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CINEMATIC STRATEGIES AGAINST SILENCED AND REPRESSED PAST: A FORMAL ANALYSIS OF UNCONVENTIONAL FILMS FROM TURKEY IN THE 2000s

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SESSİZLEŞTİRİLMİŞ VE BASTIRILMIŞ GEÇMİŞE KARŞI SİNEMATİK STRATEJİLER: 2000'LERİN TÜRKİYE'SİNDEN KONVANSİYONEL OLMAYAN FİLMLERİN BİÇİMSEL ANALİZİ

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I wish Barış could read this thesis, make a face and say something awkward in his snobbish way.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP: Justice and Development Part (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)

EU: European Union

JİTEM: The Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism organization (Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele)

PKK: The Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the relation between memory and cinema in the context of cinema in Turkey. It analyses the unconventional films made between 1999 and 2014 during a period of political transformation which engage with the various traumatic events in the history of Turkey. It is argued that the formal strategies used in these films constitute a film language that enables representing both the silenced and repressed past and how the past is being lived and sustained in the present, and that this language engages with discussions of memory in Turkey. Memory is the core analytical tool in this thesis, and it is discussed with its collective aspects. The films analyzed in this thesis are discussed in terms of their postmemorial function. The selected films are situated into the corpus of cinema in Turkey, and their transnational characteristics are indicated. Considering the filmmakers' critical positions to the hegemonic discourses and national identity in Turkey, these films are situated into the accented cinema literature. The accented style is used as a critical and formal guideline to analyze the films. Thematic preoccupations, the use of epistolary form and spatial relations in the selected films are closely examined in order to understand the film language that emerges in these films as a response to the forced silence and repression of the past. Structures of feeling and truth claiming in these films are discussed in terms of memory activism in Turkey. Throughout this thesis, it is argued that these films produce aesthetic responses to the political discourses, and contribute to the demand for coming to terms with the past.

Keywords: memory, trauma, film form, cinema in Turkey, accented cinema

ÖZET

Bu tez Türkiye'deki sinema bağlamında hafıza ve sinema arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanmaktadır. Siyasi bir dönüşüm sürecinde, 1999 ve 2014 yılları arasında yapılmış, Türkiye tarihindeki çeşitli travmatik olaylarla ilişkilenen konvansiyonel olmayan filmleri inceler. Bu filmlerde kullanılan biçimsel stratejilerin bastırılmış ve sessizleştirilmiş geçmiş ile bu geçmişin bugünde nasıl yaşandığını ve sürdürüldüğünü temsil etmeye olanak tanıyan ve Türkiye'deki hafıza tartışmaları ile ilişkilenen bir film dili oluşturduğu iddia edilmiştir. Hafıza bu çalışmanın temel analitik aracıdır ve kolektif yönleriyle tartışılmıştır. Bu tezde analiz edilen filmler hafıza sonrası işlevleri ile tartışılmıştır. Seçilen filmler Türkiye'deki sinema külliyatı içerisinde konumlandırılmış ve ulus aşırı nitelikleri belirtilmiştir. Yönetmenlerin Türkiye'deki hegemonik söylem ve ulus kimliğine eleştirel pozisyonları göz önüne alınarak bu filmler aksanlı sinema literatürü içinde konumlandırılmıştır. Aksanlı stil filmleri incelerken eleştirel ve biçimsel bir kılavuz olarak kullanılmıştır. Seçilen filmlerdeki tematik ortaklıklar, mektup formunun kullanımı ve mekânsal ilişkiler, geçmişe dair zorunlu sessizlik ve baskıya cevap olarak gelişen film dilini anlamak için detaylı incelenmiştir. Bu filmlerdeki duygu yapıları ve hakikat talebi Türkiye'deki hafıza aktivizmi açısından tartışılmıştır. Tez boyunca, bu filmlerin siyasi söylemlere estetik cevap ürettikleri ve geçmişle yüzleşme talebine katkı yaptıkları iddia edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: hafıza, travma, film biçimi, Türkiye'de sinema, aksanlı sinem

INTRODUCTION

> As *Spectator* I was interested in Photography only for "sentimental" reasons; I wanted to explore it not as a question (a theme) but as a wound: I see, I feel, hence I notice, I observe, and I think. (Barthes, 1981, p. 21)

The desire to explore the inability to speak of a wound was the first motivation for conceiving this thesis. Rather than finding a theme or a question of inquiry, I started with an intuition. Some films, I thought, generate a disturbing feeling that haunts my mind even after I finish watching them. I tried to name it, describe it, and comprehend it, until my struggle became a self-reflection of the problem. This is a familiar feeling for my personal history in Turkey. As a kid growing up in the 1990s, I used to catch some words that I couldn't comprehend, sense some feelings that I couldn't understand. When I grew up and learnt about the political background of these words and feelings, I also realized that not every kid at my age had the same experiences. I lacked the social context because of my Sunni-Muslim Turkish apolitical family. I did not have any multi-cultural/ethnic encounter and/or been in any politically conscious communities that would pass me information to interpret the words, situations, and feelings. Years later, I have been privileged to access the information I once lacked. When I link my experiences in childhood to these films, the primary difference is that, in addition to a grown up and considerably more politically conscious self, these films also provide facts about feelings. Feelings are not free floating anymore; they have a narrative.

Hayden White (1990) argues that narrative might be considered as a solution to "the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific (p. 1). He furthermore quotes Barthes's claim on the translatability of narrative without a fundamental damage,

and emphasizes the human universal quality of narrative on transmitting the shared reality. As a historian, White discusses narrativization in terms of representation of reality. If I return to cinema, his argument would be translated as decoding the representation of real events. But I would like to explore how feelings are told rather than the events. Feelings do not exist per se. They are attached to people, places, and events. Raymond Williams (1977) criticizes expressing culture and society in the past tense and describes "conversion of experience into finished products" as "the strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity. (p. 128). Williams develops the concept of structure of feeling to refer to "characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically, affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity" (p. 132). According to Williams, this concept is specifically relevant to art and literature because "the true social content is in a significant number of cases of this present and affective kind" and it includes the elements of social and material experience which cannot be covered in other systematic elements (p. 133).

The interest in the strategies in translation of knowing into telling by including the structures of feeling, in other words, how the past is being lived and sustained in the present is the starting point of this study. The films that created my intuition to ask these questions have similar thematic preoccupations that can be summarized as dealing with the traumatic events and issues from the history of Turkey. The objective is exploring the relation between memory and film form in the context of cinema in Turkey. Specifically, I will analyze the formal strategies used in the unconventional films made after the 2000s, which refer to traumatic events in the history of Turkey. The preoccupation with the past exceeds the unconventional films and could be traced in various examples of films from popular cinema as well as from television series. Moreover, the films engaging with the past and/or traumatic events in Turkey did not appear in the 2000s. The purpose of the periodization is to understand the strategies deployed in the films at an arguably

more liberal atmosphere in Turkey as well as within the transnational filmmaking practices.

The films chosen for this study are *Journey to the Sun* (*Güneşe Yolculuk*, Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999), *The Photograph* (*Fotoğraf*, Kazım Öz, 2001), *Waiting for the Clouds* (*Bulutları Beklerken*, Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004), *Future Lasts Forever* (*Gelecek Uzun Sürer*, Özcan Alper, 2011), *Voice of My Father* (*Dengê Bavê Min*, Orhan Eskiköy, Zeynel Doğan, 2012), *Mold* (*Küf*, Ali Aydın, 2012), and *Song of My Mother* (*Klama Dayîka Min*, Erol Mintaş, 2014). These films are chosen for referring to traumatic events in Turkey and being made by filmmakers critically positioned to the official discourse in Turkey. Undoubtedly, there are other films that might fit into these criteria, but instead of mapping the corpus of these films, I try to elucidate a selection of them. Moreover, I tried to select films that include unconventional formal strategies at a certain level so that I would investigate if these strategies lead to a common film language.

I argue that the formal strategies used in these films constitute a film language that enables representing the silenced memories, as well as how the past is being lived and sustained in the present, and this language responds to discussions on memory in Turkey. The primary questions set to underlie my argument are: How does cinema engage with the past and represent its effects on individuals? Which formal strategies are used in these films that enable creating structures of feeling? What is the function of these films in memory making? Memory is the core analytical tool in this study, in that I discuss the relation of collective memory to cinema, as well as film as a material for memory-making. The answers to these questions require a close examination of cinematic narration that will be the methodology of this study. I situate these films into the accented cinema literature that was theorized by Hamid Naficy in his book *An Accented cinema: Exilic and diasporic filmmaking* (2001). The formal guideline of the accented style provides a methodology to analyze these films which I apply to this study.

Although the focus and method of the thesis will be on the formal strategies deployed, I feel the need for designating the social and historical framework. For

this reason, I will try to illustrate some major issues to provide a common understanding for making sense of cultural and political context these films are made and received. These films refer to traumatic events in the history of Turkey such as the oppression of the Kurds, the conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurdish guerillas, forced displacement, forced disappearance, mass killings, and exile. I will briefly provide information about the rationale behind these traumatic events and specifically on the Kurdish conflict. The subject, widely known in public as "the Kurdish problem", provides the background of all but one film in this study. Consequently, I find conveying the positions taken by the filmmakers regarding the Kurdish conflict very important for this study. These events and issues are not necessarily represented in the films, but rather they are referred to and/or implied. No matter if those events are in the fabula or syuzhet of the film, they function to create meaning, explain the events, motivations, and feelings generated from the plot. As I provide information about these events and issues, I will not ask how and why questions about them but rather keep my engagement within the limits of film narratives.

Contextual Background

The historical events and issues that I discuss below are the outcomes of the homogenous state fantasy of the Turkish nationalists. The Ottoman Empire was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society where the division was based on the binary of Muslim and non-Muslim rather than the ethnic identities. The multi-ethnic dimension of Muslims in the Ottoman Empire favored Islam as a unifying identity. Moreover, the Muslim identity emerged by forgetting the Turkish identity (Akçam, 2002, p. 54). Consequently, Turkish nationalism was relatively delayed in comparison to the other nationalist movements that emerged in Europe. World War I activated the emergence of the Turkish nationalism and the most significant result of the war was the "Muslimification of Anatolia" through deporting and killing the Armenians and exchanging the Greeks with the Muslims of Greece (Yeğen, 2007,

p. 125). The Turks and the Kurds were allies on the grounds of being two major Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire. Nonetheless, the new Turkish state was constituted as a nation state in 1923, and in the Constitution of 1924, the nation and the language are referred to as Turkish, and the official religion as Islam. The statement on the official religion was removed from the Constitution in 1928. Various reforms were implemented, such as the abolition of the Caliphate, the abolishment of the religious communions, the Surname Law, the adoption of the new Turkish Alphabet, and the unification of education by building the national and secular education system, in order to create a modern and secular society. The Turkish nationalists, who were the founders of the Republic, invited the citizens to accept "being a Turk" by denying other ethnic communities in Anatolia. The Turkification project aimed to assimilate non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities. On the other hand, the Kurds resisted the idea of the nation-state as well as the reforms of the Republic. The latter had consequences for the Kurds, such as in the case of the abolition of the religious communion which extinguished the only educational institution in which Kurdish was used (Özsoy, 2014, 327). The growing discontent among the Kurds took the forms of revolts and rebellions against the new Turkish state (Yeğen, 2007, p. 127), which created the fear of separation that lies beneath "the Kurdish question" for the Turkish Republic. The fantasy of the homogenous state whose citizens are Turkish and Sunni Muslim in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious geography has created many traumatic events and issues in the history of Turkey.

The policies of Turkification created acts of violence against diverse ethnic and religious groups in Turkey. The 1934 pogrom of Thrace which targeted the Jewish population, the massacre of Alevis and Kurds in Dersim in 1938, the "Wealth Tax" levied on non-Muslim citizens in Turkey, the Istanbul pogrom of 6-7 September organized against non-Muslims in 1955, and the massacres targeted the Alevis in Maraş in 1978 and in Çorum in 1980 are the brutal examples of the Turkification project. These acts of violence were either directly carried out or sponsored by the state as being carried out by paramilitary forces. In a similar vein, "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" campaign in 1928 was initiated by law students but

supported by the state. The campaign promoted the speaking of Turkish language in public aiming at eradicating the non-Turkish languages from public life.

Each decade since 1960 was marked by a military coup in Turkey. Elected government was removed from the office and its leaders were arrested on May 27, 1960. They were charged with high treason and 3 government members including the prime minister were executed. The following years were marked by social and economic unrest that motivated the military to intervene again by sending a memorandum which forced the government to resign on March 12, 1971. The third coup came on September 12, 1980, which had suspended the democracy in Turkey for three years by governing the country through the national security council. Although each coup had its own damaging effects on various social levels, the September 12 coup had the most abiding effects for the future of the country. Escalating conflicts in the society were used as the pretext for each coup. Many leftists were either executed by parliament order or killed by police or soldiers.

I will specifically point out the distinguishing characteristics of the 1980s to understand the cultural environment that a new cinema in Turkey started to emerge in. The military coup in 1980 limited the political freedom and rights, and authoritarian politics were employed under the pretense of putting an end to social polarization. Concurrently, Turkey was led to a liberal economic transformation that has changed not only the economy of the country but also the culture. Nurdan Gürbilek (1992) characterizes the cultural climate of the 1980s in Turkey as repression and explosion of speech (p. 21). The repressive side of the cultural climate derived from state violence. In the 1980s, the social opposition was suppressed by force and many of them were put into prison. On the other hand, new channels and frameworks for individuals to talk about themselves were opened. In this new era, as "we" was banned, "I" was encouraged which gave a way to talk about private life in public. Correspondingly, sexual orientation and women's liberation become public issues and political movements. Women took to the streets for the first time to put an end to the violence against women in 1987. LGBT people gained public visibility and organized their first protest against the homophobic and

transphobic oppression and violence in 1987. As Gürbilek emphasizes, the world of excess and possibilities and of lack and impossibilities were polarized sharply in the 1980s in Turkey.

The 1990s in Turkey were marked by clashes between the Kurdish guerillas and the Turkish state. The Kurdish conflict is a matter exceeding the Turkish state when we take into consideration the Kurdish presence in Syria, Iraq, and Iran; Kurds are a nation without a state. In this study, I will only refer to the Kurdish presence in Turkey and the conflict with the Turkish state. The Kurds are the second most numerous ethnic group in Turkey after Turks. According to the research conducted by KONDA[1] in 2010, the Kurdish population in Turkey is 13,261.000 which is 18,3% of the whole population. Kurds are the majority of the population in the southeast and the middle east Anatolia regions. The second highest population is in Istanbul where the Kurds are 14.8% of the population. The mother tongue of 12.7% of the population is Kurdish, for 1.4% it is the Zaza language, and for 1.9% it is other. As an outcome of the 1980 military coup, the military government banned speaking Kurdish in public in 1983. The ban was lifted in 1991, but education and broadcasting in Kurdish remained prohibited (Zeydanlıoğlu, 2012, p. 111).

Mesut Yeğen (2011) splits his examination of the Kurdish issue in Turkey into three major periods: pre-denial, denial and post-denial. Pre-denial is the years preceding the foundation of the Turkish Republic when "state officials declared they would recognize Kurds as an ethnic group with cultural and political rights" (p. 67). Between the mid-1920s and the 1990s, the state denied even the ethnic aspect of the Kurdish question and conceptualized the issue as social backwardness, regional underdevelopment and an outcome of foreign incitement. Since the 1990s, the state has recognized the ethnic dimension of the issue. Moreover, Yeğen underlines that the 90s were a new period not just for recognizing the ethnic aspect

[1] A well-known public opinion research and consultancy company.

but also for the strategies the state used. He argues that "the shy politics of recognition of the early 1990s gave way to a new wave of politics of oppression between 1993 and 1999" (p. 78). In this study, I will only be concerned with the post-denial period in which the films of this study were made and to which their narratives refer. The period Yeğen describes as "a new wave of the politics of oppression" involves racism, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, the state of emergency in Kurdish cities, forced immigration, and most significantly, the armed conflict between the state and the Kurdish guerrillas which caused the death of thousands of soldiers and guerrillas.

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) initiated a guerrilla war against the Turkish state in 1984 which is also the beginning of a new phase in the Kurdish issue: sustained armed struggle. Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya (2011) argue that although PKK uses violence to obtain its goals and its name used synonymous with its guerilla army, it still cannot be categorized as a military organization but rather as a "militant political organization" (p. 124). The Turkish State defines PKK as a terrorist organization which aims at suppressing "the diversity of Turkey, prevent participation and integration of Turkey's citizens of Kurdish origin and intimidate the people in the region" as it is stated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (n.d., para. 2). PKK evoked the fear of separation from the Turkish state.

A state of emergency rule was established in the regions where the Kurds were the majority in 1987, which placed the region under the control of a regional governor. Conversely, in 1991, the prime minister made a speech in Diyarbakir declaring that the Turkish state recognize the Kurdish reality and the very same year the ban on speaking Turkish in public which had been enacted in 1983 was lifted (Yeğen, 2011, p. 74). Meanwhile, increase in armed clashes, arrests, murders, disappearances, and forced displacement in the region intensified the fear of the state for the Kurds (Aras, 2014, p. 91).

The conflict between the Turkish state and the Kurds have had various effects on social relations and widened the gap between the Turks and Kurds.

Racism and discrimination are the results of this gap occurring in everyday life. Labeling the Kurds as terrorists and/or potential criminals, imposing speaking Turkish in public, humiliating Kurds because of their accent and culture, and even avoiding any personal contact have been the most common methods of discrimination and oppression in everyday life.

Solution processes for the Kurdish conflict were initiated at various levels since the 1990s. Ceasefires were declared by PKK in 1993, 1995, and 1998; and the İmralı process started after PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was captured in Kenya on 15 February 1999 by Turkish National Intelligence Organization. The İmralı process lasted in 2004 and the next move was the Oslo talks that proceeded between 2008 and 2011. The Oslo talks were important for being the second attempt to solve the Kurdish conflict though dialogue, and the first official process initiated by the Turkish state (Çiçek, 2018, p. 167-168). The talks were public to some degree, which allowed public discussion of the subject. The last, and the most significant attempt of solving the conflict was "the Kurdish opening" between 2013 and 2015. This process started with Öcalan's letter read in 2013 in Newroz, which called for an end to the armed struggle. After this call, the government took some steps for the solution. A committee was organized with the task of explaining the solution process to public. A research commission was established, entitled the Turkish Grand National Assembly's Research Commission Established to Research Paths to Social Peace and Evaluate the Resolution Process.

I will discuss neither the details of these processes nor the reasons for their failure. These processes opened grounds for discussion with the participation of various subjects. Particularly, the Kurdish perspective gained an opportunity to engage with the wider public. The atmosphere in these years was also determined by the European Union (EU) membership process that will be referred as a considerably mild and liberal atmosphere throughout this study. Turkey's candidacy for EU was officially announced in 1999 and membership negotiations started in 2005. The EU harmonization process was the motive for reforms and democratization processes initiated in this period by the AKP (Justice and

Development Party)—elected as government in 2002. The democratization process is presented by AKP in 2010 as a project to improve the democratic standards in Turkey and to put an end to terrorism. The government organized meetings with popular figures, intellectuals, and the representatives of civil society to discuss this process. The problems and agenda of ethnic (Armenian, Kurdish, and the Roma) and religious groups (Alevi, Greek Orthodox and Caferi) in Turkey are discussed with government and in public during this period. The political censorship relatively softened in this period. This atmosphere unequivocally influenced the production themes, subjects, stories, and film language of these films as well as their reception.

Outline of Chapters

As I will be discussing the relation between memory and film form in the context of cinema in Turkey, memory as a concept will be discussed in Chapter 1. Memory has been an object of study in many academic branches, I will specifically emphasize how memory has been an organizing concept in social sciences by referring to the major discussions. I pay specific attention to factors relevant to the interest in memory in order to gain an understanding of the value attached to memory in the twentieth century. Memory is a neutral concept without any feelings attached. But depending on the focus of this study which relies on the traumatic events in the history of Turkey, I will focus on the negative reminiscences of memory. I will examine approaches and conceptualizations on memory for providing a conceptual framework for this study. I use the word "traumatic" very often in this study, especially when referring to certain events from the history of Turkey. Memory studies are dominated by the traumatic events which motivated the emergence of trauma studies. I discuss different approaches to working with traumatic memories, and explain the position I stand in this study for analyzing the traumatic events in Turkey. The chapter is concluded with the intersections of memory studies to the framework of this study: Turkey and cinema. The interest in

memory in Turkey is discussed to provide a background for locating these films into the memory field in Turkey. The relation of memory to cinema has been discussed with different aspects such as formal similarities, the role of cinema in memory making and repository function of films. Overall, this chapter provides the theoretical approaches that this study will be grounded upon.

Chapter 2 is an attempt to situate the films of this study in cinema made in Turkey. These films are made around and in the 2000s, but I start with providing a brief look at the history of cinema in Turkey. This segment of the chapter also illustrates why I come to use "cinema in Turkey", instead of "Turkish cinema" or "cinema of Turkey". The approaches on contemporary cinema in Turkey—known as "the new cinema of Turkey"—emphasize its transnational characteristics. Therefore, I provide an overview of discussions on the concept transnationalism in terms of cinema. As I stated before, I use the accented style as a formal guideline to analyze the films. Naficy describes accented cinema as an aesthetic response to displacement by exilic, diasporic, postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers. Although the filmmakers in this study do not fit any of the categories, I argue that their critical position to the official discourse in Turkey place them into sites of struggles. Their critical positions and primarily the political discourse in their films allow me to situate these films into the accented cinema literature. I conclude this chapter by illustrating components of the accented style that are relevant to the films I discuss. The discussion on the functions of these components and the meanings they generate will be closely analyzed in the next three chapters.

In the Chapter 3, I discuss thematic preoccupations as the first component of the accented style. Themes are outcomes of transforming knowing into telling so they reveal important information about the emphasized truth and feelings about the past. They also provide a context to interpret different events. Naficy introduces journey narratives as a recurring theme in accented films in relation to the exilic and diasporic experience. Journey is a relevant theme for the films of this study, besides I discuss loss as a recurring theme for these films. All the three are both a theme and a plot drive. I will subcategorize these themes in accordance to the form

they appear in these films to understand the strategies produced in them to engage with the public conversation as well as creating the conversation itself.

In Chapter 4, I analyze the epistolary form used in the films. According to Naficy, epistolary and exile are linked because both are driven by distance and separation (p. 101). But I argue that epistolary form is the principal strategy used to engage with the past and register repressed and silenced memories for the films in this study. Epistles function as a bridge between the past and present as well as a signifier to reveal conflicting narratives of official and individual memories. I classify the epistles used in these films as letters, telephonic epistles, audio records, video records, archival footage, photographs, and mass communication epistles that are radio, newspapers, and television. These categorizations are medium and receiver based. Interpersonal and mass communication categories signify the receiver, and so the sender and intentions of the communication. As interpersonal epistles are produced by and for characters in these films, they are only subjected to mass communication. Receiver based communication epistles are used to indicate the conflicting narratives of the past by using mass communication as a representation of the official discourse, whereas personal epistles represent repressed and silenced memory. Medium based categorization provides a ground for analyzing the process of communication as well as effect of physical components on understanding a message.

Naficy uses the Bakhtinian concept chronotope to discuss the spatial configurations and as the last component analyzed in this study, I will examine the spatial relations in the Chapter 5. Spaces are one of the significant aspects of inquiry for this study hence their relation to memory. I argue that analyzing spatial relations reveals the strategies used in these films to engage with the traumatic past as well as structures of feeling that haunt the present. I use Avery Gordon's (2008) conceptualization of haunting to indicate the effects of the past on the present, and the uses open and closed form mise-en scene as a signifier to decode the affects deriving from certain spaces. Some places are discussed separately, because they are used as privileged spaces in these films, and are also recurring settings in

different films. Nature, mountains, railways, monuments, houses, and ruins are analyzed in this context, specifically by discussing the socio-political implications of these spaces.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, is an attempt to illustrate the findings of this research. After providing an overview of the prominent formal strategies used in these films, I discuss the lack of conventional methods for engaging with the past. I argue the truth and affect registering value of these films in this chapter and illustrate my argument by referring to the analysis made in the previous chapters. Finally, I discuss the function of the language employed in these films within the memory works in Turkey.

A significant number of studies on the relationship of memory with the Kurdish conflict's representation in cinema in Turkey have been made, and I refer to some of them in this study. I believe that the authenticity of this thesis is focusing on film form as a strategy against the silence and repression. I value language as a potential for proposing new ways of analyzing and understanding the systems. With this approach, I will discuss the function of film language in relation to memory work in Turkey, that I hope will contribute to understanding the reflection of political struggle in these films.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the literature on memory, specifically on the studies that focus on the collective memory and the relationship between memory and cinema. Memory is the core analytic tool in this study that I use as a concept rather than an object of study. To place my approach among existing literature, I will discuss the major approaches briefly; I will start by discussing the interest in memory in social sciences that also underlies my interest in using memory as a concept. After discussing approaches to memory in the context of both Modernism and Post-modernism, I will go over the works by Maurice Halbwachs, Jan & Aleida Assman, Marianne Hirsch, Alison Landsberg and Susannah Radstone, those that primarily focus on collective memory. Among all of the literature on memory, I chose their works because they are canonical. Maurice Halbwachs, Jan & Aleida Assman, Marianne Hirsch, and Alison Landsberg offer different terminologies for approaching memory, that also lead me to discuss their works. Susannah Radstone is one of the pioneers of contemporary memory studies. She edited *Memory and Methodology* (2000) and coedited *Regimes of Memory* (2003). Her research interests include humanities memory research as well as psychoanalytic cultural theory and film studies which are the main concerns in this study. Furthermore, I plan to analyze effects of memory, and to do so I will introduce the concepts of loss and haunting. I will use the conceptualization of loss by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, and the concept of haunting by Avery Gordon. After discussing the interest in memory in Turkey, I will conclude this chapter by addressing the approaches that problematize the relation of memory and cinema.

1.1 Interest in Memory

Memory has been an organizing concept in various academic branches in the social sciences such as history, philosophy, media studies, film studies, psychology, literature and cultural studies, as noted by Radstone (2000a). She argues that there has always been an interest in memory, however since the 1970s we can trace a renewed interest. Among various explanations for this interest, two justifications, both of which are the consequences of modernity and the atrocities of two world wars, are significant. Although the latter could be discussed as consequences of modernity, the emphasis made on the uniqueness of such events by various authors lead me to discuss it as a separate argument. Below I will present seminal arguments about the interest in memory that also provide an understanding of the value of memory in the twentieth century.

Paul Connerton (2009) explains the current preoccupation with the memory in relation to the holocaustal events of the last century and furthermore, acknowledges that modernity has a problem with forgetting (p. 1). Connerton defines modernity as:

> the objective transformation of the social fabric unleashed by the advent of the capitalist world market which tears down feudal and ancestral limitations on a global scale, and psychologically the enlargement of life chances through the gradual freeing from fixed status hierarchies. (p. 4)

The problem of forgetting is not unique to modernity, as the prior social formations had forms of forgetting peculiar of themselves, but Connerton argues that modernity exhibits specific types of structural forgetting. The argumentation of Connerton relies on the approach that memory is dependent upon topography. If the order of the places preserves the order of the things to be remembered, memory depends upon a stable system of places (p. 5). At this point, types of structural forgetting peculiar to modernity are associated with the "processes that separate social life from locality and from human dimensions" (p. 5), such as mega cities, the short life span of urban architecture, and consumerism disconnected from the

labour process. Discussing the holocaustal events in a wider spectrum that is beyond Holocaust and the World Wars addresses the problems of modernity, as well as provides a context to understand the circumstances that create them. This approach reveals the common genus that cause them by establishing a connection that frees the events from a singularity. Nonetheless, the approaches that discuss Holocaust and the two World Wars as unique events reveal fruitful questions first and foremost on the issue of representation.

