/11. She notes: "On those bright sunny September afternoons, the Square was crowded with mourners and with people like myself needing to share in the grief and loss we all experienced, even if one had not personally lost a loved one." (2005, p. 12). In other words, 9/11 as a catastrophe, led to collective trauma, in which the individual experience cannot be separated from collective experience and brings important questions concerning how to deal with loss. In this case, solidarity among people, sharing the pain and experiencing loss all together offer reconciliation and comfort up to some point. On the other hand, even though unidentified murders in 1990s in Turkey are also part of the collective memory of some groups who had tragic experiences such as Saturday mothers, there is a limited discussion of these events due to the obstructions by official authorities. This situation is not limited to the case of missing people; contested moments and loss deriving from discrimination of minorities, assimilation politics, unidentified murders, conflicts between the Turkish army and the PKK or tortures and hunger strikes at prisons in Turkey in 1990s are not openly discussed in official terms either. Losses that are not allowed to be mourned after, and not considered to be part of collective trauma, turn into an open wound without any chance for conciliation. Judith Butler asserts, most difficult is the loss of loss itself: somewhere, sometime, something was lost, but no story can be told about it; no memory can retrieve it and a full "recovery" is impossible (...) What results is a melancholic agency who cannot know its history as the past, cannot capture its history through chronology and does not know who it is except as the survival, the persistence of a certain unavoidability that haunts the present. Places

are lost and destroyed (Butler, 2003, p. 468). The main sources of unending melancholia result from losses that are not confronted. Discomforting truths of the past that are threatening to be revealed and encountered with, haunt the present in separate ways because the past cannot be left behind with some closure or conciliation. These issues that cannot be spoken loudly and suppressed continuously because of their conflicts with the official discourse, come to the surface in an unexpected moment through unpredicted ways of hallucinations, dreamlike images or nightmares (Walker 1997, van der Kolk and van der Hart 1989, Caruth 1996). The trauma itself is defined as the active refusal of the experience, the original event is governed by incomprehensibility and a common response to trauma is fantasy (Walker 1997, van der Kolk and van der Hart 1989, Caruth 1996).

Unending state of melancholia after loss derives from the unaccounted disturbing facts about the traumatic events. Trauma can be described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event, or events that are not fully grasped as they occur but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena (Caruth 2016: 91-92). Traumatic events of the past that are not confronted with in the past reappear as fragmented recollections in an unexpected time and space. Van der Kolk and Van der Hart argue that when mind faces with an incomprehensible experience, it fails to organize it within an unfolding temporal order, so fails to turn it into a coherent narrative. This process of trauma's disabling of the mind is called "dissociation" (Kolk and Hart, 1991, p. 432). This means even if fragmented memories of the tragic event come back intrusively, it is impossible to narrativize it completely as a coherent whole. Cathy Caruth asserts that the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that ... is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on (Caruth, 2016, p. 4). Repetitive recurrences of images or sounds related to the traumatic event can take the form of hallucinations;

dream-like visions or ghosts and they can never be fully grasped because of inability to comprehend the event itself.

In her article “History and Hauntology; or. What Does One Do with the Ghosts of the Past? Reflections on Spanish Film and Fiction of the Post-Franco Period” (2000), Jo Labanyi talks about the return of the past in spectral form which means past is not passed over and still exists in the present. She describes ghosts as the embodiment of the past in the present and describes different ways of dealing with ghosts. Firstly, Labanyi talks about refusing to see them as official discourses often do. Secondly, she mentions the melancholic state of being obsessed and allowing the past to take over the present and turning it into a “living death”. Thirdly she describes acknowledging their presence through the recovery process of mourning and allowing the ghosts of the past lay and acknowledging them as past. She argues that images of a spectral past, unlike official versions of history, are discontinuous, having no causal logic, and for this very reason they offer a space to let the ghosts of the past in, allowing popular memory to elaborate the ghost stories that are normally part of oral history (Labanyi, 2000, p. 68). Even though Labanyi looks at the issue of return of the past in spectral form in the context of Spanish Civil War, within the framework of science fiction movies, her arguments have parallelisms with the context that the new cinema in Turkey has developed as a result of the recent history of Turkey. There are many traumatic events such as the conflicts between Turkish Army and the PKK, unidentified murders or tortures, hunger strikes in the prisons, and these events have not been confronted with, which turn to the melancholic state of being obsessed with the past. Labanyi explains that the images in the science fiction movies in Spanish cinema reflects on The Spanish Civil War and manifests the traumatic events of that period. For these reasons, developing on Labanyi, I argue that the use of silence in relation to sound plays a significant role in the manifestation of loss and mourning and articulation of spectral past.

In the film medium, with its multi-level structure of the potential mixture of discontinues fragments, dreams, flashbacks, factual or fictional elements, can embody a spectral past. It also allows for reflecting on the ambivalent nature of traumatic experience itself, which cannot be easily translated into a coherent narrative.

Through acknowledging ghosts of the past which can take forms of hallucinations, flashbacks or nightmares, movies can offer a space for the manifestation of disturbing facts of the past that have been not allowed to be represented by official discourse. In the films of the new cinema of Turkey after the 1990s that are based on traumatic events of the national past, the spectral past reappears in different forms. It is manifested through new visual aesthetics and creative use of soundtrack elements. I will look at how traumatic experiences of the past, loss, and mourning are manifested through different forms of expressive silences in new cinema in Turkey.

## **1.2. SOUND AND SILENCE**

In this part, I will discuss the importance of sound and its interplay with silence in the construction of meaning in cinematic representation, especially in terms of time and space. The most significant functionality of sound is its utilization in relation to on-screen and offscreen space. Michel Chion (1994) and David Bordwell (1994) talk about how offscreen space is constructed in cinema. Chion argues that “the problem of localizing a sound derives from the problem of locating its source” (Chion, 1994, p. 69). Regardless of its shape, the frame always makes the image finite and limited. From a continuous world, the frame selects a slice to show the audience, leaving out space to the left-right, above-below, behind the set and behind the camera (Burch, 1973, p. 26). Even though the image is limited to represented space, sound can never be fully grasped, and it resonates everywhere. Chion asserts that there is no auditory container for sounds (1994, p. 67).

The sound has a determinant role especially in the construction of offscreen space which is otherwise not easily implied. Offscreen space is the space that is not visible on the screen but still is a part of the diegesis (Bordwell and Thompson, 1993, p. 495). This means onscreen space and offscreen space are part of the same diegetic world. The reasons behind the construction of offscreen screen can be forming expectations in the audiences or creating mystery in the narrative. Off-screen space is, after all, purely imaginary and has only intermittent or, rather, fluctuating existence. (Burch and Lane, 1973, p. 21).

However, what interests me is most how disturbing facts and unpleasant events of the traumatic past that have never been represented at the visual level, are manifested through sounds of offscreen space. For example, in some movies it is impossible to see the tragic event itself, the traumatic moments of the tragic past are only known with sounds coming from offscreen space. For example, Esin Paça Cengiz looks at the use of sound flashbacks in the movie *The Voice* (Zeki Ökten, 1986) and she explains that there are no visual flashbacks in the movie. Even though the events in the movie take place in the present time, sounds from traumatic moments of the main character haunt the present (Cengiz, 2016). The movie tells the story of a man who has stayed at the prison for six years and been tortured there. After he was released from the prison, he comes to a small town near the coast. However, his traumatic past haunts his daily life and he has nightmares and hears sounds from his uneasy past. The images of his traumatic past have been never represented with images, however, the sounds coming from offscreen space, mostly in the form of hallucination or nightmares, implies the trauma itself. The sounds coming from the tragic past imply an offscreen space beyond the represented one and they embody the existence of traumatic events even if they are not represented visually. For these reasons, the construction of offscreen space through sounds plays a significant role in the articulation of trauma and loss. Even though the traumatic events that are grasped or fully remembered cannot be visualized, they come back intrusively in the forms of fragmented sounds. Mary Ann Doane also discusses the issue of sounds from offscreen space and describes “voice off” as instances in which we hear the voice of a character who is not visible within the frame (1980, p. 35).

However, the utilization of voice off reminds ‘presence’ of the character within the diegetic world by means of previous shots or other contextual determinants, in other words, the voices turn back to their sources at one time. In this way, the unity of image and sound is maintained again. The traditional use of voice-off constitutes a denial of the frame as a limit and an affirmation of the unity and homogeneity of the depicted space (Doane, 1980, p. 38). Unity of represented space with the offscreen one is quite an important issue at a conventional cinema in terms of establishing continuity.

The conventional film includes ambient noise to suggest a vague but consistent world offscreen (Bordwell, 1994, p. 120). What if the sound coming outside the represented space is not consistent with it? Unconventional movies sometimes apply to the construction of unusual inconsistent offscreen space which contradicts the represented space to underline what is represented is not always the only reality. They generally utilize voice-off or offscreen space unconventionally that construct a space transcending the represented image in which voices are never fully grasped. For example, in the movie *Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoglu, 2003), there is one scene in which the sounds from offscreen space is heard everywhere but it is impossible to grasp where these sounds come from. The movie tells the story of assimilated Greek Ayşe/Eleni who isolates herself after her sister's death and recollects unsettling memories of forcible dislocation of Greeks during the Ottoman Empire. In her journey to the highlands of the Black Sea Region with other villagers, out of a sudden, she stops and stares at the mountains. While she is watching, a distant unrecognized melody is heard in a different language, as if it is coming through her memory. Nobody hears this melody except for her. This moment implies two different significant facts about the importance of the use of sounds coming from offscreen space. Firstly, the unconventional use of sounds, which has sources that are not seen, creates the sense of inconsistency and marks the space beyond the depicted space and underlines the fact that the reality should not be limited to represented space and meaning can transcend it. Secondly, unusual uses of sound that are never fully grasped imply not only an offscreen space but a history that is not fully revealed in this scene. Unrecognized sounds and melodies in another language mark poorly discussed moments of traumatic events in the national history that took place on this geography. The voices that Ayşe/Eleni hears embody the loss of identity and sense of belonging of the main character. Thus, the use of offscreen space and unconventional uses of sound coming from the unrecognized source manifest traumatic moments of the past and articulate loss and mourning.

Another use of voice off in an unconventional way is the use of the voice of a character that never comes back to his/her body. In *Voice of My Father* (Zeynel Doğan, 2012), the voices of the main characters never come back to their bodies. The movie tells the story of a guerrilla's mother, Base. She listens to the tape



recording of her lost son Hasan and her husband, but their bodies are never seen during the movie. This situation creates the sense of inconsistency by establishing an offscreen space through voice-off which comes from the past. In this way, this use of unusual voice which transcend from just being an ‘absence’ of a body to embodying a ‘presence’ of a repressed traumatic past also breaks the linear understanding of time and reminds repressed moments of traumatic past that haunts the present, because some tape recordings are about tragic events that experienced in the past which have huge influence on the present. For these reasons, the unusual use of voice off has a significant role in the construction of offscreen space and articulation of loss and trauma as it can be seen in the examples above. The issue of offscreen space will be discussed in detail in the last chapter while analyzing different forms of silences.

After considering the importance of sound in cinematic representation in general, it can be useful to look at how the issue of sound has evolved in cinema in Turkey. Changing socio-economic and cultural conditions, globalization and identity politics after the 1990s brought a new perspective to the cinema in Turkey. Issues of identity, ethnicity, and belonging have been started to be discussed, which reflects the multitude of voices and viewpoints in the contemporary cinema of Turkey. For a long time starting from 1940s to mid-1990s, the voices of all the characters in a film are dubbed by dubbing artists with the same Istanbul accent, even though social and cultural background of the characters differ. Actually, people from different regions of Turkey speak in different accents. Thus, the practice of dubbing becomes considered as problematic in terms of not reflecting the multiplicity of society. Nezih Erdoğan states that dubbing as a standard practice for Yeşilçam is central to the debates about sound in the emerging New Turkish Cinema because it is against emerging paradigm of new cinema, which identifies itself with a different mode of representation which takes the issue of “credibility,” “naturalness” and “sincerity” into account, that implies a clear break from Yeşilçam’s mode of representation (Erdoğan, 2002, p. 234). The practice of dubbing leads to detachment of the voice from the body, so this creates a sense of insincerity and unnaturalness. In other words, the voices of the characters are disembodied from their own bodies spatially and temporarily, then dubbed by professional dubbing artists in an isolated studio

without any ambient sound. Many characters are dubbed by the same people with similar styles. Even sometimes same dubbing artist dubs different characters in one film. Stage actors and actresses dubbed the voices in the movies with same Istanbul accent. In this regard, there is no chance to talk about the expressivity of sound attributed to the character's voices or to the place. Dubbing people from a different socio-economic background with the same Istanbul accent also leads to the sense of unnaturalness and unreality.