The atrocities of the two World Wars are discussed as the prominent reasons for memory crisis in the twentieth century; genocides, sufferings of war and Holocaust have brought up the question of the representability of the catastrophic events. Adorno wrote that "(A)fter Auschwitz, it is no longer possible to write poems" (as cited in Radstone, 2000a, p. 5). This dictum reflects that the horror of the event is beyond representation and by extension, of memory. The problem Adorno raises leads to the quest for new ways of representation. Besides, Shoshana Felman argues that what Adorno had said is not that "poetry could no longer and should no longer be written, but that it must write 'though' its own impossibility" (as cited in Radstone, 2000a, p. 6). The impossibility of representation is also addressed by Julia Kristeva (1989), who claims that "those monstrous and painful sights do damage to are our systems of perception and representation. As if overtaxed or destroyed by too powerful a breaker, our symbolic means find themselves hollowed out, nearly wiped out, paralyzed" (p. 223). Furthermore, Kristeva writes that the difficulty in naming leads to illogicality and silence. Conventional methods of representation, in Kristeva's approach "our symbolic means", are incapable of narrating the catastrophe. Therefore, subjects develop an alternative language to utter the melancholia.

Hayden White (1996) uses the concept "the modernist event" to describe the events "which not only could not possibly have occurred before the twentieth century, but the nature, scope, and implications of which no prior age could even have imagined" (p. 20), such as the two World Wars, the Great Depression, the growth in world population, genocide, and nuclear explosions. As such events could

not be forgotten, but they also could not t be adequately remembered, affecting a group's capacity to live in the present and envision a future free of the effects of the event. White suggests that the modernist techniques of representation, such as anti-narrative non–stories, hold the potential of "de-fetishizing both the events and the fantasy accounts of them" (p. 32) which pose a threat by pretending to represent realistically. De-fetishizing holds the potential to open a way to the process of mourning which, White argues, can relieve "the burden of history" (p. 32).

Andreas Huyssen (1995) also relates renewed interest in memory to a "crisis of the ideology of progress and modernization" (p. 6), and argues further obsession with memory is "a reaction formation against the accelerating technical processes" (p. 7). Huyssen argues that memory has been a getaway both from modernity's faith in progress and the threat posed to memory by the postmodern world. Modernity assumes a temporal order in which events were in a causal relationship. Memory breaks the temporal order with its fragmentary and ambivalent character. Modernity's faith in progress, which was motivated by faith in rationality and technology, is challenged by memory. Modernity places the subject into a world with definite past and predictable future. Postmodernism challenges grand narratives presented by modernism, the idea of linear storytelling of history and homogenous knowledge bound up with the privilege of science.

Conversely, Radstone (2000a) is careful about placing memory into a postmodern response to modernity's faith in progress, reason, and objectivity since it triggers the risk of exaggerating the opposition between modernity and present. Therefore, Radstone prefers not to relate "the late modern foregrounding of memory to memory's oppositional status within modernity, but rather to (...) modernity's ambivalences and equivocations" (p. 4). Her approach to memory is cautious against oversimplified binaries attached to modernity such as identifying it either as a utopia or dystopia of modernity, and she rather suggests an understanding of modern memory "as the site within which modernity's equivocations found their most pressing expression" (p. 5).

Late modern technology undoubtedly shaped the way memory is perceived and formed. At this point, Radstone (2000a) invites us to consider that our preoccupations with the memory remain equivocal. As the context of memory has changed in the contemporary world and we are forced to consider new regimes of knowledge and the role of technology, there are scales of equivocation swinging between invention/tradition and reflection/representation. She argues that "the 'fragile value' of memory resides in its continued capacity to hold, rather than to collapse these equivocations" and "it is this holding of equivocation" that she insists "guarantees the radical value of memory in our own times" (p. 8-9).

Capitalist economy, poverty, wars and slavery also forced people to move from their homelands and reside in other countries. The constituents of multicultural societies emerged as consequences of diaspora, exiles, and forced migration. Memory has become more important than ever to hold the identity and erased past since it is marked by silence, absence, and hesitation. Memory has a radical value for the minority rights, it grounds and empowers the struggle for equality. Especially when identity is at stake, remembering becomes a form of resistance.

Although I have listed the negative associations of memory, it is not by nature a negative phenomenon. Halbwachs (1992), Assman (2008), Radstone (2000a), and Landsberg (2004) emphasize memory's function for constituting identities. As memory constitutes subjectivities, transformation affects current subjectivities. Remembering may serve as a transformation and recontextualization and they have a potential for revision and reconstituting subjectivities. As resistance and struggle are held against forgetting and implementation, they are also motivated for rebuilding the current subjectivities and so the society. If we are made of our memories, remembering, and recontextualization of memories constitute new subjectivities. Memory involves positive and neutral reminiscences and they are as effective as negative reminiscences, but in this study, I am interested in the negative reminiscences and how they affect the present.

1.2 Approaches and Conceptualizations

Before discussing conceptualizations of memory, I would like to begin with the history and memory opposition. Pierre Nora (1989) argues that memory and history are in fundamental opposition because memory is a bond tying us to the present and history is a representation of the past. Memory is in constant evolution "open to the dialectic of remembering" as history is a problematic and incomplete reconstruction of what is no longer (p. 8). Memory binds us to the present while history is a problematic representation of the past. Memory is multiple, every group/individual has their own memories. History, on the other hand, claims to have universal authority. "Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things" (p. 9).

In their introduction to *Regimes of Memory* (2003), Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin argue that the main tendencies within contemporary memory studies under the impact of post-structuralism and postmodernism have been "on memory's capacity to destabilize the authority of the 'grand narratives' with which History has become associated" (p. 10). History is negatively associated with objectivity as memory is positively associated with subjectivity. Radstone and Hodgkin criticize such distinction, claiming that it has kept the memory outside of systems of knowledge and power, albeit both history and memory are "produced by historically specific and contestable systems of knowledge and power" (p. 10).

In this study, I'm interested in individual memory only with regards to collective memory. So, even when I refer to individual remembering, I will be discussing memory in its collective and social contexts. Theoretical interest in memory goes back to the ancient Greek, but Halbwachs was first to develop the concept of collective memory and his work still matters for contemporary memory studies. Halbwachs (1992) concludes his famous work *On Collective Memory* by stating:

“social thought is essentially a memory and that its entire content consists only of collective recollections of remembrances. But it also follows that, among them, only those recollections subsist that in every period society, working within its present-day frameworks, can reconstruct” (p. 189).

Collective memory is a reconstruction of the past in accordance with the present needs, however the problematization of the determinants and the constituents of the present is absent in Halbwachs' work as he did not analyze how power and domination works in society. I use the concepts power and domination in the Foucauldian sense. Michel Foucault (1982) defines the exercise of power as “a way in which certain actions may structure the field of other possible actions” and a relationship of power as “a mode of action upon actions” (p. 791). Domination is a general structure of power. A society without power relations can only be an abstraction so there cannot be a society without power relations. Besides, questioning power relations and “the "agonism" between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is a permanent political task inherent in all social existence” (p. 792). Bringing Foucauldian concepts of power and domination to the discussion of how memory is constructed within the present-day frameworks provides a critical discussion on whose remembrances are being recollected and how present-day frameworks are being determined. Inclusion of a perspective of power and domination in approaching memory provides an understanding of its function in present day frameworks.

Jan Assman (2008) breaks from Halbwachs' work by indicating that his work lacks “the realm of traditions, transmissions, and transferences” (p. 110) and they[2] break his concept collective memory into cultural memory and communicative memory. Assman defines cultural memory as a kind of institution. “It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, **...** are stable and situation-transcendent” (p. 110–111). Human memory is in constant interaction with other human memories as well as external objects and symbols and they

2 Jan Assman use the pronoun “we” to refer to works he collaborated with Aleida Assman.

become reminders in forms such as monuments, museums, archives and other mnemonic institutions which are specifically constituents of cultural memory. Contrary to cultural memory, communicative memory is non-institutional. It is bonded up with every day communication and has a limited time span. Assman specifies this life span to eighty years which is the time span of three generations interacting.

Assman clearly distinguishes memory and knowledge and emphasizes relationality of memory and identity. Memory, even cultural memory, is local and specific to a group. It does not have claims of universalism and standardization as knowledge and history have. There are always frames that relate memory to specific "horizons of time and identity on the individual, generational, political, and cultural levels" (p. 113-114.) Memory is "knowledge with an identity index" and "knowledge about oneself" (114). His usage of identity involves being part of a group, a family, a nation and so on.

Aleida Assman extends the communicative memory and cultural memory distinction into four categories: individual memory, family/group memory, national/political memory and cultural/archival memory. Memories are linked between individuals: "once verbalized, …the individual's memories are fused with the inter-subjective symbolic system of language and . . . they can be exchanged, shared, corroborated, confirmed, corrected, disputed—and, last not least, written down'" (as cited in Hirsch, 2008, p. 110). Furthermore, even individual memory contains much more than personal experience, and family is the main site for memorial transmission, as in all groups we live in, and they are sites for framing memories shaping them into narratives. On the other hand, national/political and cultural/archive memory work through symbolic systems and are embodied practices providing a concrete form to conception of memory. The main criticism of the work of Jan and Aleida Assman is that their work doesn't address how traumatic events affect memory transmission; nonetheless their work is important for discussing narrativization and institualization of memory.

Landsberg (2004) claims that modernity has created new forms of public cultural memory, and offers the term “prosthetic memory”. She argues that prosthetic memory “emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or museum” (p. 2). Such a contact forms an experience in which the subject relates herself to larger histories, although there is not any connection to the person's own past. The subject does not directly become loaded with new memories but rather engages them deeply and affectively. Landsberg further argues that “the resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person’s subjectivity and politics” (p. 2). Prosthetic memories are transferrable and transportable. This form of memory challenges the authentic nature of memory. Prosthetic memory emerged in the capitalist economic system in which everything is commodified. Memories could be commodified and made available to people all over the world. Landsberg invites us to recognize power and political potential of this new memory making technologies.

Our memories are not only constituted by the events we personally experience but we also borrow the reminiscences of other people and make them our memories. Hirsch (2008) proposes the concept of postmemory: “the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up” (p. 106). These experiences are capable of constituting memories since they are transmitted so deeply and affectively. One growing up with such intense memory transmission shapes her own experiences and stories under the dominance of previous generations. What has not been experienced personally becomes one's memory and since they are deep and affective, they haunt the present in various forms. Postmemory does not replace one's own memories literally, but they are engaged affectively. By creating structures of feeling, it determines how subjects experience and attribute meaning to the present contexts.

1.3 Memory and Trauma

As memory studies are dominated by catastrophic events explained above, an interest in trauma has risen. Cathy Caruth is one of the key theorists of trauma theory and I would like to use her definition for trauma which is “an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.” (1996, p. 11). Although trauma theory and significantly the works of Caruth have become influential, considering the amount of the citation given to her key texts, there are also critiques and objections towards trauma theory. Radstone (2000b) argues that trauma theory avoids dealing with the unconscious and rather suggests to use Laplanche's term ‘afterwardness’ to refer “a process of deferred revision” where “"experiences, impressions, and memory traces may be revised at a later date to fit in with fresh experiences” (p. 85). She criticizes trauma theory by arguing:

> 'Afterwardness' posits traumatic memory not as the registration of an event, but as the outcome of complex process of revision shaped by promptings from the present. Trauma theory, on the other hand, posits the linear registration of events as they happen, albeit that such registrations may be secreted away through dissociation. (p. 89)

She criticizes trauma theorists for associating trauma “not with the effects of triggered associations but with the ontologically unbearable nature of the event itself” (p. 89). In this study, I'm interested in effects of triggered associations rather than the event itself. For this reason, my study will exclude trauma theory and I will rather use theorization of Radstone for traumatic memory. As I will discuss in the following chapters, the films in this study are not preoccupied with the traumatic events but rather with the effects of them in the present contexts.

In their seminal work *Loss – The Politics of Mourning*, Eng and Kazanjian (2003) offer to investigate ways of engaging losses of the twentieth century. Loss is what is described as unrepresentable, silenced and absent. Engaging with loss

today requires going after remnants. The only way to materialize what has been lost is finding what remained. At this point, I prefer to use the term haunting to describe the effects of unclosed events, silenced memories, mourning, past sufferings and abusive systems of power. I borrow the term 'haunting' from Gordon and use her contextualization. Gordon (2008) makes a distinction between haunting and trauma. She describes it as follows:

> ... haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done. Indeed, it seemed to me that haunting was precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done. It is this sociopolitical-psychological state to which haunting referred. (p. xvi)

Memory is sensuous, it is not just a cognitive process but experienced by the body. Its power is hidden in its affect. Gordon sums up the key problems of our time as "war, slavery, captivity, authoritarianism, the theft of culture and of the means for creating autonomous, sustainable life, the attachment to epistemologies of blindness, and the investment in ontologies of disassociation" (p. xix). They constitute what I call above as negative affect in memory. My aim in this study is analyzing neither material conditions generating those problems nor their representations but how they are expressed in film form.

The past engaged in the films of this is a traumatic past and its effects are alive in the present. These films are mainly preoccupied with the ways that the past haunts the present to indicate the urgent need of dealing with the past. Thus, Radstone's emphasis on the afterwardness, Eng & Kazanjian's the discussion on the loss, and Gordon's concept of haunting will be the guide for this study. Moreover, I find Hirsch's arguments on postmemory very useful for this study, especially for understanding the potential of these films in the memory activism in Turkey.

1.4 Memory in Turkey

Interest in memory has also been significant in Turkey. Esra Özyürek (2007) remarks that throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, citizens of Turkey have started sorting out the layers of history to understand and control the present (p. 2). On the other hand, Nükhet Sirman (2006) also notes the academic and popular preoccupation with memory in the late 90s, but also indicates that there has always been an interest with memory in Turkey by reminding the memoirs written since the 1950s. What is significant about the recent interest is their recourse to the oral material (p. 32). Leyla Neyzi (2010) informs that as an interdisciplinary field, memory studies and oral history is a fledgling research area in Turkey and explains this tendency as:

> In recent years, with the rise of identity politics and widespread debate in the media on national history, academics as well as NGO's, informal groups and individuals are turning to oral history as a means of rediscovering and reinterpreting the past. (p. 443)

Where does such a need to discover and reinterpret the past come from? Özyürek provides an answer by emphasizing that the Turkish Republic is based on forgetting. In 1923, the Turkish Republic was established on the idea of a modernist future by erasing the Ottoman past. Özyürek argues that the current engagement of generations with the past allow them "to create alternative identities for themselves and their communities" (p. 2). Furthermore, she observes that "in contemporary Turkey representations of the past have become metaphors through which individuals and groups define their cultural identity and political positions" (p. 2).

Coming into terms with the past is a political struggle in Turkey. NGOs and informal groups initiate memory works about the traumatic events in the history of Turkey and they aim at contributing to Turkey's coming to terms with its past atrocities. Examples below provide a brief understanding on the forms of struggle as well as the events that are the subject to debate. The works of an unofficial justice

commission and two NGOs discussed below should also be understood in terms of their contribution to the memory work in Turkey as well as indicators of interest in memory.

Justice Commission to Research the Truth about Diyarbakır Prison (Diyarbakır Cezaevi Gerçeğini Araştırma ve Adalet Komisyonu) was established in 2007 with the aim of turning Diyarbakır Prison[3] into a museum by the Initiation of Generation 78 (78'liler Girişimi) and academics from various fields. The unofficial commission conducted interviews with 461 ex-prisoners to collect evidence and testimonies. The findings revealed the torture and degradation methods used in the prison. Symposiums were organized in Diyarbakır, Ankara, and İstanbul. The commission documented an extensive data on the torture in Diyarbakır prison.

Truth Justice Memory Center (Hakikat Adalet Hafıza Merkezi) was set up in 2011 as an independent human rights organization by a group of lawyers, journalists, and human rights activists. The objectives of the Center are manifested as uncovering the truth concerning past violations of human rights, strengthening the collective memory about these violations, supporting survivors in their pursuit of justice. The center has published reports on enforced disappearances and set up a database for collecting the data of enforced disappearances in Turkey after the 1980s. The recent works of the center include a chronology of peace process and visual documentation of curfews and civilian deaths in Turkey.

Hrant Dink Foundation which was set on 2007 after the assassination of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. The Foundation leads projects on intercultural dialogue, cultural heritage, discrimination, and hate speech in media. The oral history project The Sounds of Silence I - Turkey's Armenians Speak[4] was published, and the Armenian Architects of Istanbul in the Era of Westernization exhibition and Adana 1909: History, Memory, Identity from a 100 Year Perspective

[3] A prison located in Diyarbakır, known for systematic torture against political prisoners in 1980s.
[4] The series flow as The Sounds of Silence II - Diyarbakir's Armenians Speak and Sound of Silence III - Ankara's Armenians Speak.

conference was organized. The foundation also provides History and Memory Research Fund.

The works on memory in Turkey reveal the undealt past and the clash between the official history and collective memory. Collective and individual memories which have not been told in official history and/or changed/repressed/implemented are publicly returning in recent years. As people start to speak up, share their stories and demand for alternative histories, cultural artifacts are also being produced for fulfilling this need and demand.

The distinction between official history and collective memory reflects power relations in Turkey. In such circumstances, keeping parts of a culture alive through memory becomes a form of resistance. These cultural artifacts and activities include lullabies, oral stories, songs, writing, recording & screening. The power of oral culture should also be considered in the context of Turkey; traumatic events which occurred almost 100 years ago reached today through oral stories. Recently produced written and audio–visual materials use oral stories as their main source. Even so, memory is still marked by silence, absence, and hesitation. Publicizing memories and overcoming the negation in public are the primary concerns of memory activism in Turkey. Throughout the 2000s in Turkey, due to EU harmonization and peace processes, repressed memories gained a voice to express themselves publicly for the first time. These events have not resolved but created a discursive space. The change in society is hidden in the common phrase "we didn't know back then". At this point, afterwardness should be considered when trying to understand how subjectivities are being reconstituted when engaging with silent, absent and hesitant memories. Eng and Kazanjian argue that loss is being animated for hopeful and hopeless politics (2003, p. 2). With this regard cinema functions as a medium to analyze how loss is being animated – hopefully – for hopeful politics.

1.5 Memory and Cinema

General assumption about the cinematic temporality is that spectator perceive the image in the present tense. Mary Ann Doane (2002) explains this phenomenon by indicating the archival quality of the film. The film stores the image and time. When the present as contingency is stored, it becomes the past. Yet it is perceived by audience in present tense due to existing nowhere but in its screening (p. 23). Whereas Maureen Turim (1989) underlines that sometimes spectators perceive the film as a story from the past which might be encouraged by filmic devices such as voice-over narration, a specific mise-en scene and historical references (p. 16). In such circumstances, the film would be articulated as an experience of the visualized past for the spectator rather than a present tense context.

The cinema has been discussed in terms of its relation to memory by some theorists, and these discussions varied from formal similarities to cinema's function in memory making processes. In her conceptualization of prosthetic memory, Landsberg (2004) emphasizes that cinema and other mass cultural technologies have the potential to create a shared social framework for people who belong to different social spaces, and thus these technologies can structure "imagined communities" (p. 8). Landsberg illustrates how these images produced for cinema and mass media function to form the collective memory by emphasizing that these technologies replaced the collective rituals of the Middle Ages and the monuments of nation states in the nineteenth century. These technologies create mediated memories which people incorporate with their own archive of experience.

Robert Burgoyne (2003) illustrates the relation of cinema to memory by emphasizing that the film is understood in terms of emotional and affective truth (p. 223), so just like memory it is experienced by the spectator in somatic level. Furthermore, he argues that in the contemporary media culture the representing the past which was once an objective phenomenon, has transformed in to an experiential collective memory which Burgoyne describes as electronic or audio-

visual sites of memory (p. 225). Both Landsberg and Burgoyne emphasize the memory making function of the film in popular imagery that has become a widely-employed approach in studies on memory and cinema.

Another approach is analyzing the relationship between memory and the language of the film. Radstone (2000b) investigates this relationship and addresses the similarities between memory and cinema existing in both form and content. Mnemonic images of the past bear similarities with cinematic visual elements as in the techniques of fade-in and fade-out, which are "often motivated from the narrative point of view of a protagonist's acts of memory" (p.81). Another connection is the flashback, which is the best example of the link between cinema's formal strategies with memory's vicissitudes. Flashback "designates both a cinematic edit that links the present with the past and the involuntary and spontaneous recall of (usually traumatic events)" (p. 81). Turim also suggests that flashbacks developed "as a means of mimetic representation of memory, dreams, or confession" (p. 6) and present a narrative past which usually refers to a historical past (p. 17).

Moreover, Radstone indicates the repository function of home movies and videos and both art and mainstream cinema's preoccupation on memory. Interest in memory in art cinema generates "a spate of 'new' autobiographical films which deploy purposeful self-reflexivity in relation to memory's instability" (p. 82) as in the films of Andrei Tarkovsky and Chris Marker. For mainstream cinema, memory has become a narrative theme. Science fiction films such as *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990), and *Dark City* (Alex Proyas, 1998) dealt with the risk of science's potential to replace memories. Films on historical events also have been popular in mainstream cinema since the early years and even became a genre. Robert A. Rosenstone (2001) proposes to value the history on film as a way of dealing with the past and consider it as one of the past forms of history (p. 65).

Cinema is a very important medium for memory transmission, but not just as an implant technology. As new cultural formations emerged, new forms of

filmmaking appeared. Intercultural cinema is one of the most important cultural outcomes of new cultural formations. Laura U. Marks (2000) emphasizes the experimental style of intercultural cinema, which functions "to represent the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge or living as a minority in the still majority white, Euro-American West" (p. 1). By offering various ways of knowing and representing the world, intercultural cinema attempts to overcome unrepresentability of the sufferings and challenges the grand narratives by deconstructing dominant histories. Marks defines this process as creating "an empty space where no history is certain" (p. 5) and to contemplate this emptiness, the story is suspended. The outcome is "narratively thin but emotionally full" (p. 5). But how do these films create emotional fullness and evoke memories in a way that deconstructs grand narratives? Marks argues that they create an appeal to "nonvisual knowledge, embodied knowledge, and experiences of the senses, such as touch, smell, and taste" (p. 2). By discussing how certain images appeal to a haptic tactile visuality, Marks offers a new way of working with films which is beyond conventional boundaries of audio-visuality and explores alternative ways of evoking memories.

Trauma cinema is another useful concept to understand memory and cinema relation. Janet Walker (2005) defines trauma cinema as a group of films that deal with "a world-shattering event or events whether public or personal" and trauma films as those that deal with the traumatic events "in a nonrealistic mode characterized by disturbance and fragmentation of the films' narrative and stylistic regimes" (p. 19). Trauma films "disremember" by altering the illusionist system of Hollywood classical realism that enables identification of audiences with characters. Walker's work provides an important approach to studying formal attributes of films that relate to the problematization of trauma and memory. Joshua Hirsch (2004) also uses the concept of trauma to describe the films that deal with the traumatic past and describe them as post-traumatic cinema- "a cinema that not only represents traumatic historical events, but also attempts to embody and reproduce the trauma for the spectator through its of narration" (p. xi). Discussions on traumatic and/or post-traumatic cinema usually start with the discussion of

holocaust films. As indicated by J. Hirsch, the Holocaust plays a large role in the development of post-traumatic cinema but not the sole determining factor (p. 24). Alain Resnais is discussed as the key figure in the post-traumatic cinema who made the pivotal film on the Holocaust—*Night and Fog* (1956) as well as the films the bombings of Hiroshima (*Hiroshima, mon amour*, 1959) and *Guernica* (1951). Although the Holocaust is an important driving force, the discussion cannot be reduced to it. As discussed earlier, traumatic/catastrophic events would be discussed as consequences of modernity. Each atrocity has its own singularity and uniqueness but the rationale behind are rooted in the same system of thought. Arguments of Walker and J. Hirsch are centered on the representation of traumatic event though its own impossibility that requires being preoccupied with the ontology of the event.

A number of studies are discussed above on the relationship between cinema and memory approaching the subject from different angles. The interest in memory in social science eventually reflected upon film studies. There are many other works that I could not include here as thoroughly exploring the relevant corpus is beyond the limits of this study. Each approach presents a new way of articulating the relation between cinema and memory as well as a methodology to study films. In this study, memory is taken as a concept to understand how the past is engaged in these films that brings me to include formal relations between memory and cinema as well as the function of memory-making. I would like to explore the function of cinema in constituting memories by analyzing the formal strategies used to engage with the past. For this reason, I will refer to the works of Radstone, Turim, M. Hirsch and Marks. Mainly, I will follow the conceptualization of Hamid Naficy (2001) on accented cinema who focuses on the displaced filmmakers and argues that their identity and memories define their film language. I will discuss accented cinema in the following chapters in detail.

1.6 Conclusion

The official history in Turkey denies and/or ignores the past atrocities, conversely and paradoxically motivating efforts for maintaining memories of them. While the representation of traumatic events is problematic on its own, it becomes more challenging in Turkey due to the oppressive pressure to remain silent. In these circumstances, the unofficial practices of documenting the past are forms of resistance in order to address and deal with the past. Memory work conducted by NGOs and informal groups institutionalizes and protects memory against the danger of eradication. Each method of keeping the cultural memory alive challenges the concept of a grand narrative by offering various ways of knowing and representing the world. In this context, the films in this study are not just representations of collective memory but rather efforts contributing to developing strategies to overcome silence, absence, and hesitation all of which are hallmarks of traumatic memory.

CHAPTER 2: SITUATING THE CINEMA IN TURKEY AFTER 2000

The films I will be discussing in this study in terms of their stylistic aspects were made in Turkey between 1999 and 2014. These films are discussed together because their narratives question different aspects of the same past, and simultaneously employ formal strategies to overcome the problem of representing the traumatic past. They have even more in common, such as the fact that they were all made in Turkey and within a specific period as independent productions. Neither of them are mainstream films nor reached a mass audience. So, if we map the film industry in Turkey, they are not the best representatives of cinema in Turkey. They would rather be categorized as critically acclaimed alternative productions that meet national and international audiences via film festivals. The reception of these films, and a comparative analysis of the alternative and mainstream films that engage with the past, would be an interesting and important subject of study. Nevertheless, considering the scopes of this study, I will leave them out for further studies, and in this chapter, I will try to situate these films in the context of cinema in Turkey and transnational cinema.

A brief look at the history of cinema in Turkey reveals the traces of the homogenous state fantasy that constantly battles to reestablish itself by exterminating the 'others'. The extermination is either physically or symbolically removing all non-Turkish existence from the history of Turkey. In a similar vein, the history of cinema in Turkey is open to being read as the cultural aspect of Turkification. The birth of cinema in Turkey dates back to the Ottoman Empire, but as the history was written, the multi-ethnic and religious diversity of the Ottoman Empire has been intentionally ignored. The arguments on "the first film" in Turkey reveal how the truth is moderated for building the nation.

As in many other countries, cinema arrived at the Ottoman Empire through the screening of Lumière Brothers' films. The screening in 1897 was organized by a Polish Jew, Sigmund Weinberg in Sponeck—in a beer house in Beyoğlu. Weinberg also opened the first film theatre, Pathé, in 1908 in Beyoğlu (Nijat Özön,

2010, p. 39) and became a significant figure for introducing cinema to the Ottomans. In 1896, The Lumière Brothers' cameraman Alexandre Promio shot films in Istanbul, and the Macedonian Manaki Brothers started to make documentaries in 1905 that would be considered as the first films made in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the official history of "Turkish" cinema neglects the Manaki Brothers due to their ethnic identities, and considers Fuat Uzkınay's military-sponsored documentary, *The Demolition of the Russian Monument at St Stephan*, made in 1910, as the first Turkish film in the official history of Turkey (Gönül Dönmez-Colin, 2008, p. 23). As Dilek Kaya Mutlu (2007) indicates, the debate on *The Demolition of the Russian Monument at St Stephan* has become a site of a clash between contesting national memories (p. 82). Registering Uzkınay's film as the origin of the *Turkish* cinema exposes the nationalistic reflex in writing history and registering truth in Turkey that has become the founding principle of the Turkish Republic.

The heyday of cinema in Turkey is often discussed in the bracket of Yeşilçam (which is the name of a street in Beyoğlu where the producers were located), that also became the phrase for popular filmmaking in Turkey. For a critical history of cinema in Turkey, Savaş Arslan (2011) proposes a periodization based on the socio-economic rise and decline of Yeşilçam which appears in three periods: Pre-Yeşilçam (cinema in Turkey until the late 1940s), Yeşilçam (between the 1950s and 1980s), and post-Yeşilçam (1990s onward) (p. 11). Yeşilçam created its own cinematic language as well as the pattern of production, distribution, and exhibition and had its golden age in the 1960s and 1970s. The film style mimicked the classical Hollywood films in a "Turkish" perspective. Arslan (2009) describes this process by claiming that Yeşilçam "'Turkified' Western cinema by putting it into the vernacular, transforming it into a local product, by openly pirating scripts, themes, and footage from both Hollywood and European films" and offered a synthesis between western medium and Turkish cultural forms that created a language through melodramatic modality (p. 85).

The history of cinema in Turkey is intertwined with the issue of Turkification, hence the Turkish Republic is established on the idea of a homogenous nation-state that defines itself as Turkish. Kevin Robins and Asu Aksoy (2000) analyze the cinema culture in Turkey in terms of the national question, and propose the term 'deep nation' to refer to the most fundamental level of belonging to a nation that provides grounding for imagining the ontology of the nation (p. 193). Film regulations were introduced in 1939 functioned to censor films in accordance with the idea of a unified and homogenous nation. Censorship is still a hot issue in Turkey in the guise of the official registration document given by the Minister of Culture and Tourism[5]. The forms of censorship have varied throughout the history of Turkey but the raison d'être of censorship remains the same: to protect the unity and the morality of the nation. Robins and Aksoy map various censorship decisions imposed such as avoiding the misrepresentation of the Turkish peasants and land, discord, corrupting morality, and family values (p. 199 – 200).

Nevertheless, the history of cinema in Turkey outgrow the duality of oppression and control of the state and reproducing the cultural aspects of homogenous state fantasy. Robins and Aksoy claim that it is rather the history of a productive disordering that weakens and loosens the deep nation in the Turkish imagination (p. 202).

A similar approach is presented by Umut Tümay Arslan (2005) who claims that the weakness of Kemalist cultural modernization project and the popularity of cinema created an authentic cinema in Turkey and moreover, Yeşilçam revealed the distance between the idealized image of homogeneous society and the existing

[5] The official registration document is a must for screening in theatres and film festivals in Turkey. In the last few years, the necessity of the document was extended to short films and documentaries. Authorities certified to give the document can demand "changes" in the film so that the registration is used as a tool for censorship. In recent years, there have been some famous cases for this kind of censorship. The screening of *Bakur* (*North*, Çayan Demirel & Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, 2015), a documentary about the Kurdish guerrillas in Turkey, was canceled due to the lack of the document. A scene of *Zer* (Kazım Öz, 2017) was forcibly cut to get a document. The director protested the censorship by adding black screens and using titles to indicate the censorship. Censorship aware version of the film was also censored that the director had to remove the black screens. Another example is *Clair-Obscur* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2017) in which the female desire centered sex scenes are cut to avoid an 18+ rating. The most of the films made in Turkey has ministry fund and the filmmaker has to pay the fund back if the film gets an 18+ rating.

one (p. 40 – 41). Yeşilçam connotes to a form that appeared in the process of popularization which has always been degraded for being primitive and backward (p. 29). U. T. Arslan makes an analogy between Yeşilçam and arabesque[6] music in Turkey, arguing that aside from being the popular culture, they have also answered and even articulated the same sensibilities (p. 41). Both forms are degraded as if to punish them for revealing the fakeness of the national imagination and failure of the modernization project.

Nevertheless, Yeşilçam followed the national ideal in some aspects, as in the representation of ethnic and religious minorities. As Dilara Balcı (2013) examines in her study, non-muslims are only presented as stereotypes. Armenian women are mostly represented as old widows without any sexual attraction while Armenian men hold specific professions. Jews are represented as greedy, evil, and selfish. Especially, events such as 6-7 September[7] (Istanbul pogrom) gave rise to the misrepresentation of Greek men as either barbaric or evil and Greek women as either femme-fatales or prostitutes (p. 232-3). Imagining a unified Turkish nation was only possible through exterminating the multi-ethnic and religious Ottoman past. The misrepresentation in Yeşilçam is the continuation of this attempt, and a punishment for the remaining non-Muslims for being a reminder of the past. In this sense, it could be argued that Yeşilçam reproduces and represents the idealized nation, yet simultaneously the past has been flashing from the interstices as Yeşilçam ambivalently became both a cultural product where the repression and the return of the repressed coexisted.

The representation of the Kurds in Yeşilçam reflects the politics of denial. The Kurds are either absent or reduced to folkloric elements or accent which function to signify that they are not an ethnic group. Kurdish people were depicted in the village films of the 1950s and 1960s but more importantly, they become more

[6] A hybrid music genre that emerged in the late 1960s mixing Turkish classical and folk elements with those of the West and Egypt (Özbek, 1991, p. 211).
[7] After the false news that the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki, Greece were bombed, organized mob attacks directed at Istanbul's Greek minority on 6–7 September 1955.

visible with the rise of the working class and the migration to Istanbul (Yücel, 2008, p. 35), but only as Turkish speaking citizens.

By the late 1980s, the number of the films produced in Turkey declined dramatically. 1165 films were made between 1977 and 1986 while 812 films between 1987 and 1997 (Scognamillo, 1998, p. 423). Scognamillo indicates that no measures were taken to prevent the inevitable decline in the film industry. Correspondingly, the ticket sales decreased as a sign of lost interest in cinema. Scognamillo interprets this loss of interest in the Turkish audience as an outcome of television, political and economic conditions, anarchy and terror, before and after the September 12th military coup, and the hegemony of the American cinema (p. 427). These changes in the socio-economy of filmmaking led to the end of a period in the history of cinema in Turkey while simultaneously being a precursor of a new period.

As a cultural medium, films reflect the psyche of the society but moreover, as an industry, the conditions for making and situating films are dependent upon the market conditions and audience reception. The politics in the 1980s created a significant change in the economy and culture in Turkey that inevitably affected the film production and reception. S. Arslan names this period in cinema as the 'late Yeşilçam' and defines the tendencies in that period as either continuing popular genre film production for the videotape market or a continuous self-reflexivity (p. 204). The 90s brought a new kind of filmmaking that is often called "new cinema" in Turkey. S. Arslan explains the changes in the film industry during the 90s in relation to Turkey's integration into global capitalist markets because the close involvement of the U.S. companies into the film market had negative effects on the film industry in Turkey (p. 201). The change was not limited to the economic model, and the new issues that were suppressed in the past were being voiced, which had consequences in social and cultural life. In addition to, and as a consequence of Nurdan Gürbilek's (1992) narrative on the cultural climate of the 80s in which she characterizes as the repression and explosion of speech, the new

subjects were being addressed in the cinema of the 90s as the new production methods were also being considered.

Asuman Suner (2010) asserts that a new wave of cinema was born in the 90s in two separate forms: a new popular cinema with box office success, and an art cinema with critical acclaim and national/international awards (p. 12). New popular cinema is characterized by addressing the classical Yeşilçam themes by using Hollywood visual style. *The Bandit* (Yavuz Turgul, 1996) is the prominent example of the new popular cinema, proving the success of this new formulation with its box office success. On the other hand, new directors with low budgets and almost amateur production conditions started to make films on unconventional stories using distinct cinematic styles such as *Somersault in the Coffin* (Derviş Zaim, 1996), *The Small Town* (Nuri Bilge Ceylan, 1997), *Innocence* (Zeki Demirkubuz, 1997), and *Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999). Although these films were critically acclaimed in both national and international film festivals, they attracted neither media attention nor box office success in Turkey.

Suner's analysis on the new cinema is framed in relation to notions of identity, memory and belonging, hence the question of identity is repeatedly visited in new wave cinema in Turkey, popular and art films alike. Albeit identity is questioned from different social, political, and aesthetic perspectives (p. 16). Suner examines films in which the past is a recurrent theme and within this framing, popular films are situated under the category of 'popular nostalgia films'. Another category Suner proposes is 'new political films', defined by addressing political issues as well as being produced in the time period of 'new liberal atmosphere'. The new liberal atmosphere was the outcome of improving relations between the European Union and Turkey from the late 1990s to the early 2000s (p. 55), and it arguably softened political censorship on issues such as religious minorities and conflict between the Turkish state and Kurdish guerrillas. New political films covered issues such as "conflict between the Turkish army and the separatist Kurdish guerrillas in the southeast, police brutality against political prisoners, people who disappear while under police custody, discriminatory policies against

religious and ethnic minorities, and so forth" (p. 18) by employing a distinct cinematic style. The main focus in these films could be described as the manner in which the lives of ordinary people were being destroyed by the Turkey's political climate of the past (Suner, p. 18), and these films provide a traumatic encounter with the past.

As Hamid Naficy (2001) emphasizes "how films are conceived and received has a lot to do with how they are framed discursively" (p. 19). Classifying the films made in Turkey in the 90s and onward into the diverse categories such as 'popular nostalgia' or 'new political' would limit their potential by giving them a priori meaning. Moreover, their difference in terms of style would disappear in a similar vein. Nonetheless, I do not denounce the usefulness of these categorizations, especially for understanding the social, economic, and cultural conditions in which they were conceived and received.

As I attempt to situate films in this study, I will avoid using the term "Turkish cinema" due to its constraints. Suner proposes using the concept "cinema of Turkey" for new political films hence they challenge the notion of *Turkishness* and this concept places the emphasis on Turkey "as a geopolitical entity and a locus of divergent ethnic, religious, and cultural identities" (p. 75). In a similar vein, S. Arslan suggests using "new cinema of Turkey" for contemporary "cinema in Turkey" to avoid limiting it to its *Turkishness*. This conceptualization has a potential for revealing "its multiplicities and pluralities as well as its transnational and global characteristics" (p. 19-20). Unlike Suner, S. Arslan does not limit the concept into specific films but refers to the all post Yeşilçam films.

Moreover, both authors refer to transnational cinema for understanding the framework in Turkey. Suner draws attention to the similarities between Turkey's new wave political cinema and emergent independent transnational cinema on the grounds of "relentless interrogation of questions of national belonging and identity". (p. 18). Transnational characteristics of cinema in Turkey are also emphasized by S. Arslan, indicating the shift from national to transnational through

“multiplication of identities, border crossings, and alternative avenues of filmic narration (p. 21).

As I try to map the landscape of cinema in Turkey, I try to register the multitude rather than push them into an umbrella term. Therefore, I prefer to use the term “cinema in Turkey”, so that I refer to the social, political, economic, and cultural context in which they are produced. Nevertheless, understanding the multitude requires considering the constituents first. In this regard, I will try to include the discussions on the Kurdish cinema. According to Suncem Koçer (2014), Kurdish cinema is a discursive space that has emerged as a national cinema in transnational space and has always been transnational by nature (p. 474-480). Defining a national cinema is a complicated issue by itself, and it gets more complicated for the Kurds since they are a nation without a state. The Kurds inhabit different nation states and some of them live in the diaspora, yet their history and culture have been erased from the public for many years. Under these circumstances, defining or at least discussion on a Kurdish cinema should be seen as a cultural and historical resilience. For this reason, the discussions around a Kurdish cinema involve the visual archeology of the Kurds.

Koçer’s observations reveal that there are three criteria employed for judging and ranking Kurdish films: the use of Kurdish language, the director’s ethnic identity and his/her relation to it, and the subject matter of the film (p. 479). These criteria are neither clear-cut nor create a consensus but offer a path for evaluating and ranking the films.

Some of the films I analyze in this study were made by Kurdish directors based in Turkey and more than half of them include Kurdish characters and dialogues. I exclude the discussion on how they engage with the Kurdish cinema and rather focus them on the context of cinema in Turkey. As Ayça Çiftçi (2009) asserts, the analysis of any film by a Kurdish director in Turkey should begin with analyzing the meaning of their sole existence as they make up for a lack of representation that ruled the cinema in Turkey till the late 90s (p. 268-69).

Cinema in Turkey is not a self-contained category but rather a proposition to understand a cinema by considering the context of production and reception. The discussion on the transnational cinema provides a perspective to understand the context.

2.1 Transnational Cinema

The concept of transnational cinema is one of the categories and subjects of inquiry in film studies that different approaches should be overviewed to understand the concept. Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim (2010) map various conceptualization of transnational cinema in their study that reveals the current state and problematization of the concept. One of the common approaches to the concept is to emphasize the inadequacy and limitations of the concept of nation in an increasingly interconnected and multicultural world (p. 8). Transnational is commonly used in humanities as a critical concept offering to extend beyond national boundaries and link people and cultural artifacts across nations. The ambivalence on the possibility of assigning a fixed national identity reflected upon the understanding national cinema. As Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (2006) suggest:

> The global circulation of money, commodities, information, and human beings is given rise to films whose aesthetic and narrative dynamics, and even the modes of emotional identification they elicit, reflect the impact of advanced capitalism and new media technologies as components of an increasingly interconnected world system. (p. 1)

As the interconnected world system creates the need for a new conceptualization on cinema, circulating commodities, information, human beings and even money do not totally melt into the global. Transnational cinema derives from the interstices between the local and the global and includes both dominance of Hollywood and counterhegemonic responses from underrepresented countries from all over the world.

A nation is, as Benedict Anderson (1991) defines it in *Imagined Communities*, "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). The concept of transnational cinema enables us to understand how the contemporary world is being imagined by filmmakers across the world (Ezra & Rowden, 2006, p. 1). The contemporary world is marked by globalization that challenges the notion of nationalism as well as creating the extreme ends of it. The twentieth century witnessed mass mobility including the forced deportations that caused the death of millions of people as well as the mass migrations caused by wars and economic struggles, which is also an on-going phase in world history. The overall experience changed the elements of society as well as the states of living in a country. Inhabiting a country can be experienced as a native citizen, a migrant, a refugee, or in a diasporic community. The multitude of these experiences create the multiple regimes of knowledge (Marks, 2000, p. 1) and a new power dynamics that also create xenophobia and racism.

In these circumstances, exile, immigration, and displacement designate the ways individuals define their identity and belonging. The difference between transnational and national cinema is not limited by the imagination of the land and/or the world. Mode of production is one of the important features of transnational cinema. Many films have either international co-productions and/or international crew. However, "international" does not specifically refer to people/institutions from other countries. As in the example of Turkey, people/institutions originated from the same country, but do not necessarily share the same hegemonic national identity, including ethnic and religious multiplicities. Furthermore, transnational cinema is not limited to a new mode of production. There are common features, filmmakers across the world share both in their films and filmmaking processes.

Naficy (1996) offers using the concept of independent transnational film genre in which he describes transnational filmmakers as interstitial authors and considers these films as "products of the particular transnational location of filmmakers in time and place and in social life and cultural difference" (p. 205).

Naficy correlates genre and authorship in a transnational context that leads to reading films as sites for struggles over meanings and identities. This authorial approach specifically focuses on exilic, diasporic or postcolonial film-makers living and working in the West and problematizes being at the margin of the nation and culture and thus raises questions about identity and belonging.

Although transnational cinema offers to recontextualize the notions of nation and cultural, various conceptualizations of transnationalism have their own problems, as addressed by Higbee and Lim. The approach which emphasizes the insufficiency of the national to explain the cinema's relations to cultural and economic formations fails to contain the power relations across the transnational exchange. On the other hand, the post-colonialist approach challenging the western constructs of nation and national culture, as well as knowledge and aesthetics, remains on the periphery of film industry that it cannot be used for analyzing mainstream and popular films (p. 9-10). At this point, Higbee and Lim offer a critical stance towards the question of transnational in film studies that is attentive to questions of politics and power, understands local, regional and diasporic film cultures as well as the tensions between the national and transnational. Instead of a description of a transnational cinema, they offer to take it as a tool for critical inquiry.

Transnationalism is not the first and only concept that offers to study films in relation to changing social, economic and cultural conditions. Different conceptualizations have been used such as *intercultural*, *accented*, *postcolonial*, *hybrid*, *interstitial*, and *Third cinema*. Laura U. Marks (2000) prefers to use intercultural cinema, as the term 'intercultural' indicates the encounter between different cultural organizations of knowledge (p. 7) and argues that representing the experience of living in between different cultural organizations of knowledge is embodied with experimental style. Many works of intercultural cinema, Marks argues, begin from an inability to speak and represent their own culture, history, and memory and to overcome this phenomenon they explore new forms of expression (p. 21). So, intercultural cinema indicates the experience of living in

between different cultural regimes as well as using an unconventional film language to overcome the absence of representation.

In the manifest “Towards a Third Cinema” (1969) Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas critique mainstream and capitalist cinema, and coins the term “Third Cinema” – a cinema against oppression and aiming at inspiring revolutionary ideas. Third Cinema refers to a movement criticizing Hollywood for promoting bourgeois values and European Art Cinema for centering on individual expressions and it offers to expose oppression in societies through filmmaking (Solanas & Getino, 1969, p. 120). As Teshome Gabriel (1994) summarizes, the Third Cinema addresses issues of class, culture, religion, sex and national integrity simultaneously. Contrary to the mainstream cinema, the aesthetics of Third Cinema are not perfect and polished. Gabriel emphasizes that Third World film practice favors the spatial concentration over the conventions of temporal manipulation which is an indicator of how Third World cinema initiates “a coexistence of film art with oral traditions” (p. 48). Moreover, Gabriel’s overall argument suggests that Third World cinema is the outcome of the oral tradition meeting a new medium which eventually creates its own language. The manifestation of Third Cinema was followed by Julio García Espinosa’s “For an Imperfect Cinema” in 1979 in which Espinosa invites filmmakers to apply imperfect aesthetics and no longer be interested in the quality of technique. The only thing, he argues, that an artist should be interested in is the question: “What are you doing in order to overcome the barrier of the "cultured" elite audience which up to now has conditioned the form of your work?” (para. 40). Both manifestations and the films made in Third World cinema aesthetics suggest the importance and necessity of developing a new film language that enables to contain the experience of non-Western.

In his book, *An Accented cinema: Exilic and diasporic filmmaking*, Naficy reworks the concept of independent transnational genre and proposes the concept of “accented cinema.” Accented films are interstitial due to being created astride and in the interstices of social formations and cinematic practices (p. 4) as the filmmakers are either in exile or diaspora. In situating accented cinema, Naficy

emphasizes that it is an offshoot of the Third Cinema, considering their shared attributes and differences on certain sensibilities. Both Third Cinema and accented cinema stand opposed to authoritarianism and oppression. On the other hand, accented cinema, as Naficy observes, favors discursive and semiotic struggles (p. 31). As the Third Cinema engages with the masses, accented cinema rather engages with individuals, ethnicities, identities, and the most of all the experience of deterritorialization itself. Both signify "historically conscious, politically engaged, critically aware, generically hybridized, and artisanally produced" (p. 31) works of cinema.

Third Cinema and accented cinema are not two distinguished categories. Many films are open to be discussed under each categorization, just as Naficy analyzes the films of Solanas to show their accented style. Third Cinema is a strategically useful term to emphasize the political position of the filmmaker. Naficy argues that both are politically engaged films, but how they are engaged might be the difference. In Third Cinema, films have a political standpoint and refer to grand political issues – issues of the system. On the contrary, accented films do not necessarily have a political standpoint but the situation itself - which is being accented – is political. Third Cinema declares that films should engage with the audience to evoke revolutionary action to improve their conditions. Accented cinema evokes politicization but also synaesthesia, tactility, and feeling of loss.

The films discussed in this study have transnational characteristics but rather than situating them into a clearly described categorization, as Higbee and Lim suggest, I prefer to use transnationalism as a critical tool to understand the tensions between national and transnational. Especially, the production and reception of these films are in constant engagement with transnational dynamics considering that they are funded by international organizations such as Eurimages or European co-producers and gain critical acclaim through international film festivals. Nonetheless, there are many other films in Turkey that are produced and received in similar conditions. The films in this study are significant for employing

unconventional forms that seeks a language for being critical to hegemonic discourses on identity and registering the truth about the underrepresented ethnic identities. In other words, their critical language attributes them "accented" therefore I will try to understand them through the context of accented cinema.

2.2 Accented Cinema

Accent is a distinctive way of pronouncing a language and an indicator of the origin of a person. Accent may indicate that spoken language is not the native language of the speaker, so it becomes a significant marker of foreignness and identity. It also signifies demographic information about the speaker as well as social, economic, and cultural class. Although any pronunciation of a language is accented, only the non-standard accents are regarded as "accented". As the official accent is standard and value-free, some accents are considered ugly, vulgar, or comic and some others may be called as proper, sophisticated, or beautiful. In the mainstream media and cinema in Turkey, a non-standard accent is used to indicate the region of a character or as an element of comedy. The lack of representation of non-Turkish native languages in Turkey, such as Kurdish, Zazaki, Armenian, Greek, Ladino, Laz, and Homshetsi, is substituted by accented Turkish.

Hence cinema is a medium with a language, it also has its own accents. The standard and value-free accent in film language is identified with dominant cinema which is mostly Hollywood and/or Hollywood style popular filmmaking which are intended for entertainment. According to Naficy, all alternative cinemas are accented in a specific way that distinguish them (p. 23). The "accent" in his conceptualization of accented cinema, derives from its artisanal and collective production modes as well as the filmmakers' and audiences' deterritorialized locations. Deterritorialization would be physical or otherwise, the filmmaker would be living in diaspora or internal/external exile. Whereas external exile is physical displacement, internal exile refers to restrictions, deprivation, and censorship in their home countries. A filmmaker might be residing in the home country but their

cultural identity and/or relation to home country would be problematic. Consequently, not all accented films are exilic and diasporic but, Naficy argues all exilic and diasporic films are accented (p. 23).

Accented films have similar thematic preoccupations and formal style as well as a similar mode of production and reception. Themes involve journeying, historicity, identity and, displacement as characters are often outsiders, alienated, illegal, alone, and lonely. Mise-en-scene consists of homeland's landscapes, nature, monuments, transitional border spaces such as airports, train and bus stations, objects and icons of the homeland and of the past, or prison-like spaces of exile. Films are multilingual with an emphasis on oral and aural. Sound and image are intentionally asynchronous challenging the synchronous sound convention of the dominant cinema, creating "a slippage between voice and speaker" (p. 24). Native music is used both diegetically and extradiegetically (p. 289 -292).

Accented cinema is an extension of authorship theory in the sense that accented films are both authorial and autobiographical. Naficy argues that authorship in exile needs to be considered; not only the individuality and originality of individuals, but also their (dis)location as interstitial subjects within social formations and cinematic practices (p. 34), so the way they express the experience of exile characterizes the accented authors. Some of the filmmakers I will discuss are not external exiles, they inhabit their "home" country. But their dissident position to the hegemonic discourse on national and cultural identity allows me to consider them as internal exiles. Although the main approach in this study is to analyze films as "texts", I will also try to problematize the relationship between the text and its author. Naficy repeatedly emphasizes the situatedness of the filmmaker, but rather than taking situatedness for granted, I will rather try to understand whether filmmakers in this study are situated or critically positioned.

The accented style maps commonalities among exilic filmmakers that "cut across gender, race, nationality, and ethnicity, as well as across boundaries of national cinemas, genres, and authorship" hence these films are also the sites for the struggle over identities (p. 39). The characteristics of accented style are the

interstitial and artisanal mode of production, collective mode of production, epistolarity and epistolary narratives, chronotopes of imagined homeland, chronotopes of life in exile, and journeying, border crossing, and identity crossing. Naficy notes that accented films do not necessarily contain all components, but each film partakes of some in different measures.

Suner (2006) observes that cinematic style and thematic preoccupations associated with the accented style also appear in a wide-range of films that are categorized under national cinemas and therefore suggest to disclose the mutual entanglement between exilic/diasporic filmmaking and national cinema to realize the critical potential of accented cinema (p. 364). Through the films of Wong Kar Wai, Bahman Ghobadi, and Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Suner illustrates how non-emigrant filmmakers employ accented style as they have a troubled experience of belonging and cultural identity. Suner proposes to reimagine the categories of national, diaspora and exile cinemas in less monolithic and hegemonic terms to understand their dialectics as well as their heterogeneity and thus recommends 'accented cinema at large' as a concept that emphasizes "not so much on narrow situatedness, but critical positioning in the face of the questions of belonging and identity" (p. 378-379). Naficy observes that exile is not experienced similarly and equally, and there are vast differences among exilic subjects. Moreover, he includes the condition of internal exile into his study. Nevertheless, his example on internal exile does not go further than Sergei Paradjanov, who was personally subjected to the oppression of the state. Exile creates physical conditions that cannot be ignored and equated to any other experience, but if the problem of exile is the distance to the place called "home", then a rupture of the sense of belonging creates a similar structure of feeling. The filmmakers whose films are discussed in this study are not in physical exile. All of them inhabit in their home country but have different ethnic origins that are Turkish, Kurdish and Homshetsi. Thematic preoccupations in their films, as well as their narrational choices, reveal their critical position to hegemonic national discourse in Turkey which is the fundamental component of the Turkish identity and belonging. Naficy emphasizes that exilic filmmakers are subjects inhabiting interstitial spaces and sites of struggle that gives them the authority as

exilic authors (p. 12). Filmmakers in this study inhabit interstitial spaces and sites of struggles against the hegemonic identity and belonging and moreover turn their films into interstitial spaces and sites of struggles where repressed, absent, and silenced memories are coming out. Under the circumstances, I find it strategically useful to situate these films into accented cinema literature and employ the critical potential and the formal guidelines of the accented style to analyze these films.

The accented style is not homogenous, and therefore all films made in this style do not contain all components. Each film has some or all of them in different measures and they have different functions for each film. In this study, I will limit my interest in the accented style to the most significant ones in relation to the films I discuss in this study.

2.3 The Accented Style

Accented films are produced in interstitial production mode; their financial provisions are self-investment, private, public, and philanthropic funding sources; accumulation of labour, particularly on behalf of the director to control the project and keep down the cost; multilinguality which address to the many languages of the filmmakers and their crew, the stories told, and the targeted audiences; the artisanal conditions and the political constraints, such as a political obstacle to shoot in a specific territory; the length of time it may take to distribute and exhibit the films. In this study, I will not discuss the mode of production for each film nevertheless how they are funded is important to understand their autonomy. Self-investment, national/international public funds, private funds, and crowdsourcing were possible funding sources and more than one of them were used for each film. Neither of them was made by collective formations nor a mainstream production company which made their thematic and stylistic features possible.