Before the emergence of the new cinema in Turkey after the 1990s, it was impossible to talk about the expressive use of sound in cinema because of the extended period of post-dubbing. Even though first sound film *İstanbul Sokaklarında* (Muhsin Ertuğrul) was made in 1931, Starting from 1943, not even one movie is shot with sound until the release of *The Bandit/Eşkîya* (Yavuz Turgul) in 1996. Savaş Arslan argues that the practice of dubbing caused dissemination of a mainstream Turkish accent used by Istanbulites and Turkish actors of Istanbul theatres based on the process of Turkification from above, which disseminates Turkish cultural codes (Arslan, 2011, p. 44). It leads to unification and standardization of national identity at the expense of undermining the positions of ethnic identities. Under these conditions, it cannot be said that cinema of that period represents multiplicity and plurality of the society compromising of multiple belonging and multiple ethnic and cultural affiliations. For these reasons, the practice of dubbing did not allow for multivocality. Furthermore, it further can be said that sound worked as a silencing tool until the mid 1990s.

The New Cinema in Turkey brings not only a new visual aesthetics but also a different understanding of sound design, along with abandoning the post-dubbing practice. Shooting with sound enables interplay with dialogue, music, background noise and sound effects in a more effective and expressive way. Before that period, it was almost impossible to talk about ambient or background noise in Turkey because all the sounds were added later, along with dubbing. It was not possible to even hear footsteps of a character or sound of the wind. For example, the scenes in which couples are hanging out together in the middle of the nature accompanied by a romantic music in the background were quite popular.



However ambient noises like the sound of birds or the humming of the crowd are never heard in these scenes. Moreover, the voices of character did not sound natural, because of the dubbing process. For these reasons, before shooting with sound, it was not quite possible to talk about the expressive use of sound.

Not only different understanding of sound design came with the new cinema, but also more unconventional uses of sound such as asynchronous dialogue, disembodied voices which never come back to their bodies and creative use of silences are adopted with changing the perception of the importance of sound in the construction of meaning related to space and time. Offscreen space is constructed with sounds, that have sources that are not seen. For example, in the movie *Kosmos* (Reha Erdem, 2009), sounds of guns and conflicts are repetitively heard but the sources are never shown. *Kosmos* tells story Battal who comes to a small town located at the border, he looks as if he is running from some trouble. After he gets to the town, strange events start to happen. He raises a little child from dead and heals someone with a fatal disease. Throughout the movie, the images of conflicts are never seen, yet the sounds of ongoing battles are heard from a distant space. Offscreen space is constructed through the repetitive use of far-away conflict sounds. For these reasons, the use of sound plays a significant role in the construction of offscreen space and changing understanding of the meaning attributed to represented space. Moreover, sound can also be used in the manipulation of time. For example, in the movies of *Voice of My Father* (Zeynel Doğan, 2012), *Ceylan Özçelik's Inflammation* (2017), sounds from traumatic past are repetitively heard and haunt daily life of the characters in the present time. Linear perception of the time, from past to present, is manipulated through the use of sound and sound itself breaks the general understanding of linear time. In this way, sound embodies how the traumatic events of the past still haunt the present.

Another innovative approach in new aesthetics of sound in new cinema is the expressive use of different forms of silence in unconventional ways. For example, some films within new cinema movement such as *Voice of My Father* (Zeynel Doğan, 2012), *Jin* (Reha Erdem, 2013), *Kosmos* (Reha Erdem, 2009), *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011), *Frenzy* (Emin Alper, 2015) and *Behind the Hill* (Emin

Alper, 2012) apply a more unconventional use of sound with their manipulation of offscreen and onscreen space and distinctive interplay between sound and silence. In these movies, as explained before, sound plays a significant role in the construction of offscreen space, especially through unusual uses of voice off, which never comes back to the source or through repetitive sounds coming from a distant place. Moreover, unique interplay with silence and music is preferred with the application to an abrupt increase or decrease of background music or sound effects. At the movies such as *Behind the Hill*, *Inflame*, *Future Last Forever*, *Inflame* or *The Autumn*, which will be examined in the last chapter in detail, silence is preferred in the expression of traumatic moments instead of using sad music at the dramatic moments like in conventional movies. Even sometimes all the sounds in the movie are turned down for the sake of expressing that dramatic moment, which is quite a rare situation in conventional cinema. For instance, in the movie *Frenzy* (Emin Alper, 2015), there is one scene that can be considered as the peak moment of the entire film, in which the younger brother of the main character Kadir dies and all the sounds are turned down, nothing is heard, almost absolute silence pervades everywhere. Many other examples of distinctive uses of silence in relation to sound will be discussed elaborately in the last chapter.

Although there are arguably many works on changing visual cinematic aesthetics in new cinema, sound-related issues such as the aesthetic use of soundtrack elements have not attracted so much attention. Temmuz Süreyya Gürbüz's article "Use of Music in Cinema, Metaphor and *Mavi Dalga* (Zeynep Dabak, 2013)" is one of the few examples. Gürbüz discusses how meaning is produced in the movie *Mavi Dalga* (2013) through the use of background music and how the use of diegetic or non-diegetic music contributes to the understanding of the inner world of the characters. There are not so many articles like this one which specifically looks at the role of background music in the narration of the movie.

Moreover, employment of silence in the new cinema is mostly discussed in thematic or visual terms. In her article "Silent Representations of Women in the New Cinema of Turkey", Özlem Güçlü discusses representational forms of women based on different types of silence, -silencing silence, resisting silence, complete silence and

speaking silence on verbal and visual levels (Güçlü, 2010, p. 71). She argues that a new form of the silent female has emerged in new cinema in Turkey after the mid-1990s and Güçlü's categorization of silence related to the representation of women derives from the issue of authority. She looks at how male authority over the female body is re-established by filmic elements. She explains that how silent female character serve as a vehicle for the expression of the male stories and films do not offer a female point of view or female desire, and instead they attempt to maintain control over the female body by eroticization and/or victimization (Güçlü, 2010, p. 173). Güçlü's explanations of the silences of female characters in new cinema are based on thematic analysis and she does not examine formal characteristics of silence in relation to sound in the narration of the movies.

Asuman Suner, in her book *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity, and Memory* makes a gender-related thematic analysis about silences of women in new Turkish cinema and looks at how women are represented within patriarchal discourse. She argues that new wave cinema has a masculinist outlook. (2010, p. 174). As Özlem Güçlü states, Suner also argues that the story in new cinema is centered around a male character and there is no female point of view. Women are just seen as an object to support the stories of male characters, as a result they are portrayed as passive objects. She explains that "the absence of women is one of the defining characteristics of new wave cinema" (2010, p. 163). Suner's looks at the representation of women in new cinema in Turkey on a thematic basis and explains the silence of women as an absence of their own stories and she does not analyze formal elements of silence in the narration. In her article "Reflection of Socio-Realism: Silence of Non-Muslim Minorities in Cinema", Özlem Avcı explore the issue of the representation of Non-Muslim Minorities in Turkish Cinema and argues that they are given a secondary importance as supporting roles to the main characters. The stories are never centered on minorities' lives. In this way, they are underestimated and repressed in the movies as in real life. She also conducts a thematic analysis on silence and draws a conclusion from thematic elements and does not analyze formal characteristics of sound or silence.

Unlike from thematic analysis about the silence that cited above, I will make a

formal analysis of the use of silence based on general tendencies. I propose that silence is started to be used in quite an unconventional way with the emergence of The New Cinema in Turkey. Unlike from earlier periods, the new cinema brings to the fore new themes such as identity crisis, belonging, trauma and loss. New topics lead to the emergence of a new film aesthetics and language. More complex audio-visual styles have started to be used in cinematic representation to articulate new issues of trauma, loss, and mourning. Silence is one of the main strategies of new film language especially in the manifestation of repressed moments of traumatic events.

This does not mean that silence has never been used in earlier periods or not employed in more conventional movies of today. I'm rather saying that silence turns into a part of new film language particularly in the movies dealing with the issues of loss and mourning. In my opinion, the new cinema in Turkey has some common characteristics with intercultural cinema (Marks, 2000) in terms of new audio-visual aesthetics and new topics such as isolation, displacement, hybridity or collective trauma. Laura Marks summarizes intercultural cinema as characterized by experimental styles that attempt to represent the experience of living two or more culture and as a movement which is the merging expression of a group of people who share the political issues of displacement and hybridity' through their individual circumstances vary widely (2000, p. 1-2). Like examples of intercultural cinema, the movies of new cinema focus on telling the experiences of different groups with different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. This tendency derives from the multi-ethnic cultural background of Turkey. As a natural consequence of this situation, both films of new cinema and intercultural cinema reflect on cultural memory and consist of counter cultural- memories and oral histories which are disavowed by official discourse. These works play significant work in terms of presenting an alternative narrative through revealing gaps in collective memories. According to Laura Marks; "Intercultural cinema performs an excavation of the available sources of recorded history and memory, to find out that cultural memory is located in the gaps between these recorded images. Many works of intercultural cinema begin with the inability to speak, to represent objectively one's own cultural history and memory: they are marked by silence, absence, and hesitation. All these

works are marked by a suspicion of visuality, a lack of faith in the visual archive's ability to represent cultural memory (Marks, 2010, p. 21). The absence of a visual archive of countercultural memories derives from the restriction of official discourse to reveal them. Even if there are some existing materials attributed to traumatic events, their reliability is questionable because they only offer official discourse's point of view. The inability and impossibility of presenting the visual archive of traumatic events of the past lead to the tendency toward using unconventional use of silence with relation to sound in order to reveal tragic moments and articulate trauma, loss, and mourning.

My aim is to analyze different forms of acoustic silences in new cinema particularly in the manifestation of trauma, loss, and mourning. I suggest silence goes beyond a theme which is already cultivated in the narrative and become involved in the narration as an aesthetic approach, especially in the movies which engage with disturbing moments of what is lost and what remains. Silences occur in the gaps which cultural and personal memory of official discourses contest with each other.

### **1.3. THE NEW CINEMA IN TURKEY**

The term "New Cinema in Turkey" refers to the revival of the cinema after a long period of industrial crisis in the mid-1990s with new generations of young directors such Derviş Zaim, Yeşim Ustaoglu, Serdar Akar, Zeki Demirkubuz, Handan İpekçi, Nuri Bilge Ceylan and so on. The New Cinema brings to the fore themes such as identity crisis, isolation and minority problems, a more complex narrative form, and a new audio-visual style. Scholars argue that the movement of the new cinema in Turkey brings about a sharp distinction as "popular cinema" and "art house cinema" referring to varying practices in film production and distribution systems. The mid-1990s witnessed a remarkable revival of Turkish cinema in two separate forms: a new popular cinema with considerable box-office success on the one hand, and an art cinema receiving critical acclaim and prestigious awards in national and international festivals on the other (Suner, 2010, p. 12). While art house films are mostly financed with low budgets coming from filmmakers' own networks and different funding systems such online crowd funding campaigns or international

funding platforms, popular movies are mostly produced with huge financial supports of big production companies such as BKM. Turkey has undergone a significant socio-cultural, political and economic transformation after the late 1990s, especially in the early 2000s. Globalization, the possible candidacy of Turkey into the European Union (EU), the democratization process and the rise of nationalist discourses all contribute to the configuration of the new cinema in Turkey. The possible accession to the European Union and attempts to be part of the process of globalization force politicians to make new policies in the social, economic and cultural areas. With the aim of adjusting the law of harmonization code of the European Union, censorship practices have decreased, and freedom of speech is relatively guaranteed (Arslan, 2009, p. 86; Suner, 2010, p.11). In line with socio-cultural and political changes including globalization and democratization process after the 1990s, issues of identity and belonging come the fore. Since the late 1990s, the numbers of films about issues of identity crisis, ethnicity and belonging have drastically increased. Tensions, anxieties, and dilemmas of unaccounted events of past which are constantly obscured by national discourse come to the surface as recurring themes such as traumatic moments, collective loss and representation of diverse identities in new art house and politic films.