Journey is the major thematic preoccupation in accented films hence it is the core of the exilic experience. Journey narratives are closely related to immigration that Naficy reminds that an emigre-created country like the United States is

characterized by journey narratives, as in certain American film genres such as westerns and road movies (p. 222). Journey narratives may also mobilize mythical and epic journeys which are not immanently accented. Journeys have motivation, direction, spatial elements, and duration that affect the traveler who conventionally will go through an inward transformation on the road. So, journey narratives open questions about space, identity and belonging. Not all journeys involve physical travels; some of them involve also metaphorical journeys of identity and transformation. But when the journey is a physical one, the direction of the journey becomes a classificatory element. Naficy observes three main types of exilic journeys which are journeys of escape, home seeking, and home founding. They are, in other words, journeys of quest, homelessness and homecoming journeys. In *The Way* (*Yol*, Yılmaz Güney, 1982) characters go through physical journeys but also psychological journeys as they travel within their homeland. Kusturica's *Time of the Gypsis* (1989) is about the Gypsy populations that lead a nomadic existence in the interstices of European societies and the central drama is around a boy leaving his home for a journey to Italy which leads to his psychological evolution.

The films I will discuss in this study have either physical or metaphorical journeys. In *Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999), *The Photograph* (Kazım Öz, 2001), *Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004) and *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011), journeys are physical and their direction is to Eastern Turkey, except in *Waiting for the Clouds*, in which the character takes a journey to Greece to find her brother. *Voice of My Father* (Orhan Eskiköy, Zeynel Doğan, 2012), *Mold* (Ali Aydın, 2012), and *Song of My Mother* (Erol Mintaş, 2014) involve fabula journeys. Forced migration of the family in *Song of My Mother* is a fabula event that haunts the present of the film. Basri's son had gone to Istanbul to study, where he is forcibly disappeared. In *Voice of My Father*, the untold journeys of father and Hasan motivate their loss for Basê and Mehmet. Moreover, these films would be read as metaphorical journeys to the past.

Epistolarity is one of the principal contributors of the accented style hence it is driven by the physical distance. Janet Gurkin Altman (1982) describes

epistolariy as “the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning” (p. 4) and Naficy explains its significance to exile by indicating that “both are driven by distance, separation, absence, and loss and by the desire to bridge the multiple gaps” (p. 101). Epistolarity is basically about the acts related to letters as sending, receiving, reading, writing, losing, and finding them and moreover, it includes the conditions that inhibit and prohibit them. Naficy categorizes accented epistolary films into three categories which are film-letters inscribing letters and acts of reading and writing of letters by diegetic characters; telephonic epistles inscribing telephones and answering machines and the use of these devices by diegetic characters; and letter-films which are in the form of epistles (p. 101).

In accented films, epistolarity functions as an expression and inscription of exilic displacement, split subjectivity, and multifocalism rather than a character motivation (p. 103) and produces an array of address forms. Thus, questions about the identity of author, addresser, reader, reciter, and translator of the letters, and about their narratological functions and power relations are raised. In Mona Hatoum's single-channel video *Measures of Distance* (1988), the addressee of the letters is the filmmaker who does not visually appear in the film but whose voice reads her mother's letters on the sound track. Without this extradiegetic information, it would be impossible to understand that the voice reading the letters belong to the director, not to their mothers or to a third party. Chantal Akerman appears in her *Je Tu Il Elle* (1974) as a diegetic character who attempts to write letters to an unidentified lover and it is her own voice that reads the letters on the sound track. In Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil* (1987), the addressee is some fictional character who is absent from the film.

There are fundamental differences between recorded epistolary communication by letters, photographs, and cassettes and the live and interactive communication by telephone (p. 132). Letters have a materiality that telephone conversations lack. Letters can be read, reread, smelled, kissed and carried close to the heart. Exilic telephonic epistles encode compresence which can serve critical functions by juxtaposing incompatible and oppositional discourses, times, and

spaces to highlight their differences (p. 133). Mediated simultaneity is regarded positively for its communitarianism and negatively for intensifying the rupture of exile. Naficy discusses how epistolary media is used in Atom Egoyan's *Calendar* (1993). Egoyan appears in *Calendar* as a diegetic character who documented the trip to his ancestral homeland – Armenia. The video of the trip is not a narrative agent but rather an exilic epistolary agent. In some scenes, the video image is frozen, slowed down, or shuttled fast forward or backward as though the photographer is searching the footage for some meaning and memory. Repetition of video footage functions as an access to memory. The photographer leaves his wife Arsinee in Armenia, who makes repeated calls to his husband and leaves messages on his answering machine. The present time in the film is located in the photographer's house in Canada and through the telephone and the answering machine multilingual conversations across time and space are transmitted. Memories of Armenia and his wife are present in the apartment through an epistolary medium, and they evoke questions about memory, identity, and belonging.

The films in this study involve film-letters and telephonic epistles in various forms such as letters, tape records, telephone conversations, video records, and Skype calls. Through epistolarity, direct access to the characters' subjective viewpoints and emotional states are gained. Epistolary form is dialogic and creates a relation between diegetic characters and off-screen characters. An absent character enters the diegesis through epistolary medium since they link characters across time and space, so as to emphasize the physical distance which is a powerful marker of rupture of exile. For the films in this study, epistolarity has a significant function of carrying the past to the present time of the diegesis. Epistolary medium becomes a medium for remembering, as the absence of father and Hasan in *Voice of My Father* is substituted by their sound records. Naficy emphasizes that sound is perishable because its existence cannot be stabilized and frozen in the moment like a still frame (p. 121), and conventionally appears only with its source. The perishable quality is challenged when the absent characters are involved in diegesis

through their sound. Although it cannot be frozen in film form, the perished vision of the absent characters is embodied in sound.

As Naficy identifies, epistolarity is "constitutionally a discourse of desire, for it mediates between distanced but desiring subjects" (p.111). The character in *Future Lasts Forever* starts her journey to Eastern Turkey as she rereads her boyfriend's letter which he had left just before he joined the Kurdish guerrillas. The desire to meet him again motivates her journey. Sound recordings of requiems and video recordings of witnesses of the forced disappearances are also epistolary medium functioning as reminders of the haunting past.

Space and time configurations are significant in accented cinema as they refer to issues of displacement and emplacement. Naficy uses Mikhail Bakhtin's term *chronotope* (time-space) for his textual analysis of spatial and temporal configurations in accented cinema. Bakhtin (2004) uses the term *chronotope* to refer to "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (p. 84). The function of *chronotope* in literature is to materialize time in space and it emerges as "a center for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel" (p. 250).

According to Naficy accented films "encode, embody, and imagine the home, exile, and transitional sites in certain privileged chronotopes" (p. 152). The dialectics of displacement and emplacement are expressed in chronotopes of accented films and they create a contrast between homeland and exile. Homeland is imagined in a "utopian prelapsarian chronotope" (p. 152) which is expressed with its nature, landscape, mountains, and landmarks. Bakhtin indicated that chronotopes are the places where "the knots of narrative are tied and untied" (p. 183). Each film may contain a primary chronotope or multiple chronotopes which may coexist with or contradict one another. Accented films have open and closed chronotopes. The open form suggests a mise-en-scene consisting of external locations, open settings, landscapes, bright and natural lightning, and mobile and wandering diegetic characters. The mise-en-scene of closed forms consist of

interior locations and closed settings such as prisons and tight living quarters, dark lightning, and characters whose movements are restricted in the space.

Naficy argues that nature, mountains, and monuments are idyllic chronotopes of the homeland which blur the temporal boundaries through the unity of place (p. 155). Mountains are used as powerfully cathected collective chronotopes that "they condense the entire idea of nation—particularly if the nation's status is in dispute, as with Palestinians, Kurds, and Armenians" (p. 159). The mountain Ararat and ancient monuments in *Calendar* are used as signifiers of Armenian national identity. Similarly, in *The Way*, when one of the characters arrives at his village near the Syrian border, he kneels down and kisses the land. The mise-en-scene emphasizes the beauty and divinity of the land.

The films in this study are neither diasporic nor external exilic films. The existence of homeland and exile in the films rather refers to an invisible border between the western Turkey and the Kurdish region. Both in *Journey to the Sun* and *The Photograph*, representation of the landscape significantly changes when characters arrive at Kurdish regions. Non-diegetic music, lighting and camera angles function as glorifying the land. Nevertheless, it is not purely a utopian prelapsarian chronotope, whereas military checkpoints emphasize that the land is occupied.

Chronotope is not necessarily an open concept as in the examples above; the closed form of mise-en-scene – interior locations and closed settings – express imprisonment as in *Voice of My Father.* The mourning of the character is expressed by her relation to dark interiors. In *Song of My Mother*, characters had to leave their village in their homeland long ago and the mother's last days are depicted in her apartment where she feels trapped and longs for her village.

As I will try to explore further, the cinematic style and thematic preoccupations of accented cinema are traced in these films although they are not produced by exilic/diasporic filmmakers. Although they have different personal stories and ethnic background, these filmmakers share a common critical attitude towards the national identity that places them in a position that almost equivalent

to exile. This is a discursive exile that they are pushed by hegemonic national and cultural identity that imagine itself as a homogeneous nation-state of Muslim Turks. Under the circumstances, these films couldn't be produced and/or received as popular/mainstream films. Their mode of production, as nationally and internationally funded co-produced films, inevitably situate them into transnational dynamics. Nevertheless, mode of production is not their only transnational characteristics; in addition to transnational audience reception gained through film festivals, these films constantly problematize national identity. A vast number of films produced in Turkey could be said to have similar qualities. I chose these specific films as I will argue that these films turn into a site of struggle as they register truths about the silenced, repressed, and erased past. Through analyzing their formal qualities, I will try to analyze how the past is evoked, engaged, and even confronted. In this chapter, I briefly shared the examples of the accented style in these films to explain why employing the accented style as a critical and formal guideline is relevant for this study. In the following chapters I will discuss the relevant components of the accented style in detail in order to understand their role in engaging with the traumatic past in Turkey.

CHAPTER 3: THEMATIC PREOCCUPATIONS

The political atmosphere in the 2000s, namely the democratization process, enabled discussions on previously silenced subjects. The films, as a cultural medium, are a space in which political discourses reproduce themselves. Moreover, the films discussed in this study are examples of a cinema that directly engages with the social and political subjects. Discursive frameworks reproduce themes that designate the ways of approaching a subject. These subjects were being spoken about in public for the first time, and more importantly, the alternative perspectives to the official discourse gained a voice and shared their experiences for the first time publicly. For this reason, analyzing thematic preoccupations in these films reveal focal points of discussion as well as structures of feeling.

In this chapter, I will discuss the thematic preoccupations in the films that are strongly related to the formal choices discussed in this study. Although this work, as well as the theories employed for the study, focus on the formal strategies; they indicate the relation of form to content. Hamid Naficy (2001) grounds his argument on the experience of displacement, which is a state that inevitably reproduces its own themes, and finds its expression in the accented style. Similarly, Laura U. Marks (2000) emphasizes that the experience of living between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge expresses itself in formal experimentation. This study investigates the formal strategies that emerged as a response to the challenges of representation. These challenges might be regarding the ontology of the event and/or repression of the speech. Both challenges apply to the films in this study, but on the other hand, the political and social atmosphere in Turkey determines the ways these stories are told, as well as their formal strategies.

The films analyzed in this study are set in the present but the past is remembered constantly. The films reproduce a form of remembering, and some themes reflect how the past is being recalled. As I discussed before, the past is not depicted but rather remembered by characters, dominating their present. Recurring themes provide an understanding of prominent structures of feeling rather than

representing the historical event. In this chapter, I will discuss the themes of loss and journey in order to understand strategies for engaging with the past as well as structures of feeling in the "now" of the films. This analysis will also provide a basis for understanding the formal strategies I will discuss in the following chapters, as well as the historical background of the events to which are referred. As I stated before, this study refrains from discussing the nature of the historical events, but for clarifying the functions of themes and language I will provide brief information regarding the history of the events.

3.1 Loss

Loss is the constituting element in these films, both on thematic and formal levels. The unrepresented and/or misrepresented truth about the past is reflected upon in these films which attribute them the function of the filling a void that long been neglected. The lack of representation before them makes them prominent for filling the lack. Memory signifies a loss; something and/or a moment are gone and no longer there. Loss is not an innately negative term, but the context of the discussion in this study- which refers to the troubling past in Turkey- leads me to focus on the negative implications. Loss as a thematic preoccupation in these films operates in three categories, which are in many cases interwoven: loss of a person, homeland, and identity. Below I will illustrate the repetitive loss theme by explaining the historical background of major examples. I will exclude how loss operates at formal level in this chapter, leaving it to the next chapters where I will be discussing the strategies used to represent the loss.

Loss becomes a subject of inquiry only when it leaves a trace—whether material or affective. Avery Gordon (2008) proposes the concept of haunting as a way in which "abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life" (p. xvi) especially when they are supposedly left in the past or their oppression is denied. Haunting raises specters, Gordon argues, and I consider her concept useful to describe the loss referred in these films. The loss theme repeats

because neither denial nor oppression have disappeared. The present is haunted by loss; the subjects constantly remember and feel the absence of something.

David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (2003) approach loss as something inseparable from what remains. They argue that "the pervasive losses of the twentieth century need to be engaged from the perspective of what remains" and attention to remains "generates a politics of mourning that might be active rather than reactive, prescient rather than nostalgic, abundant rather than lacking, social rather than solipsistic, militant rather than reactionary (p. 2). This perspective redeems loss from being a passive state, and animates for hopeful politics that I argue reflect the approach in the films of this study. The way the loss is discussed does not limit the argument into the past, but rather indicates the continuum of loss in today's politics. The loss continues because it has neither confronted nor reconciled, so it reproduces itself. The lack of confrontation also indicates a loss in the political discourse that disables the possibility of a positive change. Loss is an active subject in politics in Turkey, especially for the Kurdish conflict. Numbers of people were killed in the war, people were forcibly disappeared, killed, and towns were evacuated. These subjects have been discussed publicly in the peace period and during this period and even before, the human rights organizations did works to register the atrocities. Correspondingly, these films are preoccupied with the loss, especially enforced disappearances.

3.1.1 The Loss of a Person

The phenomenon of enforced disappearances is generally referred in Turkey as "missing" and/or missing under custody for the reason that those who were disappeared were often taken into custody in the presence of witnesses. As stated in the report "The Unspoken Truth: Enforced Disappearances" (Göral, Işık & Kaya, 2013), the term 'enforced disappearances' is a much more appropriate term due to it emphasizing the use of force, the fact that not all of them were officially taken into custody, and it differentiates it from other forms of disappearances (p. 11).

According to the United Nations' International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2010) the term 'enforced disappearance' expresses

> "(...) the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by the concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law". (Article 2)

As the definition indicates, the perpetrators are not always the state officials, but in most cases, paramilitary forces supported by the state. Perpetrators either refuse to acknowledge their deed or their concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person (Göral, Işık & Kaya, 2013, p. 11), and therefore they refuse to provide any information, or provide false information. Enforced disappearances is a strategy used for the purpose of arousing fear and panic in the relatives of the disappeared person, and in the public to manage to silence the dissidents and prevent any further resistance.

Although the history of enforced disappearances in Turkey dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenon I will discuss here was in the 1990s, years when the Turkish state adapted civil war strategies to "solve" the Kurdish conflict. The exact number of the disappeared persons is unknown, nonetheless, I will use the tentative data the Center for Truth Justice Memory used in their report, which is 1353 people from 1980 to 2013 – the date the report was written. Enforced disappearances mainly took place in the period between 1991 and 1999, in the 'state of emergency' region. Istanbul and Adana are the only provinces outside the state of the emergency region, but in these cities, the profile of the disappeared is significant in that they were either politicians and/or members of the Kurdish community with links to left-wing politics (p. 25). The testimonies of the witnesses address the commonalities among different incidents. Many of the disappeared

were taken into custody by officers, and/or taken into a white Toros[8] by paramilitary forces (p. 48). Relatives tried to reach them for days, but their attempts were failed by denial on the whereabouts of the disappeared. The officers did not confirm the presence of the disappeared (p. 39).

The Republic of Turkey has not signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which ensures that victims of enforced disappearance or those directly affected by it have a right to obtain reparation and compensation. Therefore, a Truth Commission involving different parties has not been established in Turkey. Some NGOs and human rights organizations have been working on the issue by collecting and recording the testimonies and information and preparing reports.

The state discourse changed during the Ergenekon trials which were based on the accusation of forming a "deep state" to create social unrest in order to provoke a military coup (“Dokuz soruda Ergenekon”, 2013). Hundreds of military officers were arrested between 2008 and 2011. The trials revealed that the suspects had ties to JİTEM (the Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism organization) which executed extrajudicial killings of Kurdish civilians in the 1990s. The mass graves were found during the trials and public debate about the extrajudicial killings started during this period.

The loss of a beloved person is one of the repetitive themes for the films of this study with similar contexts. The lost person is either dead or forcibly disappeared, which in both cases refer to the state as the perpetrator. In *Mold* (Ali Aydın, 2012), the son of Basri was disappeared when he was a university student in Istanbul during the 90s. The narrative suggests that he was a left-winger. Basri has been searching for his son for 18 years by writing letters to the state twice a month asking about his whereabouts, although he never receives an answer, but rather a hostile treatment. A radio news piece reveals that a mass grave has been

[8] White Toros cars were driven by JİTEM in the 90s and represented enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings. As Adnan Çelik states (2015) the existence of White Toros cars constantly reminds the loss of people who were forcibly disappeared and killed; they not only represent but become the state violence itself (p. 45).

discovered in Istanbul, and soon after the remnants of his son are found. This is a reference to the period during the Ergenekon trials, and the investigation revealed the hidden mass graves. Basri returns home with the bones of his son and sits alone in this home. He gets the bones but not justice. In *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011), the father of Ahmet is a victim of extrajudicial killings who was murdered in the 90s. As the characters record the testimonials of witnesses, they also share the stories of the disappeared, as the photographs of the disappeared are on the wall. The archive they work in includes many audio-visual recordings and newspaper articles which are the material proofs of "truth". The need for the Truth Commissions[9] is expressed by the characters which have not been formed in Turkey yet. In the prologue of *Song of My Mother* (Erol Mintaş, 2014), a teacher is forced out of the school by persons with a white Toros, signifying the paramilitary forces. Although the story of the disappeared is not in the narrative of the film, it is suggested that a family member is missing. In *Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999), Berzan tells Mehmet that his father was taken away during a raid and killed. Mehmet asks him how he is sure about the death of his father and Berzan replies him that many people were taken away and killed in his village.

There are other forms of loss of a person in these films. In *Future Lasts Forever* Harun is a loss in the narrative because he joined the Kurdish guerilla. In the end, Sumru discovers that he was gone and finds his grave. His loss is identified with the ongoing war between the Turkish state and the Kurdish guerillas. Hasan in *Voice of My Father* (Orhan Eskiköy, Zeynel Doğan, 2012) is another character who joined the guerillas. His letter reveals that he is alive, but his loss dominates the whole life of Basê. The effects of war for ordinary people are specifically symbolized with the loss of a loved person. Preventing the deaths was the most prominent discourse during the peace talks, which could only start by acknowledging the lost ones. In these films, the painful experience of losing a loved

[9] The International Center for Transitional Justice defines truth commissions as: "non-judicial inquiries established to determine the facts, root causes, and societal consequences of past human rights violations" ("Truth Commissions", n.d., para. 1).

one is used as a recurring theme to expose the effects of politics to the lives of ordinary people.

3.1.2 The Loss of a Place

According to the Parliamentary Research Commission Report (1998), 905 villages and 2.523 hamlets from Kurdish cities were evacuated and 378.335 people immigrated (as cited in Aker, Çelik, Kurban, Ünalan, & Yükseker, 2005). The report suggests that the motivation for the displacements was the conflict between PKK and the Turkish military forces, arguing that oppression of PKK on villagers who cooperated with the state by agreeing to be village guards[10] and the evacuations imposed by the military to the villages who cooperate and support PKK led to the displacement. On the report 'On the Verge of Justice: The State and the Kurds in the Aftermath of Forced Migration' (Kurban & Yeğen, 2012) the motivation for the forced displacement in the 90s is stated as preventing PKK guerrillas from gathering in the mountainside and to disconnect Kurds and the PKK. The state of emergency provided the right to displace people, though no official decision was made during this period which caused the denial and the silence in public.

The implicit narrative of *Song of My Mother* is about forced displacement. Nigar constantly utters her desire to go back to her village which was evacuated long ago. Although no significant information about the displacement is narrated in the film, the reactions of his son Ali and their neighbors reveal that the village is deserted. In *Journey to the Sun*, as Mehmet travels to the village of Berzan, he passes by evacuated villages where some houses were marked with red crosses. Loss of a place means displacement in this context. Displaced characters long for their home but they cannot go back for various reasons. Either their home or the possibility of returning is destroyed. Characters experience problems of belonging in their new location.

[10] Village guards are paramilitaries recruited by the state among locals (the Kurds) to fight against PKK.

Waiting for the Clouds (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004) is another film preoccupied with the displacement. The family of Ayşe/Eleni was torn apart and killed during the deportation. The forced deportation of the Greeks is considered as the Ottoman Greek Genocide by some scholars[11]. Pontos Hellenic Research Center (2016) indicates that Greek communities in Asia Minor had constant pressure to convert to Islam during the two centuries of Ottoman Rule. In 1914, an ultra-nationalist faction of Young Turks started a campaign for deporting of Greeks for the purpose of a homogeneous nation-state of Muslim Turks. Thousands of Greek men were sent to labor battalions for war effort where they struggled to survive. After WWI, when the Greek army was defeated by the Turkish army, the Turkish army and paramilitary troops forced Greeks to abandon their towns and villages in which they had been living for centuries. Greeks who had remained were sent to Greece under the terms of The Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations. According to Pontus Hellenic Research Center "by 1923, out of approximately 2 million Greeks living in Asia Minor at the beginning of World War I, more than 700,000 perished, and over 1.1 million were uprooted prior and during the forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey" (p. 2). Trabzon was the home of the Pontic Greeks for centuries. In 1922 the population decreased dramatically. In *Waiting for the Clouds*, Ayşe/Eleni was born as a Pontus Greek in Trabzon and all of her family, except for her brother Niko who had fled to Greece, had died during deportations. Ayşe/Eleni was adopted by a Turkish family and hid her Greek identity and had not spoken her language for many years. In this case, Ayşe/Eleni lives in her homeland. Although the place remains, what made the place home is destroyed. The family of Ayşe/Eleni is destroyed, and Greek population is forced to leave the place. So, the loss is not a place but the place it used to be. Ayşe/Eleni is the only Greek person left in the village, and she survives through hiding her identity.

[11] In December 2007, International Association of Genocide Scholars ("Resolution on", 2007), an organization of the world's foremost genocide experts, officially recognized the Ottoman Greek Genocide.

3.2 Journeying

The journey is a pattern of narrative that appears in many forms of storytelling including myth, fairy tales, novels, and films. As Joseph Campbell (2004) reveals, a journey structure, that he calls “the hero’s journey”, underlies the myths and stories around the world. In the hero’s journey, the hero is challenged by the external and internal forces and changed ever after when the journey ends. Consequently, the mythic and epic journeys gain a universal status that is linked to many other journeys. The journey of Odysseus, Exodus of the Jews, expulsion from The Garden of Eden, and The Hegira are referenced and/or evoked in many journey narratives.

Although the mythic and epic journeys are archetypes of the journey narrative, modernity created conditions that led to idiosyncratic journeys that are engraved in the collective memory. Forced deportation of the Armenians, deportation of Jews to the death camps, and all forms of migration, motivated either by economy or war, are modern journeys that are loaded with negative affect. In a similar vein, Naficy discusses the journey theme as quintessential for accented cinema, since the condition of being in exile and/or diaspora is an outcome of a journey, either forced or willful (p. 222).

The journey theme is usually associated with the road films, but neither accented films nor the films in this study fit into the road films genre in which characters hit the road to escape from societal constraints and embark on an adventure; rather it functions to reveal the material and affective conditions within the country, and question the spatiotemporal relations since journey transforms space into time. Journeys take many forms based on their motivations; a character could return, escape, emigrate, and explore. Moreover, as Naficy warns, journeys are not simple or homogeneous, as for instance, exploration would involve search and quest as well as conquest and colonialization (p. 222). In this sense, the journey

theme provides a pattern but the meaning and the structure of feeling of the journey are reproduced in each story.

Naficy discussed journeys as the exemplars of Bakhtinian chronotopes; he argues that since they have direction and duration, journeys transform space into time (p. 223). Moreover, Naficy classifies journeys in terms of direction: outward journeys of escape, home seeking, and home founding; journeys of quest, homelessness, and perdition; and inward, homecoming journeys (p. 223). Both symbolically and figuratively, a character leaves a space to head to another one, so the meaning and the experience are dependent upon the character's relation to that spaces. Each journey leads to an inward journey that transforms the characters. When we consider home as the metaphor for belonging and identity, leaving home and/or being on the road provide an opportunity for self-exploration. Nonetheless, a psychological journey is not always accompanied by a physical one, as Naficy notes, it would be an inward journey into the individual psyche and the national and regional history (p. 223).

The journey is not the prominent common theme for the films in this study, but a significant repetition. These journeys have various motivations: some of them are motivated by forced deportation or migration, some of them take forms of exploration or runaway. Some of them are in the fabula as others are in the syuzhet. This journeys would be categorized by their direction, motivation, and duration. I will categorize them into the fabula and syuzhet journeys. Both coined by Russian Formalists, syuzhet denotes the plot of a narrative work as opposed to the fabula which denotes the events in its story (Baldick, 2001, p. 237). Syuzhet journeys are on-screen journeys as fabula journeys are not represented to the audience. As the focus of this study is the formal strategies employed to express silence, hesitant, and absent memories; I believe that such a categorization provides an understanding on the preoccupations with the memory. As the films discussed in this study do not contain any flashback scenes as direct representations, all syuzhet journeys take place in in the present of the films. Moreover, the significant journeys in the past is

kept in the fabula. In this sense, I will associate the fabula journeys with the past and discuss them in the context of haunting.

3.2.1. Syuzhet Journeys

Syuzhet journeys are explicitly presented and they happen in the "now" of the films. The destination, motivation, and duration of journeys are variable as per their functions in the films. For instance, *Journey to the Sun* and *The Photograph* (Kazım Öz, 2001) have the longest screen duration of the journeys among all the films. Both journeys are directed from Istanbul to the eastern Turkey but their characters have different motivations that shape the experience and meaning of the journey.

In *The Photograph*, Faruk and Ali meet during a bus journey from Istanbul to eastern Turkey. Their motivations are conflicted, Faruk is leaving home to join the military force in Dersim, as Ali goes to Diyarbakır to join the guerilla. Characters develop a traveling companionship achieved through small talk but keep their motivations for the journey as a secret. They are both anxious through the journey, Faruk is occupied by the fear of death as Ali is aware that he is heading to a threshold in his life. Their companionship signifies how ordinary people are turned into enemies of each other. The responsibility of the hostility is attributed to the military, that is also represented as an occupant in the region. Throughout the journey, the power and domination of military in the region are marked by check points suggesting that the presence of the army in the region is an occupation. The journey also functions to indicate the invisible border within Turkey. The scenery and light change dramatically favoring the Kurdish region.

In *Journey to the Sun*, Mehmet's journey is from Istanbul to Zorduç, as he carries the body of Berzan to his village that he had been longing for. Throughout the journey, Mehmet witnesses the facts about the region: military curfews, military vehicles, check points, red-crossed and evacuated houses, and criminalized children for selling a Kurdish newspaper. Starting with his detainment, Mehmet witnesses

many forms of injustice. Towards the end of his journey, Mehmet meets a young soldier on military service. When the soldier asks him if he is from Zorduç, Mehmet answers yes and moreover, after learning that the soldier is from his town Tire, he speaks of himself in the third person by saying: "A friend of mine was from Tire, Mehmet Kara". The journey makes him a politically aware subject; in the end, he refuses his identity as a Turk and embraces the identity of the oppressed – the Kurd.

Future Lasts Forever opens with two train journeys, in the first one, Harun, Sumru and their friends are on their way to an unspecified destination and in the latter Sumru is alone and on her way to Diyarbakır. An ellipsis unites two train journeys that relatively have short screen durations. The second journey is motivated by the first one in which Harun leaves Sumru his farewell letter. Sumru goes to Diyarbakır for her field research but the real motivation is to free herself from the burden of the past. The journey does not provide a transformation but rather takes her to the place where she can unite her story with many others. The final journey of Sumru in the film is accompanied by Ahmet, they drive to a village in Hakkari. This journey activates the traumatic memories of Ahmet about the death of his father. When they arrive at the village, many other stories are told. Sorrow becomes collective through these stories and the unique stories gain anonymity. The journey of Sumru ends when she finally reaches the grave of Harun, a place where she can mourn. Similarly, in *Mold,* the only syuzhet journey provides the remnants of Basri's son, so he will be able to mourn.

Syuzhet journeys are directed towards the Kurdish cities in Turkey and would be articulated as a proposal to look at the silenced memories in the region. As I will be discussing widely in the following chapters, these journeys enable representation of the underrepresented Kurdish geography, and register the truth about the repressed and silenced memories. These syuzhet journeys are used as motivations in the narrative for placing characters into the Kurdish geography and metaphors of the need to direct the conversation about the Kurdish conflict into the experience in the region.

3.2.2 Fabula Journeys

The fabula journeys are traumatic memories in the films, they are either forced deportation or immigration that led to the loss of something. The present of characters are haunted by the memories of fabula journeys, they suffer and long for their loss. Since loss is perceived only by what remains, a fabula journey is conceived only through the consequences of the journey. In *Journey to the Sun*, Mehmet and Berzan are migrants in Istanbul but the journeys that brought them to Istanbul are kept in the fabula. Their confining experience in Istanbul signifies their positions as urban migrants, as they are discriminated against based on ethnicity, which is normally an indicator of a hometown. Berzan leaves his village after his father is forcibly disappeared. The oppression and death force him to leave his beloved village and he becomes a Kurdish migrant in Istanbul. But the experience of Mehmet is quite different, as he is from Tire. However, throughout the film characters become doubtful of this claim because of his dark skin. Moreover, the information about Mehmet's relation to Tire and his motivation to come to Istanbul are restricted. His dark skin becomes a more important sign of his foreignness in Istanbul. Both characters try to survive in Istanbul, but the city confines them, and they cannot develop a sense of belonging.

The narrative of *Waiting for the Clouds* is about Ayşe/Eleni whose family was deported, just as many Greeks were, going through both a psychological and physical journey. The forced deportation is the most important journey narrative, which was kept secret by Ayşe/Eleni during her life until she loses her only witness, her sister. Ayşe/Eleni and Niko lose their family members during deportations, and Niko runs away to Greece, but Ayşe/Eleni leaves him be, and stays with her foster family. This journey marks their entire life; Ayşe/Eleni cannot free herself from the guilt of leaving her brother. This journey is marked as a traumatic event in the film. When Ayşe/Eleni goes to the highland with other villagers, she becomes more and more preoccupied with the memories of the past, and recalls the traumatic memories of her childhood. Nonetheless, in the present time of the film, which is the 1970s,

the meaning of the journey changes. When Yorgo visit Tirebolu, he encounters Ayşe/Eleni and listens to her story. Although they happen in the "now" of the film, Yorgo's journey and Eleni's journey to Greece are kept in the fabula. Despite the importance of journey for Eleni, only the moment of departure and arrival are in the syuzhet of the film. The deportation is the traumatic event that shapes the identity of the characters and the meaning of the spaces. Their past in Tirebolu was eradicated, so neither Tirebolu nor Greece is their homeland. The idea of home is lost forever. Similarly, in *Song of My Mother,* the possibilities for returning home are suspended. The forced migration that made the family leave their village and come to Istanbul is in the fabula. Nigar wishes to return to her village and even tries to go there by herself since her son is objecting. The village is deserted, he claims, but Nigar cannot be persuaded. At last, she convinces Ali for a visit, but she passes away the day before the journey.

In *Future Lasts Forever,* the deportation of Armenians is the fabula journey. Antrinik plays a lament sung by his mother for his brother, who had died during the deportation in 1915. In *Mold*, the fabula journey is the journey of his son to Istanbul, where he was murdered. In *Voice of My Father*, the father had left to work abroad, and Hasan had also left to join the guerrilla. Antrinik, Basri and Basê have lost someone after or during a journey. These journeys are not described by characters, just as they are not represented in the film. Any detail about the journeys other than displacement and loss are not depicted.

Fabula journeys are mostly about a traumatic event that haunts the present of the characters and moreover shape their identity. Although the films are about the traumatic events in the history of Turkey, they focus on the present rather than imagining the past. So, when a journey has a traumatic form such as deportation or migration, it is kept in the fabula, whereas the syuzhet journeys reflect the need of confronting the Kurdish reality, and are used as a pretext to register the truth in the Kurdish region.

3.2.3 The Death and the Journey

The journeys are either motivated by death, or the journey leads to the death of the character. The link between the death and journey indicates their relation to traumatic events. In *Journey to the Sun*, the journey of the Berzan from Zorduç to Istanbul is motivated by the death threats; he tried to escape the fate of his father, which tragically found him in Istanbul. The journey Mehmet takes from Istanbul to Zorduç is for taking Berzan's coffin to his village, and this time the death of a friend motivates the journey.

In *The Photograph*, the paths of Ali and Faruk cross again on the mountain. Although Faruk was concerned about his life, he becomes the one who kills Ali. This death is more about Faruk than Ali because the scene questions his existence on the mountain rather than Ali's. The framing of the scene raises questions about the violence of the soldiers rather than creating a tragic death scene.

The forced deportation causes the death of Eleni's family in *Waiting for the Clouds* and the death of Antrinik's brother in *Future Lasts Forever*. Sumru finds the grave of Harun at the end of a journey and Basri in *Mold* is given the remnants of his son in Istanbul. The father in *Voice of My Father* dies when he was away and the journey of Nigar and her family is motivated by the extrajudicial killings.

Death is another recurring theme in this study, but I rather conceptualize it as loss. Deaths in these films—except for Nigar's death—are unnatural. Characters are usually killed by the state. So rather than a philosophical discussion on death, the consequences of the state violence is problematized in these films.

3.2.4 Invisible Borders

The accented films are produced by exilic filmmakers, so the border and border crossing are important elements in the narrative. In the case of Turkey, borders are invisible. Although all the films in this study by *Waiting for the Clouds*

take place inside the borders of Turkey, the invisible borders come to light when there is a journey from west to the eastern Turkey. The military check points in *The Photograph* and *Journey to the Sun* are the signs that a border is crossed and in this new territory, different regulations are upheld.

The only official border is in *Waiting for the Clouds*. Eleni crosses the border to go the town where her brother Niko leaves. But the border remains in the fabula. A border literally and figuratively separates two spaces. But for Eleni, a homeland is already lost during the forced deportation, so that any space as well as the border does not have a specific meaning.

The invisible borders within the Turkey is emphasized to describe the different conditions experienced in the eastern and western Turkey. The double standard is recurrently depicted with the military check-points that indicate the oppression on the region. The emphasis on the regional differences register the truth about the different realities experienced in Turkey and bring the Kurdish experience forward for the western audience.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the main themes in the films that are further discussed in relation to the formal strategies in the following chapters. While these films deal with the various aspects of the atrocities in the history of Turkey, the Kurdish conflict is the focus in many of them. The shared interest in the Kurdish conflict appears in these films through various themes. The oppression and the continuum of violence in everyday life are expressed via different motifs. Loss is both a theme and a direct reference to the shared feeling about the past. Loss becomes an instrument to show effects of the atrocities that have not and/or cannot reconciled. Journey theme is intertwined with the loss, hence journeys either cause a loss or motivated by a loss. Referring to what has been lost becomes an instrument of talking about the past. People, places, identity and belonging have been lost for many people, so this theme repetitively appears in these films. Their loss haunts the

present, characters mourn for their losses. But loss is animated not only through memories but also through what remains. People who remember remain, traces of lost people and places are found in the present, which is so powerful that it calls for something to be done about them. There are other intersecting themes in these films, as all of them refer to at least one aspect of traumatic memories in the history of Turkey. Bearing in mind that these films were made in a similar political period, recurring themes illustrate how the past is being lived and sustained in this specific period. The journey theme unravels the abandoned places and troubled relations with spaces. The identities and belongings of the characters are shattered. Considering the past is always remembered in compliance with the needs of the present, the social and political conditions determine how the stories are told. The analysis in this chapter shows that stories that engages with the traumatic past in Turkey are told through depicting the effects of those events in the lives of the remaining people. They are not only witnesses that narrate the past but also hold the political potential of demanding justice. In this specific period, the engagement with the past is constructed in accordance with memory activism in Turkey. Recurring themes reflect the discourse of reclaiming the past generated by the oppressed. As the memories of the oppressed is discussed in public for the first time, these films contribute to discussion with their preoccupation with the same themes. The informative value of these themes about the past atrocities are very important for constructing politics of change. Themes about the past indicate the urgency of confronting the past. Nevertheless, the sole function of these films is not providing information. They reveal the effects of unresolved past and continuum of violence in today's politics. In the following chapters, I will analyze the formal strategies employed in these films to understand how these themes are engaged after many years of silence and repression.

CHAPTER 4: EPISTOLARY FORM

The strategies of representing the past in a film reveal the current relation between the past and the present, and even illustrate the need for engaging with the past. I observe that epistolarity is the principal cinematic strategy employed to register the silent, absent, and hesitant memories in the films of this study. Hamid Naficy (2001) points out that for accented films, epistolarity is the most frequently used manner of engaging with the past, among other strategies. The epistolary medium appears in accented films as a signifier of the exilic and diasporic experience rather than an element of plot formation. For the films in this study, the epistolary form functions to communicate the absence and loss.

Janet Gurkin Altman (1982) defines epistolarity as the use of the letter's formal properties to create meaning (p. 4), which is also one of the core constituents of accented cinema hence both exile and epistolarity imply distance and separation. Epistolarity is not limited to the content of the letter and its contribution to the narrative, but also includes a series of acts and events such as writing, reading, sending, receiving, tearing, finding, losing, touching, smelling, and carrying letters. Likewise, as Naficy points out, epistolarity involves the acts, events, and institutions that facilitate, hinder, inhibit, or prohibit aforementioned acts and events (p. 101). The epistolary author can choose to emphasize either the distance or the bridge (Altman, p. 13) as the medium of communication reflects both the absence and the presence of the addressee.

The films become freed from linear narration through epistolary so that direct, indirect, and free indirect discourses are juxtaposed (Naficy, p. 103). Direct discourse is the first person in the narrative, as indirect is usually the third person. Free indirect discourse is presenting the character's point of view with features of an indirect report so that the third person narrative exploits a first-person point of view (Baldick, 2001, p. 101-102). According to Naficy, this style forces the dominant language (indirect discourse) to speak with a minoritarian voice (direct speech) (p. 102). Cinematic instances of free indirect speech are exemplified by

Naficy as “point-of-view shots, cutaways, perception shots, and some shot reverse-shot configurations” that function to create ambiguities on the owner of a gaze, thought, voice, and the epistles (p. 102). The depth of story information is manipulated through these methods that bring subjectivity into the narration. The camera leaves its objective role and becomes the eye of the narrator.

In some cases, an epistle is what remains after the loss of the sender; their existence is a reminder of the loss and thereby haunts the present. Naficy argues that any form of epistle creates the illusion of transforming an absent figure into a presence, which hovers in the text's interstices (p. 103). Considering that the distance marks temporal relations as well as spatial ones, presence could also literally mean being at the present time, so that a form of an epistle would function as a bridge between the past and the present and creates the illusion of bringing the past into the present. In some cases, even though the film is about a past event, a flashback structure as a direct representation is not used; however, the past enters into diegesis through the epistolary form or sound flashback.

One of the most conventional form of engaging with the past is distracting the temporal order of the film through adding flashbacks that are representations of the past that intervenes within the present flow of film narrative (Turim, 1989, p. 2). Interestingly, flashbacks as direct representations are not used in any of the films of this study although their narratives are preoccupied with the past. Instead, epistolary form is used to bring the past to the present. Unlike a flashback which is an image or a filmic segment that disrupts the temporal order of the film, the past emerges in the present through epistolary form. Thus, the present is not disrupted but rather preoccupied with the past. Correspondingly, in some of the films, for example in the final scene of *Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999) and when Ayşe/Eleni gazes at the clouds in *Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004), sound flashbacks are used. Instead of creating a direct representation of the past via flashback form, the past enters into the filmic present via sound. These methods are alternative to each other as ways of engaging with the past and moreover, they create two distinct filmic forms that are signifiers of different approaches to the

past. The motivation of choosing epistolary medium over flashback for representing the past might also reflect the oral culture in Turkey. But more significantly, I believe that this choice is an expression of contesting past narratives. The past leaks into the present through epistolary medium, unlike flashbacks that disrupt and suspend it. Avery Gordon (2008) suggests that through haunting and the appearance of ghosts we are notified that "what's been concealed is very much alive and present" (p. xvi). If we consider the epistles as a form of specter or haunting, we would argue that their function is to manifest that the past is alive in the present. The filmic present becomes stratified by multiple temporalities. Showing that the effects of the past are very much alive in the present becomes a strategy to indicate the need for confronting with the past.

In the context of accented films, the function of epistolarity is to express exilic displacement, split subjectivity, and multifocalism (Naficy, p. 103). When I adapt the concept into the films of this study, the problems and situation that epistolarity refers are more about the unconfronted past, unresolved traumas, and silenced memories. In such films, the past becomes a ghost which haunts the present and the various forms of epistles contain the traces of haunting. The ghost is the symbol of collective memory that is in the guise of subjective memory. Thus, epistles that are usually a medium of personal communication are used to signify a collective experience. On the other hand, mass communication media are used to create a secondary layer of meaning in the films. The contesting memories are revealed through juxtaposing the official discourses with medium produced by diegetic characters. As a common theme in the films are the traumatic events in the history of Turkey, epistles function to favor memory over official history to recount and account the past.

Epistolarity brings forward the question of medium and content as the interacting aspects of narration. A medium implies physical components as well as "processes of representation, and ways of dealing with time and place" and mediates something from "outside to inside and presents itself as medium" (Van Gelder & Wesgeest, 2011, p. 5). Naficy categorizes the epistolary films into three

types: film-letters, telephonic epistles, and letter-films. Film-letters are the acts of reading and writing letters by diegetic characters and telephonic epistles are the use of telephones and answering machine by diegetic characters. Letter-films have the form of an epistle by themselves. None of the films in this study are a letter-film but they include various forms of epistles. The variety of medium in the epistles go beyond Naficy's categorization. The films in this study involve various mediums of communication such as letters, telephones, audio records, video records, photographs, computers, television, radio, and newspapers. By keeping in mind Naficy's emphasis on how differences between epistle categories are not clear-cut in all cases (p. 101), I will list each epistle by its medium.

Furthermore, I will bring forward another classification regarding the audience of an epistle in the narrative and divide them into two categories: interpersonal communication and mass communication. In the context of this study, interpersonal communication epistles refer to letters, telephones, Skype, and cassettes and mass communication epistles refer to radio, television, and newspapers. Interpersonal communication epistles are mostly produced by diegetic characters and their target audience is limited to the addressee. On the other hand, mass communication epistles are mostly produced by non-diegetic characters, but even if this was not the case, they are produced for public usage. When they are used together, they raise questions about the binary opposition of history and memory, and public and private. As interpersonal epistles are intended for private communication, mass communication epistles deliver public and in context of Turkey "the official" discourse. Thus, interpersonal epistles are attached to memory and mass communication epistles are attached to history. Moreover, mass communication is considered as an archival material for history as interpersonal communication is not equally valued for being subjective.

4.1 Letters

Naficy describes the film letters as inscribing letters and act of reading and writing of letters by diegetic characters (p. 101). The use of the letters is not limited to accented cinema, but in case of accented films, letters are "less a function of plot formation and character motivation than an expression and inscription of exilic displacement, split subjectivity, and multifocalism" (p. 103). Letters have materiality, they are written, sent, received, kept, touched, kissed, torn, and burned; they are as Naficy refers to Linda Kauffman, a "metonymic and metaphoric displacement of desire (as cited in Naficy, p. 101). Naficy describes the desire as "to be with an other and to reimagine an elsewhere and other times" (p. 101).

Film letters are used in *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011)*, Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004)*, Voice of My Father* (Orhan Eskiköy, Zeynel Doğan, 2012), and *The Photograph* (Kazım Öz, 2001) to substitute and/or remind of an absence, characters' desire to be elsewhere or in other times. The most interesting fact about the letters in these films is that they are not mutual. Characters either send or receive the letters, never fulfilling the mutualness of communication. So, that, these letters are a medium of self-expression rather than communication. Even when the communication is mutual and/or mutualness is vague, the acts of mutuality are left to fabula. Syuzhet only includes one party of the communication. A letter, as a medium of communication, signifies the lack of communication as well as longing and loss. In other words, letters are used as a method of communicating the past in the lack of any depictions of the past.

Some of the letters also have narrative motivations, as in *Future Lasts Forever*, in which a letter motivates the journey of Sumru. The film starts on a train where Harun gives a letter to Sumru and asks her not to read it right away. After a silence, Harun, who is seated in front of Sumru, fades out in the dark and this transition indicates an ellipsis. Ellipsis does not inform the audience about the

amount of time passed. Sumru is seated in the same place and looking out of the window when the voice-over starts. The voice of Harun reading the letter is heard, and it is a farewell to Sumru. Harun signs the letter as "your mountain", and leaves a photo of them together, along with his favorite book Voznesensky's *Oza*. The images of landscape and Sumru looking out of the window are on-screen during the voice over. Implicitly, the scene informs the audience that Harun left to join the guerilla which motivates the on-screen landscape during the scene. Moreover, the scene creates an ambiguity about whose point of view is presented. Although the letter reflects the point of view of Harun, the voice-over is motivated by the memory of Sumru, who read the letter before. Through free indirect discourse, the scene provides an insight into the memories of Sumru, as well as how her memories haunt her presently. Harun disappears into the darkness in the train, but his absence is brought to another temporality through the memory of his letter. The letter does not appear in the film again but it continues to affect the present of Sumru. Her quest for the lost laments substitutes her desire to fill the absence of Harun, and as she listens to the stories about the disappeared, her repressed desire to find him come to the surface. The letter functions as the informant of the traumatic event and further occurrences trigger a deferred vision.

The letter also has a function in plot formation in *Waiting for the Clouds* in which the medium fulfills its informative duty. The self-punishment of Ayşe/Eleni is suspended by a letter from Tanasis that informs about her lost brother Niko. When Ayşe/Eleni rereads the letter, the voice of Tanasis is heard in Greek; the information in the letter motivates Ayşe/Eleni to break her silence and start her journey to Thessaloniki. In this case, what matters is the content of the letter, not the sender. The metonymic desire hidden in the letter arises when Ayşe/Eleni reads it. That immediately motivates her to take the action to fulfill her long suspended desire to meet her brother Niko again. The letter is a call for a home-finding journey which exposes the paradox of Ayşe/Eleni that she has become an exile in the lands she was born and her idea of home is determined by where Niko is.

In *Voice of My Father*, Mehmet receives a letter from his brother Hasan, but we don't know the frequency and/or mutualness of their communication. The letter is written in Kurdish, so Mehmet cannot understand the whole letter and asks his wife Gülizar to translate it. The letter is never read aloud in the film. When Mehmet gives the letter to Basê, she kisses it and Mehmet tells her about the content of the letter that Hasan is fine, working and wants a list of old Kurdish words and idioms. The letter is the only mean of communication Hasan uses to contact his family but his voice is muted. His letter cannot find a voice in the narrative, marking his absence in the lives of Mehmet and Basê. Hasan is the specter in the house, his absence is repeatedly reminded by Basê's longing and calling out for him. Both father and Hasan are gone, but the absence of Hasan haunts Basê deeply hence he is far away but at least alive. His specter does not even have a voice that Basê and Mehmet can reconstruct for the letter. Hence Basê is illiterate, the tactility of the letter is favored rather than its aurality. The letter becomes a material sign of Hasan's existence, informs that he is still alive and validates his absence in the house that has been affecting the present of Basê. Moreover, the communication between Basê, Hasan, and Mehmet is also suspended by the state. The lack of education in mother tongue leaves three family members unable to communicate via letters. Hasan, probably as a political choice, writes in Kurdish, Mehmet cannot read Kurdish and Basê is illiterate. Hasan asks for old Kurdish words and idioms as a way of rebuilding his relation to the Kurdish history and identity. In this context, the letter is not just a medium of communication but the signifier of the oppression.

In *The Photograph*, a soldier approaches the mailboxes labelled respectively as international and domestic while an unmotivated tracking shot follows the soldier and stops at the mailboxes. The soldier drops his letter to the domestic box. After the soldier leaves, the postman comes and collects the letters in both boxes. The next image is a map of Turkey in which the east of Turkey is off-screen. In the next scene, a postman in the city delivers the letters, but as he cannot find the addressee at home, he leaves it to a child. The letter consists of the photographs of soldiers posing with murdered guerilla bodies. Unlike other letters in previously discussed films, the envelope does not hold a letter – a written piece -but a

photograph. Considering the extra-diegetic expectations of a letter sent from a soldier, which is to include a letter informing how he is doing and photographs of him and/or with his friends, the photographs are odd and unexpected. The expected content of the letters is substituted with graphic violence, revealing "the truth" about the war. Moreover, international and domestic segmentation of the mail boxes and the map of Turkey raise questions about the borders and the imagined land. As Naficy argues (p. 101), epistolarity involves institutions that facilitate the acts of sending and receiving letters. In *The Photograph*, the location of the sender and the receiver are coded as two separate and distanced places with different realities. The act of sending letters signifies connecting to a distant subject, resulting in intruding its everyday order. In this example, neither sender nor receiver is significant in the narrative and moreover, it does not even reach its recipient. Children playing on the street, symbolizing innocence, are exposed to the letter which freezes their lives, unlike adults that alienate themselves from the condition of the war. The letter functions to leak the repressed truth about the war. The truth can only effect the everyday life in the west when it is received by an "innocent" child. The world stops for them in a utopian narration.

Letters have narrative motivation in some of these films. They motivate characters to make a journey for reconnecting with a person. By providing information about the thoughts and feelings of characters, letters also bring subjectivity to the narration. The specters of the past dominate the present of these characters and letters provide a context for them. Through letters, specters leak to the present and effect the structure of feeling. Letters are also materials for engaging with the personal memories and they are treated as documents of the past in these films.

4.1.2 Official Letters

The letters discussed so far are written for personal communication, as Naficy points out, they "provide access to multiple viewpoints, and voices, the

epistolary form enhance the work's verisimilitude and psychological depth" (p. 102). However, when a letter is official, written for or by an institution, the meaning and the function of the letters change. These kinds of letters are written for demanding something from the authorities within the limits of the law. Therefore, the role of the authority exceeds the context of any receiver. The process of communication inevitably puts the power relation between the sender and the authority at work. The function of the official letters is less about the depth of information, content, and communication but the effect of the authority. Authorities would either demand too much paperwork as a strategy of discouragement or leave their demands unanswered. In both cases, the applicant/citizen/sender feels desperate and overwhelmed. For instance, in *Mold* (Ali Aydın, 2012), Basri, whose son has been missing for 18 years, writes petitions to the state twice a month demanding information about the loss of his son. First of all, his acts correspond to the most well-known experiences of relatives of the disappeared, which is demanding information about the whereabouts of their relatives but failing to get any accurate information. The letters of Basri are not vocalized or visualized on-screen so that the content of the letters is unknown, although the acts of writing, reading and receiving the letters are diegetic. The repetitive act of writing letters signifies the persistence of Basri and indicates the responsibility and the liability of the state for his disappeared son. Psychological depth enhanced by epistolary form derives from the repetition of the form and the addressee of the letters rather than its content. The letters as a constituent of the plot formation also function to reveal how losses affect everyday life by depicting the acts of writing, sending, and delivering the letters as the significant part of the narrative. In the case of Basri, the strategy of discouraging the through letters have a reverse effect that the authorities become weary of his letters. His insistence on demanding information about his son is the sign of his belief and hope as well as the indicator of the state's responsibility. The use of epistolary media in *Mold* poses questions about the gap between personal experience (personal memory) and the official truth (history).

As Naficy (p. 109) discusses for Solanas' *Tango: Exile of Garden*, he argues that the letters underscore the importance of papers in the lives of the exiles because

they mark their status as an exile, refugee, alien, or citizen. The letters, identity card, and the death certificate question the officiality of the death and the alive. Özgür Sevgi Göral, Ayhan Işık and Özlem Kaya (2013) state that as the relatives of the disappeared talk about their experiences on the disappearance and the aftermath, they constantly return to the concepts of the state, the search, justice, citizenship, the absence of graves and politics (p. 45). In *Mold*, the repetition of letters indicates the persistence to demand accurate information from the perpetrator and question the existence of a citizen as well as the relation between the State and the citizen. The only accurate information Basri gets is the identity card, and the symbol of citizenship becomes evidence of death before the scientific proof. The last official paper is the death certificate. Basri signs the papers in order to get the remnants of his son in a box. The use of letters and papers in the film reflects upon the experience of the relatives of the disappeared. The letters do not bring the subjectivity to the narration but rather indicate an objective fact.

In *Voice of My Father*, the postman delivers a letter for Hasan, a not guilty of verdict notification. As Hasan is absent for an unknown amount of time; his family becomes the addressee. Meanwhile, the police officers keep harassing the family by asking for Hasan. The letter becomes dysfunctional for Hasan since the law is not binding for him as he left the country. Instead, the letter indicates that the state is after him and this situation is used as a strategy for harassing the family.

One of the obscure memories that Basê shares with Mehmet is how Hasan changed the name in Basê's identity cards against her will. Basê only realizes that her name was changed to Asiye[12] when she had to go the hospital. Traumatic memory of Basê reveals the shame of Mehmet of his Kurdish identity as a kid, how identity cards play a crucial role on Turkification, and the meaning of institutions for the Kurdish people, especially for those who do not speak Turkish.

Unlike letters that supposed to facilitate personal communication, the official letters indicate a form of communication with the authorities. That form

[12] A Turkish name.

would be recognizing oneself as a citizen or demanding rights. The use of the official letters in these films function to reveal the problematic relation of characters with the state as these films focus on the stories of those whose voices have been repressed and silenced. Personal letters provide subjectivity, as the official letters are used to indicate the forms of relation with the state. Moreover, the use of the official letters documents the quality of communication between the citizen and the state. These citizens conflict with the ideology of the state but the obligatory nature of the state and citizen relations force them to interact. In the case of Mold's Basri, the citizen demands his right from the state, but in *Voice of My Father* it is the contrary. The state uses this obligatory relation as a form of harassment. In both cases, the institution that facilitate the communication is more significant than the content of the letters. The use of official letters reveals the power relations between the state and the citizen.