Asuman Suner makes a thematic analysis of the movies after the mid-1990s and characterizes a significant commonality about the subjects of the movies. She affirms that films of the new cinema in Turkey, both popular and art films, turn around the figure of spectral home and they talk about the idea of home/homeland again and again; they reveal tensions, anxieties, and dilemmas around the questions of belonging, identity, and memory in contemporary Turkish society (Suner, 2010, p. 1). The movies selected in the video essay often refer to these sensitive topics, which are organically related to each other by adding the issue of loss and mourning into a discussion.

Not only narrative themes have changed with the emergence of the new cinema but also a new form of narration has emerged to find a way to articulate issues about contested traumatic events of the national history in cinematic representation. New narrative forms have combined fiction, fact, and myth with the aim of revisiting the

discourse of official history by suggesting an alternative narrative. Experimenting with visual style is one of the main characteristics of this period of the new cinema, which contribute much to the formation of a new film language. Gökçe argues that one of these strategies is to switch between different realities, cutting across the filmic world with actual footage, shifting in between diegetic and non-diegetic worlds, between personal story and the history (Gökçe, 2009, p. 270). *Autumn* (Özcan Alper, 2008), *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011) and *Waiting for the Clouds* (Ustaoglu 2003) can be given as examples of the mixture of archival footage, newsreels, personal memories and the fictional world. Esin Paça Cengiz also mentions new political cinema as a *hybrid form* as a combination of fact and fiction in cinematic representation. She states, "in this new hybrid form of history, the personal dissolves into the historical, fiction interfere with non-fiction, historical findings are juxtaposed on the invented ones and myths mixed with official narratives of history" (Paça Cengiz, 2010, p. 41). Switching between fact and fiction is marked by non-linearity and fragmentation in the narration, which is the main strategies of new cinema as a consequence of combining different sources of knowledge.

Övgü Gökçe states that loss as an emerging sentiment in contemporary cinema in Turkey by looking at *Bulutları Beklerken* (Waiting for the Clouds, 2003) and *Sonbahar* (Autumn, 2007) and points out that these movies deal with silenced issues of history which are mostly ignored. She suggests these movies do not only uncover historical moments through their narratives but also offer new ways of aesthetic choices such as juxtaposing archive footage with fictional images (Gökçe, 2009, p. 271). She maintains that the new cinema in the 1990s, in line with the general tendency of experimenting with the form, lack of dialogue and signification of what is lost in these films exceed the narrative and become inscribed into the narration and film aesthetics (Gökçe, 2009, p. 268). In other words, loss transcends just being a theme in the narrative and flows in the narration as a significant aesthetic element and these films suggest a new film language in their search for finding a way for the articulation of loss. Although Gökçe's analysis is more visual-based about aesthetics of landscape in revealing loss and mourning, I will put forward that mourning, loss,

and remembrance are not only manifested through visual elements in these movies but also with distinctive employment of sound and its interplay with silence, which I will discuss in the following chapters in detail.





## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

Videographic film studies is a new approach in film criticism and film scholarship, which can be summarized as the combination of images and sounds by editing and remixing, with the aim of coming up with new material of interpretation or analysis. Unlike traditional ways of film critique in written forms, videographic film studies makes working with the film material itself possible, which is a ground-breaking change in film criticism. Videographic film studies is a new approach in film criticism and film scholarship, which can be summarized as the combination of images and sounds by editing and remixing, with the aim of coming up with new material of interpretation or analysis. Unlike traditional ways of film critique in written forms, videographic film studies makes working with the film material itself possible, which is a ground-breaking change in film criticism. New developments in digital video technologies offer excellent opportunities for experimenting with images, videos and sounds not only for professionals in filmmaking but also for film scholars, film critics, and cinephiles. Video essay as a growing digital form is a very convenient tool for film scholarship. The video essay is a short analytical film about films or film culture, in the last decade, it has become a term that serves as a general word for video criticism about the cinematic arts (McWhirter, 2015, p. 369). Catherine Grant argues that digital video is usefully seen not only as a promising communicative tool with different functionalities than those of written text but also as an essential cultural field for the creative practice for the work of film scholars (Grant, 2014, p. 50).

The emphasis on communicative quality of video essay is significant because it allows for a more interactive way of criticism and its practice-based nature opens the means for producing not only explanatory material but also a creative one. This new form of film criticism provides analyzing and reinterpreting a film more tangibly than in written forms. Thanks to the accessibility of technological devices, the popularity of video essay is growing every day. They are being produced by both professionals

who are experienced in filmmaking such as Kevin B. Lee and Matt Zoller and by academics and film scholars Grant, Keatley, and Bordwell. The most convenient part of new technologies advances is that they offer new possibilities of dividing a whole movie into isolated pieces, analyzing and interpreting them. Laura Mulvey explains how the films on DVD opened up new ways of seeing old movies by offering the chance of freeze frame, scan, slow motion and infinite replayability (Mulvey, 2006, p. 8). Thanks to new video technologies, video essay takes this step further and opens the road for rearranging these isolated parts into one a meaningful wholeness by sorting out some images and omitting others, juxtaposing them and remixing into a new media form only with the help of a video editing software. The ability to manipulate the picture and sound in such convenient way makes considerable contributions to videographic film studies in the digital era because rearrangement and juxtaposition of particular images carry a specific meaning that cannot be expressed in a such a straightforward way in the traditional written form. In other words, ideas regarding a movie that cannot be grasped fully in a written form are visualized with the help of a video essay. In this way, thoughts can be embodied into visuals through the video essay. Unlike the documentary film that presents facts and information, the essay film produces complex thought— reflections that are not necessarily bound to reality, but can also be contradictory, irrational, and fantastic.” (Richter, 2003, p. 13).

Video essays make way for embracing a much more comprehensive definition of what cinema is with its deployment of the convergence of film and digital media (Churner, 2011). Beyond merely having movies on DVD, the full range of digital video technologies enable film scholars to write using the very materials that constitute their object of study: moving images and sounds. As Victor Burgin has demonstrated, digital technologies have expanded the range of possibilities for dismantling and reconfiguring the once inviolable objects offered by narrative cinema. For this reason, while such technologies offer a new way of watching and thinking about films, they also provide a new way of conducting and presenting film research (Burgin, 2012). Above all, a video essay should be critical in the way how it presents the potential argument. Dismantling, rearranging and combining the scenes

of a film or sequences from different movies cannot always be enough to convey the meaning behind. Explanatory texts, titles, subtitles or voice-overs can be added to make the argument clear. Critical commentary is a significant part of the video essay's scholarly potential. Words have always been part of the visual representation, and verbal-visual interaction in audio-visual media has multiple manifestations. Video essays use verbal text together with moving images in several ways such as revealing written scholarship, inscribing personal reflections or producing poetic reflections or analytical insights. Words are juxtaposed with pictures through subtitles, letters scrolling alongside film clips, prologues, titles, credits or intertitles (Cook, 2014). As an evolving form, there have been some discussions about how it should be. Christian Keathley makes some distinctions about its form and puts forward two types: explanatory and poetic. The explanatory model is more text-based and poetic one is more expressive with more a mixture of images and sounds (Clayton and Clevan 2011, p. 181). Some videos essayists use voice-over narration that explains accompanying images for mostly explanatory essays and some video essay makers use texts or titles to describe the material. Some others, mostly poetic ones, follow a more minimalist approach and only consist of images with a chosen background music.

For a good example of a poetic audiovisual essay, Elif Akçalı's "Ceylan's Women: Looking | Being Looked At" can be given about representation of women in Nuri Bilge Ceylan` movies. She prefers not using any kind of explanatory tools like texts or voice over to explain the video but only adds extra-diegetic music that accompanies the images. To direct attention to Ceylan's cinematography, she uses the theme music which helps to express the scenes. The reason behind the choice of this example is to show that the preference about the structure of the video essay changes depending on what the video essay maker wants to underline. Even though Akçalı's video essay also analyze silence concerning the role of the women in the movies, she gives priority to images rather than sounds. However, in my video essay, the issue of how silence, with its relation to sound, is deployed as a narratological device, hence more emphasis will be given to sound-related elements. And the structure of the video essay will be based on an analysis of utilization of sound and silence rather than images. No matter which method is preferred on the formation, digital video

technologies enable reinterpreting the existing images by using only the material itself and bring about a new understanding of the film. An essayist can reveal his/her statements via rearranging images and sounds and offer a new interpretation of the film by making new connections between the scenes or films.

I propose movies of the New Cinema in Turkey about trauma, loss, and mourning deploy to silence not only as a theme in the narrative but as an aesthetic choice, so silence turns into a significant formal element in new aesthetics of film language in the new cinema. With the aim of displaying unconventional ways of use of film silences, I prefer making a video essay which demonstrates the different ways filmmakers deploy silence in the new cinema in Turkey. The idea of analyzing silence in new cinema through a video essay derives from the fact that sound-related issues are challenging to be described in words.

In addition to this, it is not easy to describe traumatic moments of the past in a written form, so a video essay can be a more convenient way than written words in order to reveal silences concerning tragic events of the past. The contested moments of the past embedded in silences cannot be easily revealed in words, since there is no common language to articulate trauma, loss, and mourning. Traumatic moments cannot be narrativized because of inaccessibility to the whole trauma itself, so silence becomes a tool to open a space to talk about tragic events. Thus, silence should not be considered in negative terms; it carries the potential for the manifestation of loss and mourning. The examples of new cinema will be used in the video essay reveal different traumatic moments related to issue of the identity crisis, unidentified murders, tortures in the prisons and the conflicts between the Turkish army and the PKK. These issues are never entirely discussed in official terms, thus silence turns into a language for the articulation of these traumatic moments.

In this regard, I suggest manifestations of trauma, loss, and mourning through silences should be experienced through an audio-visual material itself because of unrepresentable and incomprehensible nature of traumatic events. Silence by its nature is inclined to carry different denotations; a discursive analysis is inevitably needed for excavation of these meanings and bringing them into the light. I suggest that the video essay is the most convenient way to bring new interpretations to

silence, in this way unexpected meanings can be revealed.

In terms of the form of the video essay, I prefer not using voice-over narration because of both aesthetic and discursive reasons. Narrating it by one dominant voice could create unexpected authority over the silences of empty spaces that are marked by gaps, hesitations, and pauses. My primary purpose is to display all potential expressivities formed by silences in films with minimum intervention. That is also the reason for not using extra-diegetic music.

The structure of the video essay will be based on tendencies of various forms of silence used in the movies of New Cinema in Turkey by referring to existing concepts of cinematic silences named by different scholars and films critics and adding new categories to them. Therefore, short titles will be added to name each type of silence to be more precise and to be able to make a distinction between different tendencies. Before anything else, it should be noted that the concepts used in the video essay are not so strict, some forms of silences can coexist together, in other terms all these terms are flexible. It is better to say that the concepts related to types of silences are tendencies and different forms of silences permeable in the sense that there are no strictly defined lines between them. The concepts of spatial silence, subjective silence, narrative silence, music silence, language silence, conversational silence, almost absolute silence and silencing silence are used to demonstrate different tendencies. The main reason which drives me to underline different tendencies is to look at how traumatic moments that cannot be narrativized are marked through silences in various ways. In some examples, subjective silence is preferred which allows the audiences to enter into character's mind, or in another situation, there is conversational silence in which no one talks with each other and unendurable silence appears which mark underlying disturbing events. Thus, different tendencies reveal a unique situation and what kind of silence is preferred in a particular scene is dependent on what kind of meaning is meant to be revealed. My primary purpose is to conduct these several tendencies through a video essay and show the differences and similarities. In this way, it is more comfortable to reveal how silences in different scenes from various movies carry the same potential for

manifestation of loss and trauma and how these films are in dialogue with each other in the sense that silence turns into a standard tool to imply traumatic moments. In the next chapter, all the tendencies of cinematic silences will be analyzed by giving specific examples from the films that are used in the video essay with the purpose of revealing differences and similarities in the deployment of silence.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DIFFERENT FORMS OF SILENCES IN NEW CINEMA IN TURKEY**

This chapter focuses on the analysis of different tendencies related to silence in new cinema, especially in the movies concerning trauma, loss, and mourning. These tendencies that will be discussed in this chapter are subjective silence, spatial silence, narrative silence, almost absolute silence, silencing silence, language silence, conversational silence and music silence. It should be noted all the concepts used in the video essay not strictly separated categories. Therefore, it is more useful to call them as tendencies rather than categories because naming them as categories can be misleading in the sense that categorization can be understood as drawing a strict line between them. However, all the tendencies in utilization of the silence in the new cinema are not strictly isolated from each other. For example, narrative silence can also be named as music silence in some situations. That is why it is better to look at the general use of silence in the narration in the entire movie. Even though selected scenes are used in the video essay because of limited space and time, while conducting the research and analysis, the entire movie is taken into consideration in detail regarding how the silence is used as a narrational element in representation of traumatic pasts.