4.2 Telephonic Epistles

Unlike film-letters, telephonic epistles are simultaneous; Naficy describes the telephone as having a "near but far" (p. 132) quality. The subjects are separated by space but share the same temporality. Their bodies are separated but the sound binds them. On the other hand, telephonic epistles lack materiality, they cannot be stored if not recorded but they are subject to various prohibitions and surveillance just as letters. Telephone is used in plot formation and as an editing choice in many films, but specifically in accented films, telephone epistles "situate the diegetic characters' relationship to place (homeland, hostland, diaspora), to time (past, present, future), and to reality (real, imagined, remembered)" (p. 135).

In *Future Lasts Forever*, telephonic epistles function to be informative, and connect people across space. The first telephone conversation in the film is when Sumru calls her mother as she gets off the train in Diyarbakır. She talks to her in Homshetsi, confronting her about the security of the city. The conversation functions to introduce multi-linguality in the film, and dismiss the common belief

about the security of the city. The next conversation is with Ahmet, as she calls him to arrange a meeting. And the last one is when Sumru calls Ahmet to say goodbye; however, in the next scene they go to Hakkari together. All but the last conversation is one-sided, as only Sumru is audible in the conversations. The last conversation features an editorial choice, which is including Ahmet's point of view. The other epistles in the film, the letter, photographs, and audio records, emphasize the temporal and spatial distance. The simultaneity and connectivity of the telephone are used as a narrative element keeping the "living" in touch with each other. The idea of distance is perceived as a temporal concept rather than spatial in the film.

In *Voice of My Father*, Basê believes phone calls with no dialogue, which she frequently receives, are from Hasan and although there is no reply, she keeps answering the phone calling Hasan's name and talking to him: "Hasan? When are you coming back?" Simultaneous and / or mutual communication with absent characters is suspended. However, her attempts for communication continue by relating an idiom to Hasan on each silent call. Although it is ambiguous whether the phone calls are from Hasan or not, Basê's assumption brings Hasan to the present time of the film, not as a memory but as an off-screen character.

In *Journey to the Sun*, the only telephonic epistle is when Berzan uses the telephone booth. Camera pans through the different people using the booths and stops on Berzan as he talks to someone from his village and asks how Şirvan is doing. In the next scene Mehmet is waiting for Berzan whose distant, off-screen voice is heard speaking of the dropped line. Telephonic epistle is Berzan's one and only conversation with people in his village, but his desire is interrupted. The interruption informs the barriers in his relation to the village where he was forced to leave and he will not be able to establish any reconnection.

In *Song of My Mother* (Erol Mintaş, 2014), the elder son of Nigar is connected through Skype and talks with Ali and Nigar. The scene implies unfamiliarity with the technology for Nigar, as well as the limited communication between them. The brother is in exile and cannot come back due to his trial. The physical impossibility to meet him in person is deeply felt by Nigar and the

technological possibility for communication reveals her desire. The Skype conversation is a variation of separations they had to experience, the first and the core separation is leaving the village. The circumstances that forced them to leave the village have made them go through various struggles and separations.

Telephonic epistles signify characters' desire to be with someone far away and in this way, the circumstances that create the distance as well as the pain of separation is indicated. The atrocities experienced by these characters effect their everyday life in various ways and separation from the loved ones is one of them. Telephone conversations allow characters to express their longing. By suspending the voice of distant characters, the one-sided conversations focus on their lack and disvalues the communication.

4.3 Audio Records

The voices of diegetic characters are inherent to both telephonic epistles and audio records, though the latter share more similarities with letter epistles, as they are both recorded epistles and lack the simultaneity of the telephone.

The act of recording the sound and image is part of the plot in *Future Lasts Forever*, so audio and visual records are both produced and used in the film and they are also symbolic attempts of keeping and materializing the past. In one scene, where Sumru is working on a record of an elegy, her voice in the recording gives information about it, and she continues by sharing her feelings: "it has been seven months since Harun is gone." This scene is significant for revealing how recordings function as a form of personal memory, as Sumru uses it as an audio diary; the boundaries between her work and personal life blurs.

Recordings are not mere historical materials as they also reveal the affective structure of the traumatic event as in the scene where Antrinik, the keeper of the Armenian Church, finds a record of his mother singing an elegy about his brother who died during the deportation in 1915. Traumatic events referred to in the film are stories of loss, and consequently narratives are told by the ones who are left

behind. None of the stories and the traumas referred to in the film are on-screen, however all but Armenian genocide are narrativized. The feeling of sorrow is transferred via the elegy and the silence over "the event" refers to the silence over the genocide in Turkey. As being the oldest recording in the film, the elegy functions to link ongoing trauma to the Armenian genocide, and propose that the present is rooted in the past and that the past will leave its mark on the future.

In *Song of My Mother*, Agit, a friend of Nigar, records a klam (the Kurdish rhyming prose) for her. The scene cuts to Nigar listening to the klam and crying. The klam is a metaphor of the sorrows of the past connecting separated subjects and revealing the effect of unresolved traumas. The song[13] Nigar is searching for and all the other diegetic songs in the film function to be a reminder of the village and the traumas around it. Although the songs are about the sorrowful events, they are not cathartic and they are rather a way of keeping the memory of the sorrow. Nigar desires to find the klam, and listens to the others when she is feeling lonely because they provide her with a feeling of familiarity. As she becomes more and more alienated, her longing for the village is activated and at that point klams accompany her desire to go back to the village.

Voice of My Father is a film about two characters who are absent in the film, the father and Hasan. Their absence is substituted with audio cassettes which were recorded and sent between Basê and his husband - the father through the years. The domination of the sound in the narrative marks the domination of memories of the absent ones in the present of Basê and Mehmet.

Although the recording Mehmet found in his house is diegetic, most of the audio cassettes in the film are non-diegetic and their sources remain unknown. Mehmet searches for them in the house, but Basê refuses to give them and ignores his questions. She tries to avoid his attempts to reconnect with the past. The first time the recording is heard, the camera zooms in to the wardrobe and simultaneously the father's voice speaking in Kurdish is heard. His speech is

[13] The original Kurdish title of the film is *Klama Dayika Min*. Klam is translated as "song" both in Turkish and English titles.

addressed to Basê and he continues in Turkish saying "I don't want to speak Kurdish with you". The camera wanders into the house with a pan movement. Basê is doing housework and then is seated on the bed. The source of the sound is unknown, so we are never sure if Basê remembers them or recordings accompany Mehmet's search for them.

The camera zooms in or out each time when a recording is heard and moves as if a ghost is wandering among them; all camera movements when a recording is heard are unmotivated. Each recording literally zooms in and out an aspect of their relation with the father who was away for work. The father wants Basê to speak Turkish with the children; he wants Hasan to stay away from "dangerous" ideas. The cassettes also inform that the father is rarely at home and their communication is limited to the audio cassettes they are sending to each other. The audio cassettes are recorded due to absence of a telephone in their house in that time. Communication through audio cassettes is a hybrid of letters and telephone conversations in the sense that communication is established with sound but it is not simultaneous and ephemeral. As in this film, audio records have materiality allowing them to be kept and hidden, unlike telephonic epistles which are simultaneous and ephemeral. Telephonic epistles emphasize spatial distance, whereas audio records reveal both spatial and temporal distance. The present in telephonic epistle is lost, the voice becomes "something" from the past, in this case the ghost of an unconfronted past.

When the first diegetic recording is heard, camera zooms out a family photograph of Basê, the father and two little children, Mehmet and Hasan. Below the photograph, Mehmet is seated on the floor and listening to the recording. The scene is motivated by his search for the voice of his father and his attempts to confront the past.

Audio recordings are used as a method of preserving oral history, as personal memories are recorded for archival purposes. Thus, personal narratives that pass to the future generations through oral culture are embodied in a medium that would go beyond the limits of the usual generational transmission. Recording

is a way of archiving and, as it will be discussed below, archiving has political potential for the subjects whose narrative is excluded from the official discourse. These films produce materials for documenting the memory of the suppressed for reshaping the historical discourse.

4.4 Video Records

Various forms of epistles are used in the films of this study and many of them are audio-visual materials. I will classify audio-visual materials based on their medium and production. In this sense, I use video records as the materials recorded by diegetic characters and archival footage as recorded material from the past (before the diegetic time of the film). I will discuss television epistles as a separate category to be able to include the medium specificity of the material in my analysis.

In *Future Lasts Forever*, the production of visual and sound recordings in the film motivates testimonial narratives. People talk about how their relatives were forcibly disappeared and/or killed by the state. In each scene in which a testimonial is recorded, people who talk, sit in front of a wall full of photos of the disappeared and victims of unresolved murders. They talk, sing elegies and look for their loss among photographs as Sumru is seated next to the camera. The self-reflexivity of the scene raises questions about the boundaries between fiction and documentary; by employing some formal strategies of a documentary such as looking directly at the camera and consequently raises questions about the mediated memory. The documentation of the traumatic past is also the process of mediating the memory. The fiction film form is consciously used for transmitting the memory about the disappearances via testimonials. Although the recordings are motivated by the thesis of Sumru, they function as more than a narrative element. The usage of documentary form poses challenges on “fictionality” of the fiction film.

4.5 Archival Footage

An archive is a place in which public records or historical documents are preserved (Archive, n.d.), and the concept of archival footage refers to the footage that contained in and suitable for an archive. In this respect, each epistle discussed in this study might be contained and suitable for an archive and gain archival status, but they are not. Actually, the films in this study become an archive by themselves by making the absence visible, as there is a lack of archived information, audio, and video concerning the issues referred to in them. Archival footage is used only in two of them for different formal and narrative motivations. In *Future Lasts Forever*, the use of archived material is motivated, and part of the plot formation, as in *Waiting for the Clouds*, is unmotivated and functions to frame the film.

The lack of archive is not just a documentation problem but rather a political one. As Jacques Derrida (1995) emphasizes that "there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory" and effective democratization can be measured by "the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation" (p. 11). The most repeated discussion in Turkey on archives is about the atrocities in 1915. The parties refer to archives to prove their arguments on whether what happened in 1915 is a genocide or not. These discussions lack what Derrida refers to: the political power of controlling the archive. Controlling is not just about managing the archive but also constituting it. Özlem Köksal (2016a) discusses the autopsy scene from Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2011) and illustrates how it echoes the problems in constituting an archive. In the scene, "the dead body carries the knowledge within but the power, the producers of knowledge (the law, medicine), has a monopoly over translating and registering it" (p. 178). The doctor does not report the knowledge provided by the body, instead prefers a knowledge that leads to "fewer problems". Köksal further develops her argument by referring to the ways Armenian genocide has been discussed. The problematics on the discourse of opening the archives is illustrated through a close reading of the scene. Köksal's argument exposes the absences in

the archives (p. 178-9). The absence in the archives reveals the ways in which the power operates. Using the rarely seen footage in fiction films is one of the strategies of tackling the issue of being ignored during interpretation of the archives.

The history of any group that falls beyond the framework of Turkishness including the non-Turkish, non-Muslim, and non-Sunni groups as well as any dissident groups who are nonconforming in their Sunni Muslim Turkishness, have been off the grand narrative of history which concurrently could not get involved in constituting and/or interpreting the archives. Özgür Çiçek (2016) reminds that due to being a nation without a state, the Kurds do not have a national archive and the existing ones are misrepresentations constituted by the Turkish Republic. In these circumstances, Çiçek argues, "Kurdish films reveal certain "histories" of Kurdish and Turkish people and carry an archival potential that shapes the memories of both Kurdish and non-Kurdish people" and moreover, these films become "personalized sources of previously underrepresented Kurdish history" through merging with anonymous Kurdish oral culture (p. 75).

The only archive footage used in *Future Lasts Forever* is from Newroz of Cizre[14], in which soldiers attack people gathered for celebrations in 1992. The archival footage is played on the television-screen as Ahmet and Sumru are working through the archive in Musa Anter Audio-Visual Memory Center. The footage becomes full screen and as soldiers brutally attack a Kurdish man, the sound of women ululating and screaming fades out. Although many of the witnesses share

[14] Newroz is the traditional Kurdish New Year's festival, which is celebrated each year on March 21. In 1992, the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan stated that the Newroz would be the beginning of a spring offensive, a mass uprising against the Turkish state (Helsinki Watch, 1992, p. 2). In the Helsinki Watch report, it is stated that Öcalan's statement was rhetorical, but the president Turgut Özal declared that the Armed Forces with superpower will be in the region and they will remove the roots of all these events, although early in that year, the prime minister Süleyman Demirel had declared that Newroz would be celebrated as long as it was peaceful. After Özal's statement thousands of soldiers and police and many tanks and helicopters were deployed throughout the region (p. 2). On Newroz day, hundreds of people gathered for Newroz celebrations and they walked towards Cizre cemetery to pay homage to their "martyrs". The armed forces started shooting at demonstrators on the grounds that demonstrators were PKK sympathizers albeit the crowd was unarmed. 47 people died and l20 people were wounded. The state declared that only PKK guerrillas were killed as the Helsinki Watch report argues the otherwise. The infamous footage of soldiers attacking civilians in Cizre was revealed later.

similar stories about the violence and brutality of the state, the archival footage is the only visual depiction and the incident is one of the rare circulating footage regarding the atrocities in the Kurdish cities in the 90s. The footage, characters' personal stories, and the narratives of the relatives of the disappeared gain an equal value in terms of registering the truth about the underrepresented histories of the Kurds in the region.

Waiting for the Clouds opens with the archival footage of the Greeks during the forced deportations, situating the film into a historical event. In the next scene, a non-diegetic title informs the time and space: Tirebolu 1975. Considering the production year of the film (2004), the narrative takes place in the past, however, the film is based on an event from a distant past. The second piece of footage in the film appears as the last image. The photo of the family held by Niko dissolves to an archival video footage of a girl and a baby. The scene implies that the girl and the baby are their childhood. So, the film starts with the event causing their separation and ends with a happy memory of them before the deportation. The first archival footage functions to document the event from an objective point of view as the latter is subjective and include the private memory of individuals.

4.6 Mass Communication Epistles

Mass communication epistles are public materials and as Laura U. Marks (p. 41) states they compose a sort of official history. To confront the official history with the unofficial, private memories is "to dig between discursive strata—in the process, perhaps finding trace images of unofficial or private memories" (p. 41). The content of mass communication epistles either conflicts with the experience of the diegetic characters or motivates and/or effects their actions. In the context of Turkey, any medium of mass communication, namely mainstream media, represents the official discourse and challenges it only in very rare examples. Alternative media has mostly been directed to censorship in various ways, such as the scene in *Journey to the Sun*, in which children carry a Kurdish newspaper run

away from soldiers. The distribution of the newspaper, and even carrying them, is depicted as an illegal activity. Radio, newspaper, and television epistles in these films are examples of mainstream media that function to include the official discourse as a contradiction into the film. Below I will discuss each of them to explore how medium specificity of each them function in the film form.

4.6.1 Radio

In *Future Lasts Forever*, the only official perspective of the ongoing conflict is represented in the film through the radio. News informs that PKK members were killed in Hakkari and due to the funeral, shops were shut down. Radio news is also the only epistle which concerns the present time of the film, informing the audience that conflict is not left in the past and is still an issue in the region. The juxtaposing of epistolary medium in the film reveals how the unconfronted past effects the present and even shapes the film form. The director's urge to involve "the truth" via archival footage and testimonials motivates employing the documentary form in the fictional film.

In *Mold*, as Basri's letters convey his persistence, the radio delivers the official agenda. Basri's radio was brought by his son, a Soviet product. He constantly carries the radio with him and listens to the news, hoping to hear from his son. The news on the radio is about EU membership, Ergenekon trial, noise regulations, murder over Kurdish songs[15], and the Libya crisis. The content of the news presents an overview of the political atmosphere in Turkey and some of them are directly related to Basri, such as the Ergenekon trial. Basri cannot hear the last radio news about a mass grave found in Beylikdüzü because he has an epileptic crisis. This scene informs the expected fate of the son that he had been killed and his remnants were found. Soon after Basri will learn that the identity card of his son was found in a mass grave and he will go to Istanbul for a DNA test. Radio is relied

[15] In 2010, a singer in Mersin was killed by a client in a bar because he did not know a Kurdish song

on to receive the news, which the state refuses to give, but the news rather informs the official agenda. Even when the news about the mass grave is on air, the coverage is delivered without a context. The long-awaited news is covered only with a few words.

In *Journey to the Sun*, radio news informs about the social and historical context of the film. As Berzan is working on an intercity bus, radio news about the hunger strikes in Bayrampaşa prison is on the air. Radio news connects Berzan with the woman on the bus who is on her way to join the guerrillas: they don't talk about it but their exchange of looks informs their common concern. Radio, as a public communication medium, intervenes in private space, bringing news from the outer world and affecting the private sphere. After having a good time together, Berzan, Mehmet, and Şeyhmus are seated listening to the radio. A radio show of two men is on air, and they are talking about women and relationships. The content is not interesting for Berzan and Şeyhmus; only Mehmet pays attention and soon after Şeyhmus changes the station. The news about the hunger strike is on air, informing the critical health situation of the strikers. The next news is about the traffic monster, and Şeyhmus, affected by the news, turns off the radio. News about the hunger strike has a function of plot formation as well as explaining the social and the political context. Radio news is usually information about the public, other people, and situations. The examples in these films directly affect the characters. In addition to the function of informing about the political and historical context of these films, radio news are indicators of factors that motivate characters' actions as well as their feelings.

4.6.2 Newspapers

In *Voice of My Father*, the family secret is revealed as Mehmet finds newspaper articles in the basement about Maraş massacre[16] entitled "Massacre in

[16] Alevis in Turkey have been subjected to discrimination and oppression since the Ottoman Empire, considering the Sunni-Muslim majority. Martin Van Bruinessen (1996) also states that the radical left in Turkey considered Alevis as natural allies due to construing the Alevi rebellions of

the Name of Islam" and "War for Allah" along with the pictures of dead bodies. Basê kept the newspapers, although she did not tell Mehmet what happened during Maraş massacre. The newspaper as a public communication medium both informs us about the official background of the story and locates us into a social context. Moreover, the personal memories are not just the subjective point of view on the event, but also reveal how unresolved traumas mark the present in various ways including the communicational and emotional capabilities of people. Basê had not spoken about the event for years, though he had kept the newspapers. The newspapers become a personal archive, symbolizing the secret of the family as well as the silence over the event itself. In this case, the news about the event is not contradictory to what Basê tells about it. The silence over the event refers to the social amnesia surrounding the Maraş Massacre. The newspapers function as an objective archival material rather than a contradictive discourse.

In *Future Lasts Forever*, as Ahmet scans old newspaper articles, he focuses on a piece of news entitled "one more civilian was murdered in Silvan". The news is assumed to be about Ahmet's father who was murdered in Silvan, though it remains unknown. Whether the news is about his father or not, any murder in Silvan will remind him of the murder of his father. The news function to emphasize the numerous people murdered and how Ahmet cannot keep himself from attaching to the past.

The articles used in these films do not refrain from acknowledging the traumatic event, but they present it without a context. These films provide a context to the singular news by placing them into narratives that indicates the continuum of violence. In addition to their informative value, the content in the newspapers

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the past as proto-communist movements. Conversely, the religious extreme right provoked violent incidents towards Alevis, Maraş Massacre was one of them. On 19 December 1978, a cinema attended by right wingers was bombed and rumor spread that left wingers bombed the cinema, though today some people believe that counter-guerrilla was behind the incident. Van Bruinessen observes that the fascist and religious extreme right spread rumors about Alevis to draw Sunnis into the extreme right camp (p. 8). The next day a tea-house frequently visited by left-wingers were bombed. On 23 December 1978, the incidents turned into a pogrom; Sunni crowds provoked by fascists marched to Alevi neighborhoods and attacked to Alevi houses which they marked with red cross before. The official number of the dead is 111, as 210 houses and 70 shops were burnt down and destroyed ("30 Yıl Önce Maraş", 2008).

determine or explain the structures of feeling. These are not mere information for the characters, they are direct subjects affected by them. Using this kind of epistle in the films links the historical social events into the lives of ordinary people.

4.6.3 Television

Television epistles are significant as a mean of mass communication as well as with its formal similarities with archival footage. Although they are inseparable in many cases, I discuss them as two separate categories to emphasize the official and public discourse embedded in television. Television epistles in this study are the audio-visual content produced for and aired on television. Epistles are usually aired in diegetic time so the content is up to date in filmic time.

In *Waiting for the Clouds*, Mehmet rushes to the house of Ayşe/Eleni to watch a series about Battal Gazi[17], but the news is on. Television news informs that language, religion and gender data will be collected for the first time in the census. Census officers ask them to turn off the television and start asking demographic questions. The role of the television as a medium of official discourse is substituted by the state officers. Their questions to Ayşe/Eleni are interrupted by Selma coughing. The role of television and state officials are identical; they both symbolize the official discourse and intervene in their quiet life in Tirebolu. The intervention of the state keeps Ayşe/Eleni silent, however cannot erase the memory of her identity.

In *Voice of My Father*, news is on air and Prime Minister Erdoğan makes a speech about the Turkish people in Germany by saying "they should be able to have education in their native language". This television epistle contrasts with the story of Mehmet who had to learn Turkish before attending school. The language is a repetitive problem in the film: the father wants Basê to speak Turkish with their children; Basê does not speak Turkish and she is illiterate; children had to learn

[17] A mythical figure in Turkish folk literature who fought against Byzantine and Christians in Anatolia.

Turkish to attend to school; Mehmet cannot read Kurdish as well as Turkish; Hasan asks them to write old Kurdish words and idioms. The ban on Kurdish for years and the lack of education in Kurdish are the source of the problem and the television epistle reveal the discrimination on the issue.

Television plays an important role in *Journey to the Sun*, questioning the line between reality and fiction, public and private. Mehmet and Berzan first meet during an attack by the fascists after a national football match. The second-time Mehmet sees Berzan is on television. As Mehmet tries to repair his old television in his small room, which he shares with three other working class men, he notices Berzan in the news through the reflection in the mirror. The news is about the hunger strike in Bayrampaşa prison and protestors outside. Berzan is among the political activists being detained by police. The television becomes full frame and provides a newsreel like effect. This is the first time in this film that the distance between the world in the television and real life is shattered.

Television usually functions to bring the audio-visual content produced for public screening purposes into the world of diegetic characters. In *Journey to the Sun* as this function of the television is active; moreover, diegetic characters become televised. One morning Berzan and his friend Şeyhmus leave the house early when they receive the news about the death of one of the strikers. Mehmet goes after them and come across a street protest. A group of people run towards Mehmet, screaming in fear. The texture and color of the scene changes, giving the effect of a hand-held camera. The usual camera is back as Şeyhmus runs towards Mehmet and tells him that they caught Berzan. The next scene is Berzan being caught by soldiers, and the camera is in extreme close-up, blurred, and the sound is off. The footage like textured scenes, in which the state officers entering prison cells and dead bodies on stretchers, are motivated by television in the following scene. Mehmet watches television and the news informs about the protest and shows images from within and without the prison. The transition from Berzan to the television is a jump cut in which the boundaries between the real life and television are not destroyed. Mehmet was a witness in the event but as he watches television news, the effect of the event

disappears. The distant language of the news removes the human out of the news content. Mehmet watches the news about the hunger strikers and the protestors, but Berzan, a beloved friend of him is the subject of the news.

Figure 4.1: A Group of People Running

Figure 4.2: Hand-held Camera Effect

The last archival image appears after the death of Berzan, as Mehmet travels to Zorduç - the village of Berzan. The curfew is reached in the town where Mehmet plans to spend the night, and as he looks out of the window from his hotel room with his vision of military vehicles and soldiers pointing guns from the vehicle, properties of archival footage. The window frame functions as a television screen, although the footage frame is unmotivated. The village is the only place he spends the night during his journey and is also his first time in a Kurdish town. The journey transforms him and he comes to understand the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. The curfew and military vehicles in the streets were to be only seen on television for Mehmet. But at that scene, the news on television becomes his experience. Also, the scene implies criticism to the curfew and military vehicles by presenting them something only to be seen on television not from a hotel window.

Television epistles in *Journey to the Sun* do not only represent the discourse and the imagery produced by the state about the Kurdish conflict, but is also reminiscent of the question of a "subject" in this representation. Media coverage on the official narrative of Kurdish conflict dehumanizes the conflict by degrading the opponents as "terrorists". Similarly, the places are represented dehumanized, as if ordinary people do not inhabit the areas of conflict. Formal transitions between filmic reality and television footage challenges the alienation of the audience by exposing the ordinariness of these people. By establishing a link between the events

on television and ordinary subjects, the effects of these distant events on the people are also exposed.

Television epistles place the narrative of the films in a social context and explain character motivations. In *The Photograph,* Ali and Faruk watch television together during a stopover. The first news has patriotic discourse about the "success" of Turkish military forces on their operations to PKK by giving numbers of dead guerrillas and soldiers. Meanwhile, Ali and Faruk watch television without any expressions. The next news is about the Gazi neighborhood, with police attacking civilians, and a man shouting: "We want justice, only justice". The juxtaposition of two newscasts provides a perspective on the ongoing war, and explains the social motivation and even the destiny of two characters. Moreover, the news provides a context for the situation of these two characters. Their lives are effected and even led by the news on television. As soon to be soldier and guerilla, they have the risk of being counted among the dead soldiers and guerillas. Their presence in front of television unmasks the real people hidden behind the official discourse. The juxtaposition of two news reveals the contradictions in the official discourse. The first news alleges that anti-terrorist measures are taken by the military, whereas the second news show that the police attacks at the ordinary people in the city. This juxtaposition undermines the state's rule of only attacking a terrorist to preserve the security of the nation. Ordinary people, just like Ali and Faruk, are subjected to the state violence in various degrees.

Archival footage and television share the same medium specificities, and it is hard to categorize them in some specific examples. The classification in this study indicate the purpose of production as well as the modes of reception. Television intervenes the everyday life. Characters do not always choose to watch television; they are rather exposed to the content. Archival footage is either used unmotivated in the narration or watched on purpose. Moreover, television represents the official discourse whereas archival footage is unseen and/or hidden documentation of history. The curfew scene in *Journey to the Sun* is an ambiguous example. The window functions as frame but footage is not motivated by a medium. Unlike the

non-diegetic footage in *Waiting for the Clouds*, the footage is inserted into the diegesis. This footage might be categorized as an archival footage, but the television-like quality of it constructs the meaning in the scene. The view outside the window allows the video texture to imply that Mehmet has only seen such a scene in television before. The scene is not mediated via television but through the window.

4.7 Photographs

The use of a photograph in a film is open to various theoretical discussions considering the ontological similarities of the two media. In terms of production, both moving images and photographs establish a similar relation with the object photographed and/or recorded. They basically create a copy of what is being "there". As photography freezes a moment, a moving image records emerging time in space. As Hilde Van Gelder and Helen Westgest (2011) suggest, photography is a transparent medium, as one forgets that they are looking at a mediated reality instead of reality itself (p.5).

Photographs are not necessarily considered as epistles, as they are not produced to create and/or transmit a message in the first place. Arguments on the ontology of the photograph are shaped around its function of freezing a moment in history and establishing an inseparable relation with the objects photographed. The moment in which something is photographed becomes history immediately, and by capturing a moment in history, it informs us about the past as it provides an image that shapes our visual imagination of the past. Susan Sontag (1977) remarks that photography provides us with "the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads-as an anthology of image" (p.3). The fact that life and history can become tangible as photography presents a certain visual framework for remembering. Therefore, photography is an important medium for memory as it functions as an index of the past and provides a visual imagery. Annette Kuhn (2007) stresses the value of memory work with photographs—especially family and personal

photographs for cultural and social production of memory (p. 283). Theories on prosthetic memory and postmemory repeatedly suggest the function of photographs in building memories, and these photographs are not limited to the public ones. Personal and family photographs have a potential to reveal the intersections with collective memory which attributes them the function of an epistle in a film.

The photography's relation to the history is evaluated both by André Bazin (1960) and Roland Barthes in terms of how it freezes the moment and represents the photographed. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes (1981) defines the subjects of a photograph as the operator (the photographer) and the spectator (the one that looks at a photograph), and offers two concepts to analyze photography: studium and punctum. Studium is the cultural context of a photograph that recognizing it is "to encounter the photographer's intentions" (p. 27). Punctum is what pricks the spectator, the detail in the photograph that attracts the spectator.

The photograph has a unique relation to its referent in terms of representation, and Barthes calls it a "photographic referent", stressing that unlike referents in other arts, it is "the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph", the object "has been there" (p. 76). Peter Wollen (1972) points out that although Barthes does not use Peircean category "indexical", his argument on the being-there of the object reaches similar conclusions with Charles Sanders Peirce, who argues that photographs belong to the indexical class of signs, due to the physical connection between the photographs and the objects (p. 124). For Bazin, the photographic image is the object itself, which is freed from "the conditions that of time and space that govern it" (p. 8). Even when the photograph is distorted, discolored and lack the documentary value, it maintains its relation to the object. A photograph can be a piece of an evidence, as expressed by Sontag, a dubious piece of information can be proven when the photograph is presented (p. 5). Our perception of an object in a photograph is apt to be manipulated via photographic skills, such as framing and lighting. But the ontological relation between the object and the photograph persists.

A photograph is an image of the past which motivates both Bazin and Barthes to contemplate the connotations of death in photography. Barthes states that there is "the return of the death" in every photograph (p. 9). During her discussion on the life and death in the photograph, Laura Mulvey (2006) reads Barthes and Bazin together and points out how they relate the photography to death and their thoughts rely on the idea of "thereness" in the photography. Bazin compares photography to mummification, arguing that photography rescues time from a proper corruption by embalming it (p. 8), and Barthes states that in every photograph there is a return of the dead (p. 9). Mulvey interprets the idea of death in their works as a transcendent death— "part of the process of mourning" for Bazin and "the dive into death" as an acceptance of mortality for Barthes (p. 60).

The photograph as an indexical medium urges us to contemplate the past and the punctum and the studium reveals the emotion as well as the social and cultural meanings encapsulated in the image. The past is discussed within its traumatic aspects in this study. Photographs have documentary value for registering the traumatic event. Additionally, Mulvey points out the connection between the trauma and photography as:

> Trauma leaves a mark on the unconscious, a kind of index of the psyche that parallels the photograph's trace of an original event. This analogy became more telling as photography expanded into news reporting, developing, during the twentieth century, into a record of disaster and death that covered similar ground to that of Goya. This literal link between trauma and the photograph enabled an element of the unspeakable, Lacan's Real, to find a place within the still uncertain and unstable discourses of history and memory. Although the Real cannot be grasped or dealt with directly, these photographic images reach out, making a gesture towards the political and social aspects of traumatic experience. (p. 65-66)

Photographic images of traumatic experience are not always available. Marie-Aude Baronian (2010) discusses the lack of photographic images on the Armenian genocide as a consequence of the politics of extermination, she argues that "any

recording form that would explicitly demonstrate the will to negate the genocide" (p. 208). Thus, there are no public images circulating in the public space and the mnemonic and archival function of the very rare images are usually put into question. Baronian's argument demonstrates the value of a photograph for registering the truth and engaging with the past. When the production of images is prevented and/or images are destroyed, the absence of them becomes the object of study. The lack of public images is often substituted by either fictional or personal images as a strategy to overcome the silence around the event.

Photographs are valuable materials for memory work. According to Kuhn (2002), the photographs in a film function as a prop which sets the scene for recollection. The photographs activate memories of loss, feelings of longing and sorrow in the films of this study. Kuhn specifically comments on family photographs as being a prop, a prompt, and a pretext because they evoke memories that have nothing to do with what is actually in the picture (p. 13). Sontag mentions family photographs as ghostly traces (p. 9), as they are the remnants of dispersed relatives. Marianne Hirsch (1997) indicates the value of photographs for the work of postmemory, and emphasizes the relation of photographs to life for being the connection between "the first- and second-generation remembrance, memory to postmemory" (p. 23).

Photographs used in the films I will discuss above are not necessarily traumatic and most of them are ordinary family photos and portraits. In some films, they function as an index that informs someone was "there" who is no longer. When a photograph enters into a frame, a frame is contained within a frame, and two t different spatio-temporalities meet in one frame. Even when they are ordinary photographs, their presence and reception in the film create a third meaning. They do not just index what is there, but also the absences in the photograph can be a strong sign of a specter.

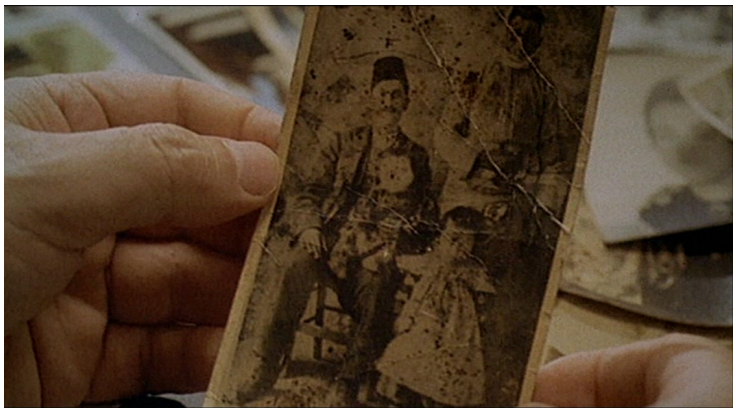
In *Waiting for the Clouds*, a photograph holds the true identity of Ayşe/Eleni, who is the only remnant from her family. When Mehmet sees the photograph, he asks: "who are these strange men?" Although the same photo appears in the film

repetitively, we cannot see what is in it until the final scene. Ayşe/Eleni and Niko are seated at the table, and he communicates with her through photographs those of his orphanage, his family, children, and significant moments from his life. Then he puts down the photographs and tells Ayşe/Eleni:

> These photos represent my life. You aren't in any of them. You say you're my sister. You ask for forgiveness. There is nothing to forgive. If you were really my sister, you would be in these photos.

After a moment of silence Ayşe/Eleni passes him the photograph which shows a family, and this photograph becomes a testimony to her story. Family photographs are personal belongings, holding personal memories. Moreover, as an indexical sign, they prove the existence of people. The photograph Ayşe/Eleni holds is the proof that their family once existed. Their presence in the photography is an indicator of the life they had before the deportation. This information is valuable for Ayşe/Eleni for reconnecting Niko, and moreover it challenges the Turkified culture of the village, and thus the official narrative that erased the Greek presence from the village as well as the memory of it. The exterminated lives and memory of them are registered via photographs. In *Waiting for the Clouds*, personal photographs function to challenge the grand narrative of history by offering to narrate subjective experiences.

Figure 4.3: Niko Holding the Photograph



In *Song of My Mother*, family photographs are significant throughout the film as Nigar kisses them, cleans their frames, packs them when she wants to go to

her village, and Ali hangs them back on the wall to prevent her mother from leaving. Nevertheless, the content of the photographs is unknown to us, and Ali and Nigar never talk about them. A black and white portrait of a man is the most prominent one and a pair of trousers and a shirt are hanged on the wall alongside the photos. Although they never talk about it, the clothes and the photographs inform the audience that someone is missing in the family. The photographs of the forcibly disappeared are used in the spaces of struggle by relatives of them. In the well-known Saturday People protests[18], the relatives of the forcibly disappeared hold up their photographs as they demand justice. On the act of holding up the photograph, Hatice Bozkurt and Özlem Kaya (2014) assert that "the disappeared is virtually brought back into existence there" (p. 61). The fact that people send the photographs when they cannot attend a protest "demonstrates the striking meaning ascribed to this effort to bring back into existence" (p. 61). Nigar's relation to the photograph evokes the public imagery on the Saturday People protests that enables the audience to understand her attention to the photograph. The photograph as an index of a person functions to inform his loss. A more direct reference to the Saturday People is in *Future Lasts Forever*, as the wall, which witnesses are talking in front of, is covered with the portraits of enforced disappearances. This imagery is a statement on the dimensions of the violence directed at Kurdish people. Each testimonial being recorded in front of the wall becomes both a specific and an anonymous story. Each missing person in the photograph has a unique story, but all of them are interconnected in terms of the state violence directed at them. The photographs of the disappeared are pieces of powerful imagery challenging the strategy of the perpetrator, which is to generate fear in the society and force silence. Photographs remind the audience that these lost people once existed. Moreover, the information about the enforced disappearances constitutes the punctum that a portrait of a person in a film becomes a signifier of the disappearance.

[18] Saturday People protests were first initiated in the 90s by human rights activists and the relatives of the forcibly disappeared. They gather at Galatasaray square in Istanbul each Saturday with the demand of "find the disappeared, prosecute the perpetrator.

Figure 4.4: The Wall Covered with the Photographs of the Disappeared

In *Voice of My Father*, family photographs evoke memories and express the longing Basê and Mehmet feels. In an interview, co-director and lead actor Zeynel Doğan (2012) states that *Voice of My Father* is an autobiographical work, based on the actual events his family had gone through. Basê is played by his own mother, the audio cassettes in the story were left by his father (rerecorded for the film) and the photographs belong to his family. Doğan describes the filmmaking process as "we tried to recreate a kind of fiction through the codes of reality". The codes of reality are used through epistolary media in the film. The first photograph in the film is a black and white photo of Basê and his husband hanging on the wall of Basê's house. The second one is a family portrait – Basê, the father and two little children (Hasan and Mehmet) on the wall of Mehmet's house. Mehmet finds an album in which he finds photographs of his father at work. When Basê and Mehmet visit Hasan's friend, Güneş's parents, Mehmet looks at a photo album again. His search for the past repetitively directs him to the photographs; he approaches to the albums as if searching for something in them. These photographs are the traces of a lost history; they function as an index of the fact that the absent person in the photograph existed during their lives. Their urge to go after and keep the photographs signify how the loss of these characters haunt their present. The presence of absent people in the photographs inform the audience about the family's history that metonymically narrate the events that tear them apart. Thus, family photographs gain a mnemonic value for interpreting the history of Turkey.

In *Journey to the Sun*, Berzan had to leave his village in order to not to share the fate of his father, who was killed by the state. The photographs of the village reflect his longing for the place where he left his lover Şirvan behind; on several occasions, he repeats his desire to go back to the village. Berzan keeps a photo of Şirvan, place it on his cart and on his wall at home. He asks her to send another photo, but the photo never arrives. After the death of Berzan, Mehmet keeps the photo as he embarks on a journey to fulfill the wish of Berzan. The photo conveys the metonymic relationship of women with the land. Moreover, they represent Berzan's desire to be with them; the impossibility of uniting is substituted by photographs. These photographs also become markers of Berzan's identity and his burden of being obliged to leave the village.

Unlike other films in the study, the photographs in *The Photograph* are produced by diegetic characters in diegetic time. An unmotivated pan movement showing the blood and pieces of cloth on snow stops at a compact camera. The timer of the camera is activated to take photos of soldiers posing off-screen. The on-screen camera is faced to the camera, and it is taken by Faruk after the shooting. The off-screen voices of the soldiers reveal that they are collecting the bodies of the murdered guerillas. The photographs appear on-screen when a child opens the envelope that was sent to his mother. The child, Savaş looks at photographs of soldiers posing with the bodies of murdered guerillas. Although the focus of the scene is the photos, the camera never closes in on them. The photos are on-screen but are never fully visible. As Savaş and other children look at the photos, off-screen audio of the soldiers talking just after the photo shooting is embedded in the scene. The graphic violence of the murder is avoided both by leaving the photo shooting off-screen, and by the camera angle that limits the view of the photos; rather; the effect of the photos on children is emphasized. The off-screen voice of Savaş' mother is heard calling for him. However, all of the children except the blindfolded girl are frozen, and the photos seem to stop the world for them. The photos sent from the distant, snowy mountains of Eastern Turkey disrupt life in the city. The photographs in these examples also have traumatic imagery. The shocking

content, namely posing with dead bodies, documents the desensitization to violence and the unseen aspects of war for the people in western Turkey.

The photographs in these films relay the loss and untold past. The insufficient public imagery surrounding the traumatic events in the history of Turkey is substituted by personal photographs. Family photographs are valuable materials for postmemory work, as stated by Hirsch (2008), as unlike public images, they have the potential for diminishing distance, bridging separation and facilitating identification (p. 116). These characters' lives are shattered by the politics in Turkey, so their personal photographs also document the history of Turkey. Hence the loss is the recurring thematic preoccupation in these films, photographs are remnants that activate the memory of them.

4.8 Conclusion

Epistolary form in accented films is structurally counterhegemonic in the sense that it challenges the style of mainstream cinema. Epistles are used for engaging with the past and communicating the loss in these films. Different temporalities converge with the use of epistles so that the effects of the past in the present are illustrated. Each epistle, with its medium and content specific meanings, poses questions to the binaries and hegemonic relations between public and private, history and memory, and fiction and documentary. In general, through personal narratives, an alternative history of Turkey is told in these films that has been silenced for a long time. Due to a lack or insufficiency of archival materials, personal materials are used or created in these films to engage with the past. So, the private materials gain public value, the voids in history is filled with memory, and fiction gains documentary value. The preoccupation in these films are not just the past, but also the question of coming to terms with the traumatic past. For that matter, methods of registering the truth are investigated in these films, and the epistle form is one of these methods. By dialogic relation between different epistles, especially between public and private contents, they reveal the contesting memories

as well as the hegemonic aspect of constituted archives. These films neither provide answers nor solution but rather underline the structures of feeling generated as a result of avoiding any reconciliation.

CHAPTER 5: SPACES OF MEMORY

Pierre Nora (1989) emphasizes the spatial relation of memory and history as such: "memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events" (p. 22). Similarly, in the films occupied with memories, the past is usually associated with certain spaces rather than presented as a flashback depicting a particular past event. In this chapter, spatial relations in the films under study will be discussed in order to elucidate the strategies through which silenced memories are represented, as well as how the present is haunted by the past. As Avery Gordon (2008) indicates, "ghosts are characteristically attached to the events, things, and places that produced them in the first place; by nature, they are haunting reminders of lingering trouble" (p. xix). Thus, investigating spatial relations reveals the strategies used in the films to engage with the traumatic events of the past. Spatial configurations reveal the silenced, absent and hesitant memories carried out as structures of feeling in the film. Although time and space are inseparable, a space haunted by the past creates an interstitiality, in which the past is embodied in the present of the space.

According to Hamid Naficy (2001), in most accented films, the function of mise-en-scene is more significant than editing, for it "conveys and embodies displacement and placement in its configuration of space" (p. 154). For the films discussed in this study, editing is not the primary cinematic technique to configure the relations with the past, especially considering their linear temporal structure. The past is traced through places, objects, and an epistolary medium that creates a significant spatiotemporal relation.

For the accented films, Naficy uses the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope to discuss the spatial relations. Mikhail Bakhtin (2004) describes the chronotope, literally time-space, as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (p. 84), and indicates that it is significant for being the place where "the knots of narrative are tied and untied"

(p. 250). Moreover, Bakhtin illustrates the forms of time and space in artistic chronotope as:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (p. 84)

Chronotope materializes time in space hence provides a setting for the story to take place. The representational importance of the chronotope is also stressed by Bakhtin:

> Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins. An event can be communicated, it becomes information, one can give precise data on the place and time of its occurrence. But the event does not become figure [*obraz*]. It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events. And this is so thanks precisely to the special increase in density and concreteness of time markers – the time of human life, of historical time – that occurs within well-delineated spatial areas. (p. 250)

Despite the chronotopic correlations between the real world and the represented world, they are not equivalent to each other, as the latter is mediated through art. The chronotope is discussed by Bakhtin as "a formally constitutive category of literature" (p. 84) and he stresses that he would not deal with the chronotope in other areas of culture. Nonetheless, as Robert Stam (1989) argues, Bakhtin's category suits the medium of cinema, therefore the cinematic chronotope is "quite literal, splayed out concretely across a screen with specific dimensions and unfolding in literal time (usually 24 frames a second), quite apart from the fictive time/space specific films might construct" (p. 11). Moreover, the Bakhtinian notion of the chronotope allows us "to historicize the question of space and time in the cinema" (p. 41). Stam furthermore indicates the possible use of a chronotopic

approach in "constructing a more comprehensive model for the analysis of time-space in the cinema, one that would simultaneously take into account questions of history, genre, and the specifically cinematic articulation of space and time" (p. 42).

As Naficy adapts the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope to the cinema, he defines the cinematic chronotope as "certain specific temporal and spatial settings in which stories unfold" (p. 152). Naficy's use of cinematic chronotope is specific to the accented films which "encode, embody, and imagine the home, exile, and transitional sites in certain privileged chronotopes that link the inherited space-time of the homeland to the constructed space-time of the exile and diaspora" (p. 152). As the homeland is imagined in open chronotopes, the life in exile is depicted in closed chronotopes of imprisonment and panic. In the open form, the mise-en-scene favors "external locations and open settings and landscapes, bright natural lighting, and mobile and wandering diegetic characters" (p. 153); long shots, mobile framing, and long takes are used to situate characters within their open settings. On the contrary, the mise-en-scene in the closed form has interior locations, closed settings, and dark lighting to reflect the restrictedness of the characters. Tight shot composition and static framing also suggest a certain closedness.

5.1 Spatial Relations

The films in this study are not exilic in the classical sense; their directors, characters, and narrative originated from Turkey, and they are not necessarily displaced or deterritorialized. Nonetheless, the films pose critical questions to the official history and ideology of Turkey that place them into an internally exilic position. Moreover, some of them, due to their narrative, expose the east and west dichotomy within Turkey. The dichotomy is not a reproduction of an already existing binary opposition but rather an attempt to elicit the truth and reclaim it by revealing the experiences of the repressed. Open and closed mise-en-scenes in *The Photograph* (Kazım Öz, 2001) and *Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999) are the visual expressions of such reclaim.

In *Journey to the Sun*, the journey narrative motivates a transition from west to east and mise-en-scene provides information about how characters feel in each space and how their identity and belonging are situated. Mehmet and Berzan both live in Istanbul, Mehmet is from the Aegean town Tire and Berzan is from Zorduç, a Kurdish border village in eastern Turkey. Berzan is in Istanbul for 2 years, as Mehmet is for a few months, but they have a turbulent relationship with Istanbul. Mehmet, literally and figuratively, does not have a home in Istanbul. After being evicted from his room, he has trouble finding a shelter and even spends a night on the streets. His next shelter is the room in the parking lot with a red cross on the door where his life was threatened. The final shelter in Istanbul is Berzan's house in the slums - the outskirts of Istanbul. A character could be homeless but wander freely in open spaces, but both Mehmet and Berzan are even confined in open spaces, almost like an unwanted extension of the city embodied in the slums. Berzan has a cassette cart that he locates in the Eminönü square, a symbolic touristic location in Istanbul. The first scene, after the in media res beginning, is in Eminönü square at dawn where Berzan pushes his cart and prepares for the day. Although it is an extreme long shot at the deserted hours of Eminönü, the cloudy and dark sky at dawn casts a shadow over the mise-en-scene. In a similar vein, the next series of shots consists of medium shots portraying workers, peddlers and everyday life in Eminönü which function to situate Berzan among them. The sequence implies that his story is just one of the many. Moreover, people in the frames are confined in tight shots in which they cannot move freely. Another example of being confined in an open space is seen in the fight scene (in which two characters meet) which features dark lighting and a closed and crowded mise-en-scene. Though they manage to run away from the fascist hooligans, they are not safe in the streets. The only scene in Istanbul with a spacious moment is when Mehmet and Berzan are on a bench by the seaside. Nonetheless, the long shot of Bosphorus is in a cloudy sky just before the sunset. A freighter ship blocks the view in a shot, and the next few shots are out focus. When Berzan and Mehmet are in the frame, the camera in medium shot turns around them and stops at their back. In the backlighting, Berzan starts talking about his village and why he had to leave. The conversation continues

with the close-ups of their faces. The open mise-en-scene is closed by framing and dark lighting as well as the narrative. A strong contrast between the mise-en-scene of Istanbul and Eastern Turkey becomes apparent through Mehmet's journey to Zorduç. In contrast to Istanbul, the mise-en-scene becomes open, and shots become larger. Natural lighting favors the geography in which Mehmet transforms his identity. The homelessness of Mehmet evolves into being a pilgrimage. As he passes many places, changes many vehicles, witnesses the evacuated villages and red crossed houses, his identity is transformed. The identity transformation is completed just before the arrival at Zorduç; when someone asks, he answers that he is from Zorduç. The answer is neither a concealment nor a lie but rather an indication of confrontation and resistance. Although Mehmet has experienced and witnessed many forms of discrimination and violence targeted against the Kurds, he embraces the Kurdish identity.

Figure 5.1: Berzan and Mehmet in Istanbul **Figure 5.2: Mehmet in the Region**

Istanbul in *The Photograph* is mostly seen through the bus window, since characters have already started their journey when the film starts, so the places in Istanbul are mostly roads and bus terminals. One scene has a Bosphorus view through the bus window in which the nervous face of Faruk enters the frame. The next view of the sea is in the bus terminal, when Ali meets his friend but the sea is behind the wired fencing. The only clear view of the sea, without any obstacles such as window or wired fencing, is in the frame when Ali's friend is on a ferry, reading Ali's letter. As the woman is left out of the journey, she has access to the open spaces, but the two characters are confined in open spaces; one is on the bus, the other is between fences. Istanbul is marked with a closed mise-en-scene for the

characters and eastern Turkey is marked with an open one. The transition from closed to open mise-en-scene is significant in *The Photograph* even though characters are in a bus, which is in itself a closed space within an open one. When the bus arrives at the eastern region, significantly the Kurdish region, Ali wakes up with the sun lighting up his face. As the view of the mountains fascinates Ali, his face dissolves into them. The non-diegetic folk song in the scene favors the fascination of Ali, but Faruk is excluded from this experience; he is rather nervous throughout the journey. When he gets off the bus in Dersim, an old woman, sensing he is a soldier, moves away from him on purpose. The scene implies how locals feel about the military; no matter how Faruk situates himself relative to the mandatory military duty, he inevitably becomes an unwanted person. Conversely, Ali is represented as if arriving home. Despite the oppression indicated by the military vehicles occupying the roads and military checkpoints, the Kurdish geography is represented as a place that he desires to be in. In *The Photograph*, all spaces except the stopover restaurant and military base are open spaces. Even when Ali enters a house, the camera does not follow him inside, but rather remain on the street.

Figure 5.3. Ali Dissolving into the Mountains

The east versus west dichotomy also emerges in *Song of My Mother* (Erol Mintaş, 2014), although the narrative is mostly situated in Istanbul. The two main themes of *Song of My Mother* are forced displacement and gentrification. Despite their different motives, the latter is also a form of forced displacement. The family in the film was displaced from their village in Doğubeyazıt, which appears in the

film twice. As the title informs us, the film opens in Doğubeyazıt. The reappearance of the place is at the end of the film, and this time the information about the location is not specifically given but left to the audience. In both scenes, although the first one is a traumatic event in which the teacher is kidnapped by JİTEM – the mise-en-scene is open with natural lighting and captured in long shots. Conversely, the Istanbul scenes are crowded and tight. The long shots suggest the loneliness of Nigar in her new neighborhood at the outskirts of the city. Gentrification forces them to move there, and consequently her loneliness in this new house activates the memories of her first displacement, leading to a strong longing. In one of her days at home, a dreamy scene in which a horse runs among mountains flashes on her mind with a dengbej[19] song. This scene provides a sense of mental subjectivity, as so we gain access to her thoughts and feelings about the village in which the village has becomes a fantasy associated with freedom for her. Despite all the sorrow they faced there, forcing them to leave, the mise-en-scene favors the village, contrasting with the confining city.

Figure 5.4: Nigar Looking through the Window

[19] The term dengbej is composed of two Kurdish words deng (the song) and bej (to tell). Dengbej is the person who recites epics in the Kurdish oral tradition.

Figure 5.5: Nigar's Daydream

The closed form generates a claustrophobic temporality driving from the panic and fear narratives. Open form favors continuity, introspection, and retrospection, and in some cases, the present is experienced through the nostalgically constructed past (Naficy, p. 153). According to Svetlana Boym (2001), modern nostalgia is "a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values" (p. 8). The concept of nostalgia problematizes one's relation to the past as well as the forms of longing for the past. Restorative and reflective nostalgia are the two tendencies that shape and give meaning to longing (p. 41). Restorative nostalgia emphasizes "nostos" (homecoming or return) and proposes "to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps", as reflective nostalgia is more about "algia" (pain), "longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance" (p. 41). None of the films under study are nostalgic, yet some characters have nostalgic moments that could be categorized as reflective nostalgia. In *Journey to the Sun*, Berzan is nostalgic about his village; in *Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004), Eleni longs for the times with her family; in *Song of My Mother*, the dreamy image of the village appears in the mind of Nigar. The reflective nostalgia of the characters juxtaposes with the structures of feeling generated in the films, which grow out of the present haunted by the past. The truth telling claim of these films creates the distance with nostalgia, as the political intent of truth telling is to come to terms with the past, free the present, and thereby reclaim the future. One of the common characteristics of the films in this study is that although they all reflect certain structures of feeling, none

of them create a cathartic affective moment, neither nostalgic nor melancholic. They register truth in order to convince the audience to develop a political will.

The representation of Kurdish region has a significant meaning in these films, Ayça Çiftçi (2016) remarks that "the beautiful, mountainous Kurdish rural landscape and Kurdish cities" were on screen for the first time after many years of underrepresentation, which generate the feeling of "foreign films" for the audience in western Turkey (p. 102). Therefore, this new imagery of the Kurdish region has gained a documentary value in fiction films.

Future Lasts Forever (Özcan Alper, 2011) starts with a train journey but unlike the examples above, it is from the west to the east – the destination is Diyarbakır. The city is imagined as a place haunted by the past; each corner of the city holds a recollection. Recording the sounds of the city and collecting elegies are attempts to record the memory of the city. The streets, houses, and ruins of Diyarbakır invite us to imagine the past, but our imagination is motivated by the sounds. The asynchronous sound affects how we perceive the image and yet the open mise-en-scene becomes a labyrinth of memories. Although Diyarbakır is represented as a city in which various traumatic events happened, the city is not imagined as a dark and confining space. The open mise-en-scene invites us to remember, recollect and reconstruct memories to come to terms with the burden of the past. The positive meaning construction of the city starts just as Sumru arrives at the train station. In their telephone conversation, she tries to convince her mother that Diyarbakır is safer than İstanbul. This introduction tries to overcome common prejudices about the city imposed by the media. Remembering the Çiftçi's emphasis on representing the Kurdish regions for the first time, the comparison between the eastern and western Turkey aspires to reclaim the region. Moreover, the city is privileged in the film as the container of the memories. The journey to a mountain village in Hakkari introduces another, yet more privileged mise-en-scene. Just as in all journeys to the region, the occupation of military vehicles and controls are emphasized. Still, the journey is framed in an extreme long shot, suggesting the glory of the land and making the characters and the story anonymous. As the image

of a horse running in the mountains suggest, mountain encodes freedom, hence the characters dare to imagine the future on a night in the mountain.