Thus, in this chapter, different tendencies in utilization of the silence for representing trauma will be examined by looking at similarities and differences between them. To begin with, all the silent moments selected in the video essay at narrative, character or soundtrack level are built around the concepts such as loss, mourning, trauma, and memory which are entirely related to each other. As discussed earlier, the reason behind the choice of video essay as a methodology for the analysis of silence in cinema is the difficulty of explaining the use of silence in a written form. Moreover, new cinema is selected as a case study to analyze silence because there is a tendency toward the use of silence as an aesthetic device in the narration of the movies. Silence in the new cinema carries the potential for the

manifestation of loss and mourning. My main purpose is to look at how silence is effectively employed in films in the new cinema to translate traumatic moments. All the characters in the selected movies are in the mood of continuous suffering, they are mourning for loss of loved persons, ideals or lands. The important question is how the state of mourning after loss of something is revealed through different forms of silences.

At this point, it can be useful to discuss shortly about subject matters of the movies and protagonists in order to underline the commonalities in terms of themes related to issues of trauma, loss and mourning. In *Behind the Hills*, Zafer is haunted by hallucinations about traumatic experiences of his military service, Yusuf in *Autumn* walks around like a ghost, overwhelmed by the long years he spent in the prison as a political prisoner, In *Future Lasts Forever*, Sumru goes on a personal journey to find out his lost boyfriend, In *Nowhere Land*, Şükran also takes the road for finding his missing son, In *Voice of My Father*, Mehmet is obsessed with finding the tapes his father recorded and send them whilst working abroad and faces the traumatic past of his family and their experience of the Maras Massacre in late 70s. In *Inflame*, Hasret goes after shocking truth behind the death of her parents and learns that they had died in the fire in Sivas massacre. In *Memories of the Wind*, Aram as an Armenian artist in 1940s, is forced to leave Istanbul and he starts to recall disturbing memories of Armenian Catastrophe in 1915. In *Waiting for Clouds*, Ayşe/Eleni, after her sister's death, secludes herself and recollects unsettling memories of forced migration of Greeks in the 1910s and 1920s. *Snow* tells the story of a mother, Sanem who lost two sons in the conflict between Turkish Army and the PKK. *Frenzy* is about complex relationship between two brothers living in the state of constant chaos and paranoia of Istanbul. Kadir as a garbage collector works for intelligence service to collect evidences about "potential terrorists". In the end, Kadir causes his younger brother's death.

All the characters described above, Base in *The Voice of my Father*, Şükran In *Nowhere Land*, Sanem in *Snow*, Hasret in *Inflame*, Sumru in *Future Last Forever*, Aram in *Memories of the Wind*, Ayşe/Eleni in *Bulutları Beklerken*, Yusuf in *Autumn*, Zafer in *Behind the Hill* and Kadir in *Frenzy* suffer from either loss of their loved



ones or sense of belonging and identity. Freud argues that “mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.” (Freud, 1917, p. 243). Actually, Freud makes a distinction between mourning and melancholia. He defines melancholia as an enduring attachment to the lost object, in other words melancholia is considered as mourning without end. Even though there is a closure at the end of process of mourning after some time, melancholia never ends because confrontation is never realized at some point, and the pain cannot be resolved, thus it turns into unending state of feeling pain and sadness.

Developing on the concepts mourning and melancholia, it can be said that the characters in the films that this thesis deals with suffer from ongoing state of melancholia deriving from loss of loved ones or ideals because there is no chance of recovery in their situations. For example, in the case of Base, Şükran or Sanem, mothers of lost sons are in the constant mood of anxiety and pain because of not knowing where their sons are. Even if they learn what happened to their beloved ones, pain never ends because there is no possibility of confrontation in official terms. As an example, even though Hasret learns that her parents died in the fire in Sivas massacre or Sumru finds out that her lost boyfriend died in the conflict between Turkish Army and the PKK, their melancholia do not reach an end because these are the issues which are ignored by the official authorities, thus they are often not even discussed publicly and in most situations, perpetrators do not get any punishment.

In this way, the traumatic moments that are not confronted with, as in the case of tragic events, films that this thesis deals with portray, haunt the survivors’ lives continuously. Survivors suffer from an enduring state of melancholia because there is no closure in the broader sense, thus there cannot be closure in personal stories. Silences in the movies this thesis analyze mark the moments of encountering with traumatic past and the state of mourning as a reaction to loss. It implies ruptures, hesitations and gaps about the disturbing truths of past that have never been faced completely in their personal stories such as unidentified murders, missing people, tortures and hunger strikes at prisons, ongoing conflict between Turkish military forces and the PKK, dislocation of Armenians and Greeks by force and so on. The moments of encountering with traumatic events that are manifested through silence

are cut from the films and brought together in the video essay, In the following part, I will discuss different tendencies in terms of use of silence by giving several examples from the selected movies.

### 3.1. SUBJECTIVE SILENCE

Subjective silence refers to sound elements such as music, background noise, and dialogue are getting decrease in the sound levels and in that exact moment we feel as if we are entering the mind of the character. This does not mean that all the sounds are silenced, certain kind of humming still resonates in the atmosphere which cannot be clearly defined. There are two different examples in *Beyond the Hill*, one is the scene in which Zafer is coming out of water and the other one is the dreamlike scene Zafer looks after his commander. *Beyond the Hill* tells the story of a re-union of a family because of unseen enemies threatening the land of family. At the end, the movie leaves us with the questions:

Who is the ‘other’? Does the threat come from external world or from inside? Is there any line between inside or outside? Zafer, the grandson of the land owner recently returns from the army. He does not mostly prefer speaking and often sees dreamlike or hallucinatory images. At the scene in which Zafer is coming out of water, in the middle of nature surrounded by cheerful twittering of birds, out of sudden, all ambient noises get silenced and only undefined hum is heard intervened by uncanny bird-sounds. The decrease in background noises follows the middle-shot of Zafer surprisingly looking at soldiers with guns passing through the water. At that particular moment of subjective silence, we only hear the sound of dripping water from Zafer’s body and uncanny bird-sound, as if we are entering Zafer’s mind. Especially the peaceful sound of nature before and after the scene is taken into consideration, subjective silence of this dreamlike scene can be easily understood. At this point, it should be note that what makes this scene hallucination-like is not visual representation but the unique utilization of sound and silence. The presence of soldiers does not so much contradict with the narrative because of the ongoing problem of land violations. Subjective silence itself underlines sharp transition from external world of peaceful nature to dark realms of inner self. The suppression of

ambient sounds can create the sense as if we are entering into the mind of a character absorbed by her or his personal story (Chion, 1994, p. 89). The suppression of sound through transition to subjective silence mirrors suppressed memory, which is overwhelmed by silently, kept memories of unrevealed traumatic past.

What is the story of Zafer, which is not openly told in the narrative but only being referred to? We only know he undergoes certain problem after being released of the army but nothing more. What happened to him? From what does he precisely suffer? These significant questions bring us to the issue of memory. When images cannot be clearly connected to narrative and represented, this means that they refuse to come to surface, so they float loose from history. The past surfaces in the excavation of discursive history and these images [recollection images] stare up at us, like “strangely active fossils, radioactive, inexplicable in the present where they surface, and all the more harmful and autonomous. Not recollections but hallucinations (Deleuze, 2013, p. 118). Zafer’s personal memory through recurring hallucinations are activated by subjective silences. This situation summarizes how Zafer’s traumatic past still haunt his daily life in the present. His past memories of tragic events are reactivated all of a sudden in the middle of a ordinary day, without any trigger. That’s why, it can be clearly said that, there is an ongoing relationship between past and present, especially in the case of melancholic state because no confrontation has been realized. As Deleuze states, these images, soldiers with guns passing through the water as in the case of Zafer’s situation in *Beyond The Hill*, are incomprehensible in the present because it is not possible to access to the traumatic event itself.

Another moment like this happens after the scene in which Zafer in *Beyond The Hill* sleeps in the middle of bushes and is awoken up by the light projected on him by imaginary commander and they talk about military operation. After this dreamlike conversation, the commander turns back toward to foggy mountainous area and Zafer looks at him, we enter into Zafer’s mind deeply, all the sound of nature that tranquilize are silenced, we only hear a disconcerting hum like an uneasy wind which cannot be easily defined in the soundscape of represented nature. The contrast between the sound of nature and an unexpected uneasiness of silence of the scene creates anxiety. If these sounds do not belong to represented sound scape, where do they come from? Do they belong to a hallucination or a

dream, the past or the present? In both scenes, the innovative use of subjective silence in a quite stylistic way reflect the activation of the process of memory at both personal and collective level.

Another interesting example of subjective silence can be given from *Autumn*. The film is about a political prisoner, Yusuf, who is released from prison after ten years of sentence and following his release he decides to go back to his village. In the scene where Yusuf and other villagers are waiting for minibus to come, villagers are talking about tourism in general. In the middle of the scene, dialogue is silenced as if vacuumed by Yusuf's mind and he is turning his back against villagers and looking at a snail slowly passing by. As we enter into Yusuf's mind, we hear birds accompanied by a disruptive hum. These sounds reveal Yusuf's inability to adopt a calming village life because of the uneasiness in his mind that does not allow him to be part of ordinary daily life and brings him repeatedly to the memories of traumatic past.

Another example of subjective silence appears in *Inflame*. The film tells the story of Hasret, who is a video editor at a news channel. After having some problems at work, she decides to quit. When she isolates herself, becomes obsessed and paranoid about what happened to her family, whether they died in a car crash as her relatives have told her or an unpleasant truth is hidden from her for a long time. She starts to have recurring and unsettling nightmares and hallucinations about her parents' death. Perpetual interventions of linear continuity of fictional world with flashbacks, timeless hallucinations and nightmares turns the film a puzzle with lots of missing pieces that creates confusion. Effective use of sound such as abrupt decrease or increase of ambient noises or turning down character's voice in a very unexpected moment enhances the state of paranoia and confusion that Hasret is going through. While Sumru in *Future Last Forever* is obsessed with sounds with the aim of preserving memories, Hasret's relationship to sound derives from her effort to recall things from the past. Images of disturbing events are constantly disguised by official history, so recalling of memories from past through sounds plays significant role in reconstitution of both personal and collective memory.

While Hasret is sitting at a tea garden and taking notes, can't help looking at someone who is reading magazine called "Released Musicians talked: Real Folk Songs Don't Lie". She gets petrified, camera zooms in, a dreamlike vision of a little child appears,

Hasret's internal chaos can be felt at that moment. However, what is more striking than images in creating confusion and tension at that scene, peaceful sounds of nature, bird singing, or dog barking give place to gradually increasing unnerving signal tone with intervening uneasy whinny of a horse. When *Inflame*'s director Ceylan Özgün Özcelik is asked in an interview why protagonist Hasret's remembrances of past firstly come through sounds, not through images, she explains that while she reads news and memorials about the Sivas Massacre, she realized that many witnesses recall sound firstly. They do not remember any image of the event exactly, but they recall the sounds of massacre, screams, cracks of the fire, clamors of the crowd clearly. What sticks in the mind of the survivors is the sound of catastrophe because what happened on that day has never found a broad repercussion in press with images. Fran Tonkiss discusses sound memory and Canetti's concept of 'eye witness' and argues that sound relation with memory is audibly present in the moment of 'recall', they together meld in the concept of 'resonance'. The past comes in its most uninvited, immediate and sensuous way not in the form of travel photography, but in the accident of sound half-remembered (Tonkiss, 2003, p. 307). As in the case of Hasret's recalling sounds from the past, traumatic memories come back intrusively without any invitation. For a long time, Hasret cannot recognize these sounds and find any connections which make her remind of these sounds because they are all half-remembered. Recalling of these immediate sounds haunts her daily life out of a sudden. Her unremembered traumatic moments of the past are reactivated through these half-remembered sounds. Her enduring melancholic state deriving from doubtful deaths of her parents cause to these immediate recollections. As the images of a traumatic event cannot be imagined completely afterwards, the sounds of a tragic moment cannot be recalled entirely. Unlike from images of a past event, sounds can be more pervasive because they spread out everywhere, they are not limited to certain frame.

After giving different examples of subjective silence, it is significant to ask how it communicates with the character's thoughts and feelings and how the character is located in present or how the tension between subjective and objective reality is revealed. Firstly, very stylistic use of subjective silences reflects the burden of

carrying untold traumatic stories, which cannot be spoken loudly. Zafer in *Beyond the Hill* as an old soldier, suffers from post-traumatic syndrome, he chooses not to speak so much among other family members. The above-mentioned hallucination-like scenes reproduce a gap between official and personal history. We are not so often informed with past traumas of soldiers in the media. Actually, we have quite few information as to after life story of a soldier who is part of operation or conflict. Moreover, the issue of the Sivas Massacre is still highly discussed in the media because the people who are responsible for this catastrophe have not been sentenced yet. In both situations, it cannot be talk about a confrontation at the end in the public sphere. In other words, these are the topics official history insistently avoids being revealed, so silence turns into a tool to open a space to speak in-between official history and personal memory.

### **3.2. SPATIAL SILENCE**

The traumatic moments of the past that are not revealed completely haunt the present in different ways. In some situations, as in the case of subjective silence, it can be observed that the moments of a tragic event can come back intrusively without any reminder, memories are reactivated in those particular moments and he/she feels isolated from the world and her/his mind gets stuck in half-remembered sounds or images from the traumatic past. On the other hand, in some other situations, some places related to old memories of traumatic past can lead to recollections of certain moments or these places can embody what is lost by reminding certain ideals or beloved ones. These places imply ‘absent’ presences by marking what has been got through and what is lost.

Spatial silence can be described in general as the silence embedded in landscape, which manifests loss by implying ‘absent’ presences. In the video essay, the scenes that are marked by absent presences of lost ones are represented, each scene are from different movies concerning loss and mourning. They are intentionally juxtaposed subsequently in order to show that how they talk with each other in the sense that landscape embodies what is lost in all these films. The scenes selected in the video essay will be discussed in detail in an attempt to show similarities between them. It should be noted that, the figure of mountain plays a significant role in the

embodiment of traumatic events of the past. It symbolizes what happened in the past and marks unrevealed grief inscribed into these lands. The image of mountain itself mostly implies the issue of border, identity or being inbetween. It draws a line between what is represented and what is not seen. In all three examples selected in the video essay that will be examined in detail, mountain embodies what is lost and so it manifests what is lost and implies absent presences of lost ones.

Firstly, *Voice of My Father* tells the story of a mother and son, Base and Mehmet who are engraving traumatic events of the past through old tape recordings. Base persistently escapes from telling some family secrets. We cannot really know what happened to father or the son Hasan whose existences are only known from their voices from the old tapes. On the other hand, Base is constantly waiting for his guerrilla son Hasan to come back home. Throughout the movie, the narrative never reveals whether he is alive or not.

The scenes in which Base is standing in the middle of the street and looking at the mountains then turns away and keeps walking can be given as a good example for expressive use of spatial silence. Firstly, we see middle shot of Base is staring at something in the middle of the street, as if she is petrified with very anxious look, at the next scene we see an extreme long shot of a white bus going through roundabout ways of the mountains in the dark. Afterwards, we see Base again while she is still looking at the mountains and then she turns and walks away. The use of the sound at these scenes is also interesting because in the middle of silence, sounds of peaceful bird singing are intertwined with sounds of something like explosion, which can be hardly recognized.

Above all, there is no motivation before or after the scenes, which necessitates Base's gaze into the mountains, so they are fragmented pieces that break linear continuity which create a gap in the narrative. She looks as if she gets stuck at that particular moment while looking at the mountains. Back and Howes argue that empty space that doesn't talk back is evocative (2003, p. 308). These moments of silences can be really arresting in the sense of capturing the person's all subjectivity and forcing him/her to think about what is inscribed into mountains. The landscape embodies loss and mourning by reminding absent presence of his lost son. The space beyond the



mountains is never known and captured and her gaze at the landscape is full of questions as to what happened to his son over there. In that particular moment of standing and staring, she remembers what is lost.

Another example of spatial silence can be given from the movie *The Snow*. This film tells the story of a guerrilla's mother, Sanem and starts with the image of snowy mountain in silence then we see a crowd waiting for Sanem's son Ahmet who brings news about his brother's corpse. He dies somewhere beyond the mountains probably in the conflicts between Turkish army and the PKK, but the story never completely reveals it. Ahmet is not allowed to get his brother's body. From the very start of the film until the end, the image of mountain appears in many times. In one scene we see snowy mountains and then Ahmet shows up from the bushes and firstly looks at the mountain and then looks at the camera directly. In another scene, firstly the image of the mountains is seen, then we see Sanem looks at the mountains. There are also other scenes, in one of them Ahmet goes to mountains on the horse while we hear the sound of far-away explosions and he never comes back from this journey. Then, we see firstly mountains and then see people are murmuring in agony after death of Ahmet.

Repetitive images of the mountains construct the line between offscreen space and onscreen space. The space beyond the mountains is never known and fully grasped but only implied. We can only have an idea about what is going on beyond the represented space through the sounds of explosions time to time or through news on radio or television about ongoing operations taking place up to the mountains. Even if any characters do not reveal his/her sentiments about loss and mourning, suffering and pain are embedded in silent images of the mountains. Unrepresentability of the what is lost becomes embodied in empty landscape.

Other examples can be given from *Waiting for the Clouds*. The movie tells story of loss of identity and sense of belonging through assimilation and what happens after its revelation after a long time. The story is built around the main character Ayşe/Eleni whose Greek family is forced to immigrate in 1910-1920s. During their long journey, her parents died of harsh weather conditions and starvation. She and her brother Niko survive but separate from each other because she cannot stand marching anymore and then is adopted by a Turkish family. In this way, she keeps silent about



her identity around 50 years. Ayşe lives with her sister Selma in a remote village on the north coast of Turkey in the Black Sea Region. Selma dies because of a disease in the very beginning of the film, then Ayşe isolates herself and starts digging old pages of past. After looking at black white photos of her family hidden at the chest, her trouble memories are evoked. She and other villagers go to highlands for seasonal pasture of their cattle. During her journey, she disengages herself from other people and hardly talks with anyone.

The images of going up to high plateau are accompanied by oriental music in the beginning like a music clip sequence, then it decreases and slowing sounds of pipe mix into sharp whistling noise with the accompaniment of images of misty mountains, then villagers appear on the screen as they keep walking in company with noises of cowbell, out of a sudden Ayşe stops and looks at foggy mountains with questioning eyes. At that moment sound of cowbells decreases so abruptly and a distant unrecognized melody is heard in a different language as if coming through her memory because all the ambient noise except humming of the wind is silenced for few seconds. Only through silence itself, distant voices of troubled past are captured. Remembrances do not only come with images but sounds also evoke memories. Ambiguities and uncertainties concerning troubled past are marked by silence. In her article, Gökçe asserts that Ayşe looks at the misty mountains and empty landscape as if she is remembering something but cannot remember. Her gaze at the landscape is embedded with different levels of remembering referring to almost remembering, grieving, expecting, being awed and unsettled. In that initial break, that moment of silence, everything, which is lost, is remembered, evoked and captured (Gökçe, 2009, p. 273). Gökçe argues that aesthetic character of the landscape reveals sentiments of loss and mourning by embodying Ayşe's subjectivity. I suggest amplification of silence with reduction of ambient noises also marks disturbing presence of who and what is lost by referring to something unknown in history. While Ayşe stops and scans all empty landscape with her eyes in almost complete silence, camera follows her gaze all through the misty mountains and panning ends with the full frame of foggy sky accompanied by sound of screeching of a bird which source is not seen. Sharpness of that sound in silence is so distinctive as if it embodies sufferings of troubled past and bringing them into present. Possible meanings of loss and mourning are embedded in silence that are waiting there to be noticed. All the films cited above

manifest loss and mourning through implying an empty space, reveal the ruptures in subjective and collective memory and evoke memories of traumatic past. In this regard, landscapes embody loss and mourning resulting from suffering and pain of the tragic past that have never been represented completely because of obscuring by national discourses and so animate absences in the presence.

### **3.3. NARRATIVE SILENCE**

Babak Tabarraee coins the concept of narrative silence. In his thesis *Silence Studies in the Cinema and The Case of Abbas Kiarostami*, he offers very elaborate structural categorizations of silence forms on Kiarostami's works. His very detailed formulations are very helpful for studying filmic silences, when especially rarity of formal analyses is thought. He describes narrative silence as refrainment from providing some information whose presence would change either the construction of the narrative or the viewer's recognition of the film, but whose absence does not change anything other than raising questions about itself (Tabarraee, 2013, p. 121). Narrative silences can be thought as gaps and hesitations in the story which are implied but not fully known.

A striking example of narrative silence can be given from *Future Last Forever*. The movie tells the story of Sumru who takes a journey to collect elegies in south-east of Turkey. During her stay in Diyarbakır, she takes recordings of city sounds, mournful voices are heard from different corners of the city as if all these lands overflows with sorrow and pain. She is obsessed with collecting sounds, treats them as voices of past and trace the old memories through them. She makes interviews with people who lost their loved ones and hears stories about their disappearances. She meets with Ahmet who are selling bootleg dvds on the streets of Diyarbakır, they both start to trace what is left behind ongoing conflicts and dig out fragmented memories of disappearances, executions, evacuations of villages and unidentified murders through personal memories of the relatives who witness all cruelty. Their search for elegies makes them confront their own traumatic past which both have buried and silenced until now. Their repressed personal memories are activated by different systems of knowledge like tape recordings, newspapers, interviews and so on. One quotation

from John Berger is hanged on the wall of Musa Anter Visual and Audial Memory Center says: “These masters do not only kill innocent people but also eradicate memory. Crimes shouldn’t be forgotten, recordings, documents and testimonials should be kept”. At one of the scenes taken place at Memory Center, Sumru is listening tape recordings about conflicts between Turkish soldiers and guerrillas and how dead bodies of guerrillas are brought to village square for identification and afterwards thrown inside a pit all together. The witness also mentions corpses of two university students that they took from village called Siyasümbül in Hakkari. At this moment Sumru takes off her earphones, she stays in almost total silence for few seconds except a disturbing humming as background noise in very low tone. At the next scene, in the middle of the shot we see her sitting in agony leaning back on the wall full of photos of missing people, still in silence. Her body which covers only very little part of the whole image is positioned in a way that as if her existence is captivated by interrogating images of lost people. The scene dissolves into Ahmet in silence reading news with the title “Another civilian was killed in Silvan” with the image of corpse body lying on the street covered by pages newspapers, then it cuts into the scene we see Ahmet is sitting in front of the same image Sumru sits before. Then the camera starts panning all the room accompanied by sound recordings of different people about unidentified murders, Jitem, executions, confess of a soldier regarding burning the bodies of guerrillas and throwing into dump site. The source of the sound is not known, voices are detached from their bodies.

Chion’s suggested concept ‘acousmetre’ is very important with the regard to the relationship between the image and the voice. Chion defines acousmetre as “a kind of voice-character specific to cinema that in most instances of cinematic narratives derives mysterious powers from being heard and not seen. (Chion, 1994, p. 221). In other words, it can be recognized as “voice without body”, disembodied voice, which is not easily be captured or confined to any boundary. The place where it comes and the time when it belongs are not determinate. Ability to move around gives certain power. These disembodied voices blur the distinction between onscreen and offscreen space and pervade the places beyond the represented frame. In the light of Chion’s terms, the concept of disembodied voices can be thought in line with narrative silences in certain situations in which voices never come back to their sources repeatedly during the film. The existence of voices without body which sources are

not known, can create narrative silences in the case of refrainment from providing some significant information about the narrative, whose absence lead to raising questions.

At the scenes of Memory Center mentioned above in *Future Lasts Forever*, the voices whose source are not known signal certain silence in the narrative which transcend just being an 'absence' of a body but a 'presence' of a repressed traumatic past. Rawe explains that the persistence of silence through the concealment of a sonic source, namely acousmetre makes silence a visible subject within the sound film (Rawe, 2014, p. 92). Narrative silence is utilized as marking uneasy truths about traumatic moments in the past, which are constantly ignored by official authorities. In this way, silence makes tragic events of the past visible through implying contested traumatic facts by creating a space in the narrative in order to think over again. Narrative silence in the films by its nature creates a feeling of uneasiness, which derives from being deprived of knowing significant facts about the story. The inability of catching the sources of the voices leads to a fluctuating existence which provide them certain power. For example, in *Future Lasts Forever*, the sources of the recordings about unidentified murders, executions and confess of a soldier regarding burning the bodies of guerrillas are never known. The voices are heard out of a sudden without any implication of their sources. Moreover, it is impossible to know about every detail of the traumatic events through these limited sources, which create a feeling of uneasiness. These disembodies voice also show that significant amounts of knowledge can be hidden for a long time by the official discourse.

On the other hand, narrative silences create a gap in the narrative which provides a place to speak about uneasy truths of traumatic past. Ghost-like character of the voices, uneasy to catch and to be fixed in a certain time and space arouses curiosity about what happened in the past and make visible traumatic events which are refrained to be revealed by the national discourse. In this way, narrative silences through disembodied voices lead to fracturing of meaning and open a breach in official discourse which reveals loss and mourning that have been not represented before. The voices without sources mark the gaps or hesitations in the narrative concerning traumatic past. In this way, these disembodied voices invite the audiences to rethink about the tragic facts through making them visible. At this point, it is

important to note that uneasy events of the traumatic past, as unidentified murders and missing people in *Future Lasts Forever*, are mostly escaped to be discussed openly at national level and systematically ignored by the official discourse. For these reasons, narrative silences in the movies help for the manifestation of loss and mourning regarding the traumatic event.

The embodiment of trauma of loss through narrative silences by revealing gaps and hesitations is also related to the issue of limits of representations. The problematic question regarding to what extent a traumatic event can be represented in a coherent way leads to refrainment from providing some information about the traumatic event itself. The inability to narrativize every detail of the tragic event because of belatedness leads to the existence of gaps and hesitations in the narrative. Unlike from revealing uneasy and contested facts of the traumatic past, narrative silence is also utilized for acknowledging the limits of representations.

Narrative silences can be embedded in the entire story. For example, sometimes characters are not preferred to be shown or heard in the films, even though they have a significant part in the narrative. *Voice of the Father* have such characters. Base is waiting for his older son Hasan, who joined Kurdish guerrillas to turn back home. She is in a constant anxiety because of not knowing what happened to him and where he is now. She occasionally takes silent calls and believes that they are from him. Hasan is never seen in the film and his voice is only heard from the old tapes when he was a child. The presence of Hasan as a character in the narrative is felt mostly by the conversation took place between Mehmet and Şükran after revelation of fragments of traumatic past of the family through old recorded tapes. The ambivalent nature of his existence in the narrative is constructed by the use of sound in relation to onscreen space and off-screen space. In the very first scenes, Base turns home after certain time and sweep out the floor and then goes for a nap. While she is sleeping in the middle of all silence except distant sound of bird singing which is hardly heard of, a piece of wall falls on the floor and makes a loud noise which disrupts all stillness of the moment. Base wakes up and calls 'Hasan' in a way that assuming his existence at home, which is presumptively, is not possible. Even if the source of the noise is onscreen, Base's immediate call of her son name implies an off- screen space, which

is beyond imagination and not easily, be defined. This offscreen space also signifies narrative silence concerning what happened to Hasan which is never revealed in the film.

Narrative silences can be clearer in some situations like in the case of *Inflame*. Hasret the protagonist, sees recurring and unsettling nightmares and hallucinations about her parents' death and starts hearing sounds which she cannot know from where they are coming. After certain time, she tries to combine all the pieces in her memory which haunt every moment of her daily life and make a coherent story out of them, but she cannot be successful. At one scene in which Hasret tries to tell her recurring dream to one of her friends, in the middle of the story, her voice is silenced, and we can only hear disturbing sound of humming. Reflecting on Caruth's words on trauma in which she defines trauma as the wound of the mind, the trauma itself is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known (Caruth, 2016, p. 4), Hasret's inability to remember the unpleasant moments of the tragic past can be understood as a belated experience. The concept of narrative silence is coin In this regard, the choice of narrative silence in that particular moment derives from the fact the incomprehensibility of the traumatic events of the past prohibits recalling the stories with a coherent narrative.

All the example given above show that narrative silences are mostly preferred in the movies to demonstrate that it is impossible to represent the realities about disagreeable moments of traumatic past that are constantly escaped to be shown in public by official discourse. Narrative silences also embody loss and mourning resulting from traumatic events by revealing gaps, ruptures and fractures between collective memory and personal memory, which are sometimes in conflict with each other. In this regard, narrative silences open a space to reconsider what happened in the past and to constitute an alternative narrative.

### **3.4. SILENCING SOUNDS**

Sounds can be very disruptive under certain conditions. Silencing sounds can be considered as an abrupt intervention of a disruptive sound such as telephone ringing or knocking door, which penetrates all the stillness, and silence of the moment.



Telephone ringing scenes in *Nowhere Land* and *Voice of My Father* are good examples for silencing sounds. The silent calls appear in both movies. In *Nowhere Land*, Şükran is looking forward to seeing her son Veysel, who is lost and probably dead, but we never know precisely what happened to him. She starts getting silent calls like Base in *Voice of My Father*. During the whole movie, the voice of Veysel is never heard. The image of him is only seen on the missing peoples report put on the wall by Şükran, and his body only appears once in a dreamlike vision of Şükran in which she thinks that she saw Veysel at the train station she is working at. The scenes of silent calls in both films share similarities. Once they both get silent calls when they are sleeping. While Base is watching television on the couch, she falls asleep then wakes up with the high tones of the telephone ring. In the same way, while Şükran is sleeping on the sofa, she wakes up when the telephone rings. In the middle of sleep, at the most possible 'peaceful' moments of silence, the sound of telephone rings resonates in the room quite disruptively. That sound itself is disjunctive by nature because of its intensity and sharpness. The use of sound in relation to silence constructs the off-screen space beyond the frame and stretching the represented space into unimaginable one. The silence on the other side of the line and expected but unheard voice of their sons creates an ambivalent offscreen space which cannot be easily recognized. That silence itself brings to the fore questions about the existence of characters and what happened to them. Even though the existence of characters is accepted via narrative signs, a total absence of their voices and images imply refrainment from telling some truths in the narrative. Silence reveals disturbance in the manner of interrogating fluctuating existence of characters.

Another example of silencing sounds appears in *Autumn*. The movie reflects a loss of ideals and turmoils of recent political history. The protagonist Yusuf is a political prisoner who is sentenced to jail for ten years in the 1997 as a result of being part of the leftist student movement. He experienced hunger strikes taken place in the 2000s against harsh conditions at the prison-like solitary confinement of F-type cells.

He is released because of health problems, then returns to his village in the Black Sea region. It turns out that his father died, and his ex-girlfriend got married. Not so many people he knows left in the village except his elderly mother and his childhood friend Mikail. Yusuf isolates himself day by day. One day he and Mikail go to a tavern

where Yusuf meets Eka, a beautiful Georgian hooker who works to support her mother and child economically. They share their lost ideals and loneliness: a love story without a happy end. The movie is built around personal trauma of Yusuf who heavily pays the price for his dedication to ideals of socialism, spent best years of his youth at the prison. Gönül Dönmez-Colin explains that director Özcan Alper turns the audiences into witnesses by presenting loss of experience, so transforming personal loss of experience into a collective loss which was triggered by military interventions of three decades (Colin, 2014, p. 286).

Yusuf hardly talks about his life at prison; he mostly chooses not to speak about his troubled past. We only learn about what happened through tv reports and actual footages which interrupts the fictional world. Even though his mother also forces him to talk about what bothers him, he kept being silent. He almost never expresses his feelings or thoughts about his lost ten years in the prison. Vocal silences reach to the point of uncomfortable silence at some point. At the scene Yusuf is sitting on the sofa and is looking at stormy weather from the window, the camera turns into his mother who is sitting opposite to him. She looks away from the window to look at him, and he also turns his head from the window and looks at the other side, their eyes do not meet with each other at that moment. Then they keep looking at the rain, no word is said.

Disturbance can be felt at every second of the sequence, resulting from not only uneasiness in their eyes but unnerving sounds of tick-tack of the clock. The sharpness of the noise overcomes the peaceful sound of rain and penetrates through silence at the room. It foreshadows upcoming unpleasant events.

The doorbell scenes in *Frenzy* and *Inflame* are very extreme examples of silencing sounds. *Frenzy* is about the complicated relationship between two brothers living in the state of constant chaos and paranoia of Istanbul. The younger brother Ahmet in *Frenzy* is abandoned by his wife and left alone at home, and he works for the municipality and hunts the stray dogs. Day by day, he isolates himself and doesn't want to have communication with his brother Kadir. Because of the wrong denunciation, the police carry out an operation to catch him at home. The sequence in which police is trying to break into the house is quite disturbing.



Silencing sounds of the doorbell and knocking on the door last quite long and the sound itself is so unbearable in its intensity and sharpness. The doorbell scene in *Inflame* is quite similar. Hasret in *Inflame* isolates herself like Ahmet in *Frenzy* because she becomes so obsessed with finding the reality behind her parents' death. She doesn't go outside and reply to the calls coming from her friends. There is one particular scene in which silencing sounds come to the maximum level. The sequence starts with the sounds of a telephone ring and then the alarm of the door starts. The sounds themselves are so annoying. At both movies, the characters are similar in terms of isolating themselves from outside. The resonance of silencing sounds all over the place enhances the feeling of claustrophobia reflects the disturbance of the characters' inner world.

The sound of the helicopter in *Future Lasts Forever*, *Voice of My Father*, *Snow*, *Jin*, *Silent*, *Frenzy*, *Blue Silence* is another example of silencing sounds. First of all, the repetitiveness of helicopter sound in different movies is striking. Even though the subject matter of each film is different, all of them reflects on the traumatic past of Turkey, and the sound of the helicopter is such an ordinary thing to hear if ongoing operations are taken into account. What is most arresting about the sound of the helicopter is how it is penetrating daily routines of ordinary people, even at their home. It implies offscreen space which is beyond the represented space of daily life and forces to think about what's happening there. The prominence of the noise is easily recognized in the middle of an ordinary day, and the sound itself is acoustically so obtrusive with its sharpness and intensity.

When all the examples of silencing sounds explained above are considered, it can be easier than the use of sound in such a way is very disruptive. The abrupt intervention of a sound with its intensity penetrates the stability of the moment and arouses anxiety because of its unbearable nature of disruptiveness. To demonstrate the disruptive effect of silencing sounds, the scenes from different films with similar usage are juxtaposed, thus the distracting effect of silencing sound can be understood better.

### 3.5. ALMOST ABSOLUTE SILENCE

In some situations, all soundtracks elements drop completely in the movie, where almost absolute silence occurs as if the characters lose the ability to hear. This is very unusual use of silence. In this article “The interplay of Sound and Silence in Contemporary Cinema and Television”, Paul Théberge talks about the scene of heart attack in *Leaving Las Vegas* (Mike Figgis, 1995) which in complete silence. Figgis states that the prohibition against absolute silence in cinematic representation can result from the way in which complete silence can place the audience in a form of direct confrontation with the film (Théberge, 2008, p. 53). Total lack of any kind of sound is very rare situation in cinematic representation. The audiences are not familiar to complete silence in the movies. For these reasons, the use of almost absolute silence can be very effective and easy to recognize. In the video essay, the scenes including the use of almost complete silence are brought together from different movies related to loss and mourning in order to demonstrate the potential effects of its usage.

Firstly, the moments of almost absolute silence can depict the character’s subjectivity in purest sense. In *Frenzy*, Kadir, the older brother, works for information service to collect evidences about potential terrorists. One day, even if he is not quite sure, he gives inaccurate information about his younger brother Ahmet to the police and tells that his brother is captured by terrorists and is being kept as a hostage at his own house. Ahmet dies of police operation. Kadir feels guilty of his brother's death and his mourning turns into an enduring state of melancholia because he is not capable of handling with the suffering and pain resulting from the guilt itself. In the scenes after Ahmet’s death, his body is put inside the ambulance; all the soundtrack elements are completely silenced. Then, we see middle shot of Kadir sitting and watching television news, which shows the image of his brother with the subtitle saying, “The terrorist is captured.” He looks as if frozen at that particular moment in complete silence. The moments of almost absolute silence are beyond the depiction of death itself as the extremist situation of silence in human life but also embody loss and

mourning in purest sense. What can explain better than silence itself the unbearable and unaccountable reality of losing a beloved one? No words are enough to tell the feeling concerning the death of a loved person because of the incomprehensible nature of the traumatic event. In this regard, silence turns into a tool for the manifestation of loss and mourning, especially in the case of inability to talk about the traumatic event itself. Silence itself becomes part of active process of mourning and embodies loss and trauma. Therefore, silence has much more meaning than just being absence of words. It turns into a presence of an existing trauma or a depiction of painful feelings after a loss or manifestation of a mourning process. In some situations, silence can embody someone's feelings that cannot be explained with words, like in the case of Kadir's manifestation of mourning regarding his brother in *Frenzy*.

Secondly, the use of almost absolute silence can also enhance the violence depicted in the images. In *Future Last Forever*, the protagonist Sumru and Ahmet go to the Musa Anter Visual and Audial Memory Center to collect elegies about unsolved murders for her thesis. In this sequence, while they are watching the video of how the people are forcibly getting into panzer from the screen of a monitor, it turns into full-frame image. Nothing is left between these disturbing images and the audiences. The fiction form is replaced by documentary style, we as audiences stay alone with these unsettled images without mediation of the medium itself. Coming to end of the sequence, all screams and clamors of civilian people turn into almost absolute silence with distracting humming. This scene dissolves into medium shot of Sumru sitting on her bed in silence and looks grieved by what she witnesses.

I suggest the use of silence at the end of the scene signifies insufficiency of visual archive to represent cultural memory, which is constantly obscured by official history not to be uncovered. Even though these images are pure records of traumatic history, they are inadequate to represent all sufferings and pain waiting for to be revealed after a such a long time. The issue of how to represent collective memory is quite problematic because all the memories are fragmented, buried and repressed. Silence is employed in a way that as if emerging from fractures, gaps and hesitations between personal memory and collective memory and making a breach in narrative of official

history. In this regard, at those silent moments, not only Sumru confronts with the unsettling facts of traumatic past of Turkey but also an empty space is created for audiences to contemplate. Marks explores how recent intercultural artists interrogates the historical archive in order to read their own histories in its gaps or to force a gap in the archive so that they can have a place to speak (Marks, 2010, p. 5). The usage of archival footage in-between fictional world is one of the main characteristics of the movies of new cinema in Turkey because these movies often deal with problematic issues of traumatic events in the recent history of Turkey concerning collective trauma, loss and mourning such as unidentified murders, missing people and tortures and hunger strikes at the prisons. Therefore, usage of very rare archival footages of traumatic past in the middle of the fictional world create a space to speak about the contested issues that are not openly discussed in official terms. In this way, fragmented parts of traumatic events are brought into discussion with the help of cinematic representation. The use of archival footage brings the question as to what extent traumatic events are remembered at collective level.

Moreover, the usage of archival images can reveal the conflicts between personal memories and collective memory. Personal memories can be very limited, hard to remember and misleading in some situations because reaching to traumatic event itself completely is impossible, while remembering some parts can be forgotten or wrongly remembered. Archival footage can be a tool to trigger the memories. As discussed above, the use of almost absolute silence with the archival images imply uneasy truths of traumatic past that are not often publicly discussed. Depiction of violence in silenced moments reflects the disagreeable moments of traumatic events in the past which have not been accounted for. It opens a place for contemplation and a chance for encounter with the repressed memories which are not openly discussed and not accepted as collective trauma. Silences come out from the gaps between collective and personal memories and embody loss and mourning, in this way, it brings ghosts of the past into present to be revealed. In this regard, how the present is haunted by the traumatic events of the past is revealed through the expressive use of silences.

Almost absolute silences can enhance the expressivity of loss and mourning in

cinematic representation. The use of complete silence in the middle of the movie in an unexpected way attracts all the attention to the very moment of loss and mourning. In *Nowhere Land*, the scene in which Şükran looks at the mirror for a long time in almost complete silence appears twice in the movie, in the beginning and in the end. In the last scene, we learn that she takes a long journey to the east part of Turkey to find her missing son and the mirror scene takes place after she turns away from the journey without finding her missing son. The appearance of the same scene in the beginning and in the end both underlines her ongoing relationship with past which haunts the present and her enduring state of melancholic state resulting from loss of her son. She stands in the front of the mirror and looks overwhelmed with suffering in silence. Almost absolute silence in these moments embodies her loss and mourning in a way that no music or dialogue can express it in such a way.

### **3.6. MUSIC SILENCE**

Paul Théberge describes music silence as the interruption or absence of music when its presence is expected (Théberge, 2008, p. 60-62). Unfortunately, music silences are mostly ignored because it is hard to recognize within the structure of narrative. Théberge notes within film theory, there has been a tendency to pay more attention to the presence of music, than its absence. However, the absence of a given music at any given moment can be as significant as presence (Théberge, 2008, p. 58). Especially the absence of non-diegetic music in a dramatic moment of a movie can dissatisfies the audiences because they expect hearing sad music in dramatic scenes, like in conventional movies. A good example can be given from the movie *Snow*. The film tells the story of the relationship between a mother Sanem, and a son Ahmet and a granddaughter Zin that live in a village near to Ağrı surrounded by lofty mountains. One day, Ahmet returns from the city and brings shocking news of his brother Zeki's death. Sanem goes into mourning after that day and she stays sick in bed half-dead for days. She wants a handful snow from Ahmet as her last wish. Her son goes to mountains to get some snow but never comes back, died in the middle of military operations.

In the entire movie, there is no much dialogue, the characters are mostly silent.

Although there are many dramatic moments in the narrative, no extra diegetic music is used except at the credits in the end. We learn about ongoing operations between Turkish security forces and the PKK only through different mediums such as TV and radio. The movie starts and ends with the scenes in which Sanem covers the photos of his dead sons with black cloth. In these scenes, extradiegetic music in sorrowful tones could be used to maximize the bitterness of the moment, but no music is added, silence is preferred.

On the other hand, *I saw the Sun* (Mahsun Kırmızıgül, 2009), produced in 2009 like *Snow*, also touches upon similar issues of loss and mourning as a result of ongoing conflicts but applies to more conventional narration techniques. The movie tells the story of a Kurdish family who are forced to immigrate because of conflicts between Turkish security forces and the PKK. Davud Altun has both a soldier and guerrilla son. His guerrilla son died in the conflict with Turkish soldiers. Davud is brought to identify his son dead body. At the moment he recognizes his son's dead body lying on the floor, he starts to cry and sad tunes of piano increases, he turns his head and sees Turkish-flag covered funerals of soldiers, his screams rise. That scene dissolves into the scene he with other villagers brings dead body of his son back home on the truck accompanied by very dramatic Kurdish melody. The use of dramatic music in the moment of clamor raises questions about how loss and mourning is represented in conventional ways. Sad music lets both characters and audiences to unburden themselves for the loss and enable mourning process to start. This movie is produced during the resolution process on Kurdish question. Davud, as father of a soldier and a guerrilla offers reconciliation. Narrative and formal elements of the film put forward that critical issues of Kurdish question, evacuation of villages and forced migration can be represented and confrontation is possible. Use of sad music is one of the aesthetic strategies to represent 'confrontation' and reveal loss and mourning in more conventional way. Martin Ruben explains music is the voice of the past, of memory or of a lost moment frozen in time and left (Ruben, 1985, p. 280). Music in this movie and many other conventional ones is the voice of pain, loss and mourning, in this way, it enhances audience identification and leaves no place for critical engagement with the movie. Music as a narration tool is used to represent past, memory, loss and

so on.

On the other hand, at the last scene of *Snow* mentioned above, quite different strategy is employed by displaying a mother's mourning for her losses of her sons in almost total silence except distant sound of ticking of a clock. Silence as an aesthetic choice is preferred to signify unrepresentability of the issue at question. Sanem in *Snow* does not confront with her losses as in the same way Davud in *I saw the Sun* does. The film never shows what really happened to her sons, we only have ideas about what is going on beyond the mountains through the news from television or radio. Music silence at the peak moments of the film signify loss cannot be revealed in an explicit way because meaning behind it transcends the represented space of the image, pervade all over the places which is not present, even cannot be reached, somewhere out there beyond the mountains. E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang assert that trauma indicates a shattering of a culture's meaning-making mechanism and representational mode, so it is beyond reach of representation. Unrepresentable character of it makes trauma untouchable and unreachable (Kaplan and Wang, 2004, p. 8) In this regard, silence as an aesthetic choice turns into a narration tool to embody the issue of unrepresentability of traumatic moments. *The Memories of the Wind* tells the story of a dissident writer on the run, Aram during last years of World War II. Being accused of being a communist, he has to flee Istanbul to a small remote village surrounded by mountains located between Turkey-Georgia border. He stays in the house of Mikail and his wife Meryem. Because of lack communication between them, Aram isolates himself in the attic and keeps drawing on notebook or wooden pieces and writing diary.

He reconstitutes the past again and again by drawing charcoal portraits of people who do not live any more. These drawings are intercut with flashbacks of real or imagined past which we never know the distinction. These sequences appear in various times in the narrative and disrupt the continuity of fictional world as if marking fractures in the past through penetrating present, they are mostly accompanied by sad tones of piano without dialogue. However, at one particular sequence in which Aram is drawing of portraits of different people on his notebook, which are cut with real/imagined images of the faces drawn in charcoals as if flashes



of the past calling from the abyss of Aram's memories, no extra music is heard, only displeasing sound of wind is used as a background noise. From the very start of the sequence to the end, Aram's body is gradually falling in almost complete silence, as if his whole existence gives into mourning for the lost ones. The prominence of sound of wind with the absence of non-diegetic music creates silence in the manner of marking gaps in the blurred line of what is imagined and what is really happened. Silence occurs at the moment of recalling troubled memories. The sequence ends with the flashbacks in which his mother cries for her recently died daughter and painfully utter some words in Armenian. Aram's recurring nightmares force him to relive tragic events of his past. At another scene, he is writing diary and his written words are heard in the form of his inner voice, says: "Who are you? You don't belong to any place, you have no home or country. How long does your existence keep living like a guest? Everything is so silent. I remember more than I know. My imagination goes beyond my memory." His disembodied voice resonates everywhere beyond the represented space. Aram's complaints about silence arise from his lost sense of identity and family. With scarcity of dialogue and visual silences of foggy mountains as the symbol of displacement, movie uses silence as an aesthetic element which marks the presence of absences concerning tragic events took place in 1915 by touching upon sensitive issue of Armenian Catastrophe which is accepted as a taboo for a long time. The prominence of silence at the narrative level indicates to what extent representation is possible, even survivors themselves like Aram could not remember exactly what happened because narratives regarding those years are reproduced by official discourse in a such manner that undermines personal memories. Silence occurs where the narrative cues are hinted but not really expressed due to inability to represent tragic events of the past.

In the video essay, the scenes without any background music from different movies bring together in order to demonstrate the influence of music silence. In the both scenes from *Snow* and *Memories of the Wind*, which mentioned above, only background noises such as sound of ticking of a clock or sound of the wind are heard which get all the attention. Even if the use of more dramatic music is expected at this moment of mourning and trauma, no sad music is added like in the conventional movies. In some situations, music silence can be also understood as almost absolute



silence, but the main difference is that none of sound elements such a non-diegetic music, sound effects or background noise is used in almost absolute silence. Moreover, the concept of music silence is much more related to the expectations of the audiences concerning the atmosphere of the scenes because the audiences expect hearing sad music at the dramatic moments because of common use of dramatic music in more conventional movies. For example, no dramatic music is used at the both scenes from different movies used in the video essay, even if it is expected. However, it should be noted that both terms, music silence or almost absolute silence are not strictly defined. As an example, if any kind of music such as background noise is quite low which is hardly to be recognized in one particular scene, it can be named as almost absolute silence.

### **3.7. LANGUAGE SILENCE**

Refrainment from making full translation of a language can be considered as language silence in the narrative. In *Nowhere Land*, Şükran goes to Mardin to find her missing son. One day she visits a historical building and sits next to an old woman and a child. Even though she does not anything else about her situation, the old woman starts to talk in another language, Arabic and Şükran could not understand anything ask the child to translate what she says. He translates as “All children find their mothers and all mothers find their children.” There is no even translation on DVD; these words are intentionally preferred to not be translated with subtitles. Language itself becomes suspect, unreliable, misleading, harmful- an instrument of maliciousness (the gossip, misunderstanding) (Ruben, 1985, p. 281). Especially, in the case of dominance of the language of the majority group over the language of minority, the language can turn into a tool for propaganda and translation of the language of minority groups into majority’s language can be misleading. For these reasons, the issue of translation is not so innocent under some conditions; so leaving the language untranslated is intentional in some conditions in order to get rid of any misunderstanding or misleading information.

Laura marks states one strategy for divorcing the visual from the verbal record is refraining from full translation into language of dominant culture. Partial translation is

important. Avoidance of translating sacred elements of the speech does not only protect the culture from prying eyes but challenges a viewer's conventional ethnographic expectation that these images are a window onto the culture (Marks, 2010, p. 37-39). In this regard, the words of old woman also signify the unknowns about that culture and underline the fact that sometimes translation between languages can lead to loss of meaning because each language is part of different cultural and social context. Moreover, language itself becomes a tool for cultural assimilation by dominant culture and the preference of speaking in native language instead of official language can be regarded as a resistance to hegemony of dominant culture.

### **3.8. CONVERSATIONAL SILENCE**

In the conventional movies, dialogue comes first in the construction of meaning and development of the narrative. Dialogue plays a significant role in storytelling and reflecting the expressions and feelings of the characters. On the other hand, there is a scarcity of dialogue in more unconventional ones in some situations in order to produce meaning in a different way and express characters' feelings, especially with the aim of demonstrating inner sentiments of a character. Incessant dialogue can undermine the meaning because of difficulty of translating feelings and expressions into words. A little pause can be helpful under some conditions to express inner feelings of a character through facial impressions.

In the film, silence can be extremely vivid and varied, for although it has no voice, it has very many expressions and gestures. A silent glance can speak volumes; its soundlessness makes it more expressive because the facial movements of a silent figure may explain the reason for the silence, make us feel its weight, its menace, its tension. In the film, silence does not halt action even for an instant and such silent action gives even silence a living face (Balazs, 1970, p. 207). Even though words are not enough to tell about the feelings, especially in the case of demonstrating inner world of a character, silence can express what she or he feels through facial expressions and can reflect her or his inner feelings in a much more apparent than a dialogue does. This particular moment of silence can convey deeper meanings as in

the case of manifesting trauma, loss and mourning which cannot be expressed completely with words. In this way, silence opens a space for contemplation about the characters' inner feelings and the expressions on the human faces can be understood much better in silent moments.

When a character chooses not to speak even if it is expected to hear some words from him/her, conversational silence happens. In *Future Last Forever*, Sumru makes interviews with relatives of missing people. At one of the interviews, a woman firstly talks about his lost husband and her wish to find his bones, in the middle of the interview, she turns back to Sumru and asks: "Who are you looking for?". Sumru didn't answer it and keeps silent. In *Inflame*, Hasret looks after the truth about deaths of her parents and finds someone who knows what happened to them. She asks whether she remembers the day her parents die or not, she didn't reply and just walks away. She chooses to escape to say anything but from her eyes, it seems she knows everything, but she doesn't want to talk about and becomes silent because the truth behind it can be quite devastating for Hasret.

Both characters prefer keeping silent because they even cannot encounter with the unpleasant moments of traumatic past themselves. Even though everything is so clear about what happened to their loved ones and they both know the reasons behind their losses, they cannot confess the grievous truth to themselves. Therefore, silences occur at the moments of encounters with traumatic past. There is no possible way to express in words and narrativize it with a coherent story because the trauma itself, the wound of the mind, as Caruth says, is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known.

In *Autumn*, Yusuf and Eka stand at the pier. Eka asks some questions to him about his illness but he didn't answer it, and, in the end, she says: "You look as if you are not living at present times, you are like someone who escaped from Russian novels." In my opinion, no words could be described better Yusuf's enduring state of melancholia. After spent ten years at prison, Yusuf has already lost his ideals and even worse his youth. He is not able to leave the past behind as all the other characters who suffers from loss of their loved ones or their countries or their ideals. The lack of words is the result of inability to express to what happened to these

characters, so silence itself in purest sense, embodies loss and mourning. In combination with music, facial expressions render non-readable traces of 'trauma' into cultural encodings that might be more easily interpretable. Thus, film functions as a medium that witnesses, remembers and is haunted and obsessed by traumatic historical events that can neither be narrativized completely nor be fully decoded (Kabalek, 2014, p. 10). The use of conversational silence in the examples given in the video essay, which is discussed above, makes the facial expressions of the characters more visible. In this way, the silence itself make possible of reflecting inner feelings of the characters through facial expressions without uttering a word. In the video essay, the scenes of conversational silences are selected and brought together in order to show how the silence reveal inner feelings of the characters through facial expressions and embody trauma and loss that they have. Deeper silences without any dialogue let to enter into mind of the characters. For these reasons, conversational silences render the feelings concerning loss and mourning more apparent and interpretable.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored expressive silences used in the movies of new cinema in Turkey in order to reveal how silence is effectively employed to translate traumatic moments, articulate loss and mourning and in which ways disturbing experiences of past can be brought into surface and to what extent it is possible to reveal moments of traumatic events. New cinema in Turkey is taken into consideration as a case study with the purpose of showing similar tendencies regarding the use of cinematic silences in the movies concerning the issue of trauma, loss and mourning. Because of difficulty of demonstrating cinematic silences in a written form, a video essay is produced in order to reveal silences in a more apparent way. The traumatic moments of the past embedded in silences cannot be easily revealed in words, since there is no common language to articulate trauma, loss, and mourning. Traumatic moments cannot be narrativized because of inaccessibility to the whole trauma itself, so silence becomes a tool to open a space to talk about tragic events.

In this video essay, different types of silences including subjective silence, spatial silence, almost absolute silence, language silence, music silence, conversational silence, silencing sounds and narrative silence have explained by putting scenes with similar usage of silence from different movies of new cinema together. It should be noted that all the concepts used in the video essay are not strictly defined, it is better to call them tendencies of silences in new cinema.

The significance of use of cinematic silences in these movies derives from the fact that silence transcends just being a theme in the narrative but turns into an aesthetic tool in the narration. A close formal analysis of different movies has revealed how the silence itself is adopted as a part of new film language in search for finding a way for articulation of loss and mourning. Unlike from thematic analysis of silence on verbal level based on the narrative, a formal analysis has been applied for the demonstration of how silence is embedded in the narrational structure at the movies about trauma and loss. In this way, the performativity of silence as an aesthetic choice in the narration with its great potential for acknowledging what is lost and translating trauma has been revealed. With the help of video essay, structural categorization of different types of silences have been made in order to demonstrate similarities

between various movies regarding unconventional use of silences in new cinema and show how these movies talk with each other and imply gaps, ruptures and hesitations concerning traumatic moments.

Through a close formal analysis of cinematic silences, it has uncovered that how uneasy and contested moments concerning recent history of Turkey such as the conflict between Turkish army and the PKK, unidentified murders, discrimination of minorities, missing people, which are obscured by official history are manifested in cinematic representation through unconventional use of silences.

What makes these movies unique is the use of creative silences at the moments of encountering with displeased moments of traumatic events in which narrative memory collapses. In other words, silence occurs at the moments where there is no possible way to reveal the trauma itself. Silence embodies loss and mourning by marking gaps, fractures and breaches in the narrative concerning unaccounted memories of traumatic past and the conflicts between personal and collective memory. In this regard, silence should not be only conceived as 'absence of sounds' because its 'presence' marks what is lost. Winter and Dessingue argues that every archived, silenced word or event carries within itself the potential of being remembered, revealed and recreated, even if it may seem 'lost' in the first glance (Winter and Dessingue, 2015, p. 7). In other words, silences should be thought as constitutive element of active process of recalling traumatic moments in cinematic representation in the case of manifestation of trauma, loss and mourning. In this regard, performative role of silence in the case of acknowledging trauma and loss in cinema has been analyzed with regard to its potential marking ellipses, gaps and hesitations in the narrative.

In the first chapter, theoretical works about trauma, loss and mourning have been discussed in order to discuss the issue of representation of trauma and loss in cinema. It has been explored that loss that are not allowed to be mourned after, leads to an ongoing melancholic state which offers no chance for any conciliation. It has been discussed in detail that unending state of melancholia after loss derives from the unaccounted disturbing facts about the traumatic past cannot be full grasped, reappears in later periods in different ways such as flashbacks, nightmares or recurring sounds in an unexpected time and space. They cannot be fully grasped or

completely remembered because of inability to comprehend the event itself. Contested and uneasy events of the past that have been not confronted with, haunts the present in different ways and come to the surface in an unexpected moment. By giving references to the theoretical works on trauma, loss and mourning, it has been put forward that the issues that cannot be spoken loudly and suppressed continuously because of their conflicts with the official discourse, have been manifested through expressive silences in cinematic representation. In this regard, it has been argued that silence has a significant and empowering role in the articulation of loss and mourning. For these reasons, silence should not be defined in negative terms in a repressing manner but should be considered as performative and productive. Developing on the theories of trauma studies that have been discussed in the first chapter, it has been argued that silence should be thought as a tool in order to open a space for discussion and speak about the disturbing facts of traumatic past. As trauma studies have shown the traumatic event itself cannot be narrativized completely and fully grasped, so there is no a common language to talk about the traumatic events of the past because of incomprehensibility. As a result, it has been argued that silence turns into a tool for the manifestation of trauma, loss and mourning especially in cinematic representation. In the second chapter, the reasons behind the choice of video essay as a methodology have been discussed. It has been discussed that video essay is the best solution for demonstrating the expressive silences in the cinematic representation because there is no a common language to discuss about trauma, loss and mourning. It is used a tool in order to show in a more apparent way silences embody loss and mourning in the movies. With the help of video essay, a formal analysis has revealed that trauma, loss and mourning are not only manifested through visual elements but also with silence and its interplay silence.

In the third chapter, a close formal analysis of films of new cinema in Turkey have been conducting by giving examples of particular scenes with different tendencies of cinematic silences in order to reveal commonalities and differences regarding the use of expressive silences in manifestation of contested and uneasy moments of traumatic past. The potentials of silence have been shown with reference to the issue of representation of trauma in cinema and explored that silence carries a great potential of revealing trauma and loss, not in a passive or repressing way but in an empowering



way by implying and marking loss and mourning. Silence becomes a narrational device in cinematic representation in the articulation of trauma and loss by opening a new space to speak. It opens a space to talk about the traumatic stories that have not been narrativized in a coherent way. In this way, it has been shown that silence turns into a new film language in the search for finding a new way to represent trauma and loss, especially in the movies of new cinema.

A close analysis of different movies of new cinema through video essay has shown that the moments of encounters with incomprehensible traumatic events, loss and mourning are manifested through silences by revealing ghosts of the past that haunts the present. This constant movement between past and present also implies the gaps, fractures and hesitations regarding the traumatic events and silences at these particular moments reveal inaccessibility and impossibility of comprehending the event. Even though remembering everything concerning the traumatic event itself is not possible, silence plays a significant role in the construction of meaning and opening a new path for revealing loss and trauma by reactivating the relationship between past and present in the active process of forgetting and remembering. It has been argued that the moments of silence in the movies related to trauma, loss and mourning do not offer any reconciliation about the traumatic past but enable the active process of remembering and forgetting. In this way, silence has an empowering role in revealing absent presences of traumatic events in the national past that are poorly discussed. There is a moment of suspension that occurs in these works after the official discourse has been (if only momentarily) dismantled and before the emerging discourse finds its voice. This is a moment of silence, an act of mourning for the terrible fact that the histories that are lost are lost for good. Yet this moment is also enormously suggestive and productive (Marks, 2010, p. 26). In this regard cinematic silences are quite productive thanks to its performative role in manifestation of trauma loss and mourning.

Silence, with its great potential of making something remembered and disclosed which is obscured by national discourse and being forced to be forgotten, plays a significant role in the articulation of loss and mourning by marking absences and gaps about disagreeable facts of tragic past and so discloses incomprehensibility of trauma



itself. In other words, it reveals unrepresentability of trauma itself by implying ruptures and hesitations in the narrative. Thus, silence offers a space for manifestation of disturbing memories of the past that have not been acknowledged by official discourses and it opens an empty space in which to speak.



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