5.1.1 Nature

Most the films in this study contain both open and closed forms in their mise-en-scene, but their relationship can be characterized by co-existence rather than contrast. Nature is an important element in each of the films, signifying "timelessness, boundlessness, reliability, stability, and universality" (Naficy, 2001, p. 156). On the other hand, the function of nature in the narrative depends on the context. In *Waiting for the Clouds*, when Ayşe/Eleni starts to deny her identity as Ayşe, she starts remembering through nature. As Özlem Köksal (2016b) describes, when Eleni looks at the mountains and clouds, she remembers her past, her family and the forced migration that cut off her relationship with them and this narration functions as a flashback (p. 109). Though the past is not depicted, the conditions and possibility to imagine the past are created in the film. The audience is invited to imagine the life in the village, as well as the forced deportation. The haunting image of the past transforms the open mise-en-scene into a suffocating experience. Övgü Gökçe (2009) argues that the relation of the aesthetic character of the landscape to Ayşe/Eleni's subjectivity is an embodiment that "eventually works as an alternative level that reveals sentiments of loss and mourning" (p. 272).

The boundlessness and timelessness of the homeland's landscape hold the possibilities for reconciliation with the past. Eleni remembers her past painfully nevertheless accepts and defends her real identity. In *Voice of My Father* (Orhan Eskiköy, Zeynel Doğan, 2012), the first scenes introduce the landscape rather than the character. Basê, who walks through the landscape, is framed in long shot. Her image in the landscape is a small detail emphasizing both the glory of the space and her enduring loneliness. The open mise-en-scene ends as Basê enters the house where she is confined in the frame. Soon after, Basê goes out and climbs to the hill, puts stones on top of each other and prays for her son Hasan to come back. The

place is full of stones, signifying that Basê has long been practicing this ritual. The long shots in open mise-en-scene reveal her loneliness, moreover, the openness in contrast to the house suggests that Basê releases her pain there. Similarly, after Mehmet finds out about the family secret, he releases himself from the burden of the past. In the last scene, a construction site is on-screen in an extreme long shot, representing the death of the father Mustafa from a considerable distance that does not allow us to understand what we see. The camera pans and stops at the only tree where Mehmet stands. Maintaining the long shot, the camera closes in on them and simultaneously Mehmet is heard talking to his father about his dream. The scene creates an ellipsis between the death of the father and the present by signifying the bond between two moments. Nevertheless, Mehmet is now released from the haunting memories of the past, rather understands and accepts them. Just as the only tree in the landscape, Mehmet signifies resistance against erasure. By insisting on learning about his family's past, he gains knowledge to transmit to future which would be the key to a possible reconciliation.

Figure 5.6: Basê Entering the House

Figure 5.7: Basê on the Hill

5.1.2 Mountain

Mountains, ancient monuments, and ruins are collective chronotopes in which a powerful emotion would be invested (Naficy, p. 160). If the nation is without a state or its condition is in dispute, these spaces represent emancipation of the nation. The dream and desire for the independent and emancipated Kurdish nation and/or homeland is depicted through the landscape, nature, and mountains in the Kurdish regions, as they are also reminders of the sorrow, loss, the trauma of the nation. In *The Photograph* and *Journey to the Sun*, the Kurdish region is depicted in an open mise-en-scene, natural lighting and usually with a Kurdish folk song. The change in the mise-en-scene celebrates the entering to the region and glorifies it. Especially in *The Photograph*, Ali is mesmerized by the view. Moreover, the mountains in the Kurdish region signify more than glorifying the land, referring to the Kurdish guerillas through metonymy, as the headquarters and camps of the PKK are located in the mountains. The Turkish expression "to go up the mountain" metaphorically means to join the guerillas. For this reason, the mountain symbolizes all the meanings that the PKK has for the Kurds. Similarly, for the Turkish state, the mountains signify the PKK and thus also "terrorism". In *The Photograph,* when the bus arrives at the region, the slogan "How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk", which reflects the Turkification project of the Turkish Republic, is written on the mountain. The same message is also written on a bridge and this

repetition indicates that the region is occupied, and the Kurds are oppressed by the nationalist government. *The Photograph* is the only film in this study that represents guerillas on the mountain, as well as the experience of being on the mountain. In the scene where guerillas are attacked and killed by the Turkish soldiers, the attack and their remnants are depicted through the blood covered objects on the white snowed surface. This scene would be interpreted as a representation of the "dirty" war and the innocence of the guerillas. The death of the guerillas is respected by keeping them off-screen, though the inhumane treatment of their bodies by the soldiers reveals the effect of this war on soldiers and society, as the photographs will reach to the children playing in the street at the last scene of the film.

In *Journey to the Sun*, a character – the woman on the bus – heads for the mountains. Her journey in the film ends when she meets the person that will lead her to the mountain. The mountain promises freedom, independence for the characters as well as a very important life decision but remains in the fabula. Characters are nervous to be held by soldiers before they make it to the mountain, but they have a strong will. Although we later witness the faith of Ali in *The Photograp*h, his choice is never questioned and/or pitied.

5.1.3 Railway

In *Mold* (Ali Aydın, 2012), Basri watches over the railways, and every day he walks the endless tracks through the landscape. Open and closed mise-en-scene coexist together, he walks through the dark tunnels and arrives at daylight. The landscape is mostly framed in long shots, the isolation of Basri nests in the boundless nature. His insistence on writing letters to the state corresponds to his long walks. The repetitive acts encapsulate the hope and desperation. The railways that Basri guards are also symbolic spaces in the history of Turkey. On 24 April 1915, the Armenian intellectuals were deported from Istanbul by train; this was the first known enforced disappearance in Turkey. In 1938, people of Dersim were killed by the soldiers and the rest of them were deported by trains. In a recent film

about Dersim Massacre, *Zer* (Kazım Öz, 2017), the traumatic effect of the deportation causes the character to have the same dream for years. The dream about the massacre and the deportation is not depicted but narrated. As the character dreams on her bed, the sound of the train is audible. The haunting past is embodied through the sound of the train. One of the rare depictions of the past in the film – that would be assumed to be a dream or daydream – is about soldiers taking deported people off the train. Associating trains with deportation and massacres are not peculiar to Turkey. Jews deported in dense train wagons is a well-known symbolic image of the Holocaust. Basri works to keep the tracks safe for the trains as he is haunted by the loss of his son. His story is unique in the film, nonetheless, it is powerfully united with all the past disappearances and violence that rest in the collective memory.

5.1.4 Monument

As Nora explains the site of memory substitutes real environments of memory, their existence is dependent on the latter's loss (p. 7). The sites discussed in this study do not match the definition of Nora, specifically because they refer to and activate subjective memories on collective events. Monuments are a different category since they are constructed to represent a specific narrative and that narrative is mostly nationalist, heroic stories in Turkey. As articulated by Jan Assman (2008), monuments are one of the constituents of cultural memory. Especially the monuments erected by the state should be evaluated as an act of institutionalizing a certain version of memory. In *The Photograph*, The Victory Monument[20] represents the militarist nation state and its glorification of the war. The monument appears in the opening scene, the low angled camera spins around

[20] The monument is a dedication to the "victory" won by Turks in The Battle of Dumlupınar, which was the last battle in the Greco-Turkish War (1919 – 1922). It was made by Heinrich Krippel, who was invited to Turkey in 1925 to make Atatürk monuments and worked there for 13 years and erected in 1936 in Afyonkarahisar. There are two naked male figures in the monument, standing figure that represents the Turks, tramples on the other which represents the "occupying forces" – the enemies. Atatürk is modeled for the standing figure.

the monument with no sound. After the first 30 seconds, the militarist national chant - The Tenth Year March – is heard. The scene subverts both the glorifying effect of the low angle shot and the power of the monument by emphasizing the monstrous expression of the monument. The director, Kazım Öz, uses a similar shot in his latest film *Zer*, the low angled camera looks up to the same monument emphasizing its monstrous expression. The subversive image creates an interpretation of the heroism and nationalism of Turkey, emphasizing its violent aspects. In *Zer*, there is also a monument representing the repressed collective memory on Dersim massacre. The character looks out from his hotel room and sees the Seyit Rıza monument[21] in the dark, lit up by the police beacons. The scene exposes the continuing oppression of the state in the region.

Figure 5.8: The Victory Monument

5.1.5 House

Among various closed spaces, literally and figuratively, the house gains a special meaning in films. According to Suner, the 'house' in the political films, "turns into a potent figure embodying the persistence of the traumatic past in the present. The spectral home, Suner says, gains a material presence in these films (p.

[21] Seyit Rıza was a religious and political figure during the 1937-1938 Dersim Rebellion. He was hanged in 1937. The monument was commissioned by the Kurdish municipality in 2010 and soon after its replacement Tunceli police department made an allegation arguing that it promotes terrorism. The attorney decided that the monument does not constitute a crime.

58). Material presence is exampled with eerie houses and ruins though the house is not necessarily the space of the trauma, as Naficy states. Unlike Suner, Naficy argues that the house cannot be taken merely as a site of memory, for it is "a threatened physical place that may experience successive possessions, dispossessions, and repossessions" (p. 169). Moreover, the house would be a shelter when one is excluded from the public space, a place to resist the identity or a prison.

The house brings the dichotomy of public and personal and the question of gendered spaces. When the dichotomy of history and memory is compared to the public and personal, memory indicates a personal and so a feminized experience embodied in the house. Moreover, the homeland is also a feminized space as part of imagining the nation. So, the landscape, nature, and mountains of the homeland would be considered as feminine spaces signifying the nation. For such reasons, Naficy argues that all accented films - regardless of the gender of their directors or protagonists – are feminine texts (p. 155 – 156). On the other hand, the fact that the meaning of the house varies in each film prevents us from making a statement about the gender of spaces. In fact, for each context, the meaning of the house transforms continually.

In *Voice of My Father* and *Song of My Mother*, the house is a feminized space. Basê of *Voice of My Father* is attached to the house because it symbolizes the memories and she hopes that her son Hasan will return to the house one day. The house is depicted as a site of memory and Basê is the guard of the site. The relationship of Nigar with the house is quite different. The house is gendered, as she has to stay at home, but her son Ali is mostly away. Unlike Basê, Nigar desires to leave the house and return to her village, forcing Ali to at least take her out, and even running away from the house to go the village. The house is rather a prison for Nigar which is literalized when Ali locks her in. The actual site of memory – the prior house - was evacuated because of gentrification project which made Nigar and Ali move to the periphery of Istanbul. Nigar cannot make sense of the new house in which she has no memories and thus her desire to return the village is

activated. Although two women have different relations to the house, as two elderly women they embody the memory of the past and function to transfer it to their sons.

In *Waiting for the Clouds*, Ayşe/Eleni lives in her homeland where her family was deported. After the death of her sister's husband, together with her sister – who is the only confidant of her true identity, they move to Tirebolu. For Ayşe/Eleni, the past is not embodied in the house but rather in nature. The house is just a place in the landscape, the only function of the house is to isolate herself from the neighbors. Although she has experienced the violence of the Turkification project and was silenced for many years, she is represented neither as a victim nor a subaltern. As Pelin Başcı (2015) remarks, although Ayşe/Eleni is depicted as a storehouse of memory, the film also reminds that "subordination is an experience, an effect of power, and not an aspect of identity" (p. 163). The silence of Ayşe/Eleni is not just a repression; she rather transforms her silence into a form of resistance and so reveals continuing violence of the perpetrators. The house has lost meaning for her since what makes a place 'home' for her had long been gone. Suner (2010) argues that she evokes the figure of a ghost town (p. 60) and so the absence is embodied in nature.

In *Mold*, the house is the place to be isolated and a voluntary prison. Basri takes refuge in his house, tries to minimize human contact. The camera only shows one room of the house and Basri is frequently trapped in the frame in frames. The house as a private and personal space does not function as a storage of memories but rather represents the loneliness and isolation of Basri.

Figure 5.9: Basri in His House

The house would represent safety and belonging so as Naficy points out, it would also mean dispossession. When subject's belonging is problematic, the house would disappear from the narrative or at least remain in fabula. In *Journey to the Sun*, Mehmet's relation to the house is problematic as he is either kicked out or must leave the houses. The only place he would feel safe is the house of Berzan, is in the outskirts of Istanbul; nonetheless, his relation is terminated with the death of Berzan. The homelessness of Mehmet is the expression of his deterritorialization. The house as a problem is a recurring theme in the film. During his journey to the east, Mehmet arrives at an evacuated town with red crosses on the doors – mirroring his own experience in Istanbul. The end of his journey is in Zorduç – a flooded village. The village has become a ghost town where the houses are underwater. The flood is the result of a large dam project that destroyed many villages in the Kurdish region through a form of military strategy. Both evacuated, ghosted towns are mute witnesses to the violence, war and the deportation (Suner, 2010, p. 59). Moreover, they function to register the truth and reclaim them as historical evidence.

5.1.6 Ruins

Ruins are powerful images in collective memory, their materiality embodies the memory and reminds of the loss of something. To understand loss, we should analyze the remnants for "what is lost is known only by what remains of it, by how

these remains are produced, read, and sustained" (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003, p. 2). In accented films, ruins are powerful metaphors for creating an individual or collective identity (Naficy, p. 171). When the truth registering function of the films is considered, ruins are used to represent the aspects and consequences of the state violence in the films of this study. The evacuated village in *Journey to the Sun* is introduced with a mobile frame shot from the POV of Mehmet until he gets off the car. He walks among the houses and enters one of them and disappears into the darkness as the camera stays outside. A brief scene is shot inside the house framing Mehmet lying down on the floor and the scene cuts to the coffin of Berzan at the back of the car. Mehmet obviously identifies himself with the village hence he also experienced a form of exile. The ruin also becomes a place to mourn both for the loss of the village and, as the cut to editing implies, the loss of Berzan. The last stop of the journey is also a ruin – the flooded village of Berzan. The loss of the village mirrors the loss of Berzan and unite the various forms of violence the Kurds are subjected to.

The Armenian Church in *Future Lasts Forever* is the silent witness of the Armenian presence in Diyarbakır as well as the loss of them. Antrinik is the guard of the ruins and the memory of Armenian community. The material presence of the church reminds one of 1915 without any narrative information. Considering that the narrative of the film is about documenting the atrocities of the Turkish state in the Kurdish region, the image of the church ruins functions to illustrate the historical continuity between 1915 and the present as well as the alleged complicity of Kurds during the Armenian genocide.

5.2 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the spatial relations in the films that represented subjects' forms of remembering the traumatic events in the history of Turkey. How spaces are imagined is determined by or in relation to a traumatic event, so the "now" of the space is inseparable from the past. As Paul Connerton (2009) memory

is topographic, it depends on the stable systems of places. Spaces activate certain memories; thus, they are valuable materials for understanding the practices of remembering. Through the spatial relations, the character's occupation with the past gains materiality without the need of narrative information. Also, the formal use of the space in the films reveals the structures of feeling and the subjective expressions on the collective trauma. Thus, the fluid relation between the personal and collective memory finds an aesthetic expression.

As Çiftçi remarks, representation of the underrepresented in the fiction films indicates a semantic change. Hence, the fictive space is gained a documentary value that will contribute to the formation of "historical evidence" against the official history narrative. If we historicize the question of space and time in the cinema in the context of this study, then it could be argued that they indicate the struggle between the oppressors and oppressed, and the attempt to open an interstice to resist the oppressor. Finally, as illustrated in contrasting mise-en-scenes, differences in the representation of the spaces indicate an "us" versus "them" and "ours" versus "theirs". Undoubtedly, the pronoun "they" signifies the Turkish state and the official history.

CHAPTER 6: THE LANGUAGE AGAINST SILENCE AND REPRESSION

The previous chapters provided a close analysis of certain components of the accented style in the films of this study. I listed and decoded the constituent elements of each component, and discussed the meaning they generate within the context of these films. My examination provided answers to the primary questions of this study. I tried to understand the ways cinema engages with the past, as well as the formal strategies for creating structures of feeling and the contribution of these films to the memory making processes. The point of departure of this study was my argument that these films share a film language that enables one to engage with the traumatic past. The analysis I conducted provided an understanding of the predominant feelings and expressions of the past in these films, which are marked by thematic preoccupations of loss and journey. I discussed the epistle form as a method of engaging with the past, and came to see that the epistles function to register the truth. The lack of an archive, and the desire to include personal narratives against the official discourse led filmmakers to use epistles for registering their truth. Analyzing the spatial relations in these films revealed the memorial and truth registering function of the spaces. Moreover, the spatial relations appear to be the primary strategy for engaging with the structures of feeling. I argue that these films share a film language that is a response to the challenges of representing the silenced and repressed memories, and also fulfill a political duty of registering the truth. Below I will explain my argument by discussing the lack of flashbacks, the function of sound, the use of fiction over the documentary, and the value of registering truth. But before coming to these discussions, I would like to provide a summary of the stylistic features of these films.

6.1 The Style

If I return to the primary question—the common language in these films, the analysis conducted on the formal strategies addresses the specific formal choices employed in them. The accented style, used as a tool for analysis in this study, reveals that these films share similar constituent components. As Hamid Naficy (2001) emphasizes, these components are not a checklist that films need to meet the whole criteria, rather they are used on different levels for each accented film. Similarly, for the films in this study, they contain some of the components of the accented style at different levels, as listed below.

These films are produced in a transnational mode; internationally funded, independent productions in which directors perform multiple functions. Filmmakers are involved in all phases, from the inception of the project to the exhibition. They are primarily screened in national and international film festivals; cinemas that screen "independent/art" films as well as in universities and cultural organizations. They do not address the general audience in Turkey, but are rather received by politically conscious and/or film festival audiences that also follow the independent films. Filmmakers are not exilic and/or diasporic, but they position themselves critically to the dominant ideology. Their ethnic identities are various, some of them emphasize their Kurdishness and define their films within the Kurdish cinema context. In some examples, as in the *Voice of My Father*, the director inscribes his biography and history into the film. Personal and social experience of loss is encoded in them. Loss, search, and journey are the recurring thematic preoccupations. Certain characters and/or places are lost and absent, there is a search for something that is usually associated with the past, such as a song, a village, or an audio-cassette. Specific events such forced deportation, extrajudicial killings cause an exodus from a place and a subsequent search for a new home. Characters have non-Turkish ethnic identities except in *Mold*, in which the ethnic background of the characters is not specified. Some of the non-Turkish characters speak the dominant language with an accent. The plot is less driven by action than

emotions. The setting are real locations; spatial relations are coded with both an open and closed form mise-en scene. Nature and the mountains in the Kurdish region are as privileged and are contrasted with spaces presented in a closed form mise-en scene. The juxtaposition of different spaces in the open/closed form binary functions to emphasize the memorial status of spaces, as well as reveal structures of feeling around them. Various epistolary media are used in forms of interpersonal and mass communication means, and they function to inform about the past or emphasize distance and separation. The interpersonal medium provides a depth of information in the story, as the audience gains access to the subjectivity of the characters, as well as their personal memories. The juxtaposition of the interpersonal and mass communication media emphasizes the clash between individual memories and the official narrative of history, as individual memories in these films are used in metonymic relation to collective memory. Epistolarity is "a metonymic and a metaphoric displacement of desire" (Linda Kauffmann; as cited in Naficy, p. 101), a desire to be with someone, elsewhere, and in other times. In this context, the individual epistles signify the desire to acknowledge the past that has been either repressed or denied. There is a strong emphasis on orality in these films that are to some degree achieved through the use of epistles. The repetitive use of audio recordings in them functions to motivate off-screen sounds. Asynchronicity of sound and image intentionally is used in various scenes that are not necessarily motivated by an epistle. Sound becomes independent from the image that creates an ambiguous perception on its spatio-temporality, and gains a spectral trait embodying the negative affect of the past. Besides marking an underrepresented culture, Kurdish folk music is used both diegetically and non-diegetically for ethnically encoding the experience of the characters and spaces. In *Song of My Mother*, searching for a Kurdish folk song has a driving role in plot formation, though its value is more of a symbolization of the longing for the past. Most of the narratives are driven by the memory of the troubling past but though it is a driven force, the past is not depicted in any of the films. Some characters and places are lost or absent in them, though their presence in the narrative is repetitive. These films are made in a historical conscious approach, the political atmosphere

of Turkey is frequently used as a background, generally via mass communication epistles such as television, radio, newspapers. The prevailing mode is loss, longing, loneliness, and also melancholia to some degree.

The accented style components listed above provide an understanding of the preoccupations and formal strategies employed in these films. In addition to the strategies used in them, the strategies they lack provides an insight into understanding the language they create. First and foremost, these films share a specific lack: that of flashbacks as direct representations. Altough some of the films include sound flashbacks, direct representation of the past is not used in any of these films. As discussed in the previous chapters, flashback is one of the conventional cinematic methods for engaging with the past. Spectators mostly perceive the image in the present tense, if the film does not have any strategies, such as a historical setting, that indicate that the image belongs to the past. The lack of flashback is a subject larger than these films for cinema in Turkey, as it has never been a prevalent strategy. Nevertheless, analyzing the use of flashback in cinema of Turkey is beyond the limits of this study. To limit the argument within the scope of this study, I will focus on the flashback strategy in the context of engaging with the traumatic past, and elucidate the context of the discussion by addressing the relevant functions of flashbacks.

6.2 The Lack of Flashbacks

One of the ideological implications of a flashback is that it implies a certain fatalism. By showing the result before the cause, a logic of inevitably on the past event is implied (Turim, 1989, p. 17). The change in the linear order of the events positions the flashback scene as more privileged than others. The past becomes inevitable and privileged in the narration. The past, specifically the traumatic events, is the primary concern in the films of this study, but rather than representing the original event, the effects of the past on the present is emphasized. In this context, neglecting flashback narration indicates the preoccupation with the effects

of the past rather than the past itself. As in Susannah Radstone's (2000b) criticism of trauma theory for associating the unbearable event itself, flashback narration posits the audience at the registration of the events. Instead, Radstone suggests being preoccupied with the effects of triggered associations (p. 89). Similarly, rather than depicting the past event, which is a form of associating with the event, triggered associations are dealt with in these films. This approach is tracked especially on the links set between the past and present. The present in these films is never free from violence and oppression. On the contrary, it is suggested that there is a continuum of violence. The grounds that generate the traumatic events have not disappeared, so the violence and oppression continue in various forms. So rather than focusing on the event as a unique historical moment, the associations between various forms of violence and oppression are indicated.

Moreover, the issue of the inevitability of the event is also debatable considering the political standpoints in this films. Atrocities are not approached as fate but rather as catastrophes that could be prevented. The insistence on remembering the past is derived from the purpose of preventing any future atrocities. Remembering is a form of resistance that utters "never again" and thus a political responsibility to prevent future atrocities. The strategies used in this films, their narratives and even the fact that they are films about the traumatic events are contributions to the memory activism in Turkey which heavily relies on the ideal of coming into terms with the past to avoid the future atrocities. Emphasis on the continuum of violence and the political responsibility of preventing the atrocities might have led to employing certain formal strategies.

Flashbacks provide the images of memory but also the images of the shared and recorded past (Turim; 1989, p. 2), so when the reliability of the recorded past is at stake or if the reconciliation on the past is not met, then new strategies should be found to register repressed and silenced past narratives. The issues from the history of Turkey mentioned in this study are debatable for the public. The main problem with them is the fact that the official discourse either denies or legitimize them. For this reason, using flashback narration to engage with the past would lead

to depicting a historical image from the eye of the repressed. Although memory is used as a conceptual tool to understand the relation to the past, the problem with the traumatic events and representability surpass the context of memory. The past is not depicted in these films, and the filmic time is usually many years after the original event because the main concern in them is the fact that these traumatic events are not resolved, confronted and gained public recognition as something that should never happen again. Practices such as memorialization, transitional justice, truth commissions, and public apologies do not change the nature of catastrophic events, but they are important steps for reconciliation. On the other hand, denial sustains the catastrophe and prepares the social conditions that would easily lead to similar catastrophes. These conditions create different structures of feeling for each social group and fix them to different sides within society. These films show a critical perspective of what is happening that places them on the side of "victim". So, the primary concern becomes exposing the structures of feeling rather than focusing on a specific event. For this reason, many of them refer to various historical moments from the past, suggesting the snowball effect they have on the present.

Teshome Gabriel's (1994) argument for Third Cinema on the reflection of oral/written culture binary to film language would be another ground for discussion. The conventional medium of transferring memories to the next generations has been part of the oral culture in Turkey in the forms of stories, folk songs, and lullabies. Some of these are already used in the narrative of these films, such as dengbej songs and elegies. These films, as sites of memory, become an audio-visual source for memories by recording oral stories. On the other hand, flashbacks are memories by themselves or depictions of existing written forms that would explain the lack of flashback in these films.

Though I argued that the films in this study do not have any flashback scenes as in the forms of direct representation, there are two exceptions among them; *Future Lasts Forever* and *Voice of My Father* have two vague flashback scenes. In *Future Lasts Forever*, a young boy runs after a white Toros car in an extreme long

shot and in *Voice of My Father*, the accident in the construction site is on screen, similarly as an extreme long shot. Time is ambiguous in both examples; the audience can only assume that both are aforementioned past events in the narrative but flashbacks lack any temporal indicator as well as any motivation. The extreme long shots prevent the audience from examining the scenes in detail, and even categorizing them as flashbacks becomes ambiguous. These scenes do not fulfill the function of a flashback that is providing an informative image of the past, and for this reason, I do not count them as flashback examples in these films.

Instead of flashback, the past is told through what is left behind. Analyzing the strategies of the remnants, I see the need for making a categorization within the films. *Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999) and *The Photograph* (Kazım Öz, 2001) have significant characteristics that separate them from the rest. All films in this study except them refer to the past events that mainly occurred in the 1990s. J*ourney to the Sun* is made in the late 1990s and first screened in 1999 and *The Photograph* in 2001. Considering their production years, they were made in the atmosphere I frequently referred to in this study in terms of the atrocities. This atmosphere affected the distribution and reception of these films as well as their film language. Both directors claim that their films were subjected to censorship implicitly ("2000'lerde Sansür Dosyası," 2014). Although there was not any official ban for screening them, distributors avoided them and even film festivals rejected them because the subjects dealt in these films were considered "too radical" for the period.

This difference affects the film language, as themes, story and characterization are different in accordance with the filmic time. These components are used to reflect the oppression and discrimination towards these characters under a repressive state and nationalist society. The problems addressed in them are primarily how society ignores the Kurdish conflict and does not properly discuss how this highly repressed atmosphere threatens the lives of ordinary people. Although, similar components of style are used in these films, such as epistolarity, emphasis on the affective structure of spatial relations and journey narrative; the

function of these components is to define the truth about the present rather than the past. The shift between these two early films to the latter ones could be articulated as the shifting focus of the temporal occupations. The present is neither ignored nor depicted as peaceful in the later films; on the contrary, the repression in the present is emphasized to indicate that the forms of repression have changed but are still present. All of them reflect a continuum of repression, even during the considerably "mild" periods, the ground for the discussion is hesitant. Hence the atrocities of the past are not reconciled, and violence and repression are reproduced in the present. The police raid in the Kurdish cultural center in *Song of My Mother*, police asking for Hasan in *Voice of My Father*, the malignity Cemil represents in *Mold*, the social exclusion Cemil—the son of a communist and Ayşe/Eleni share in *Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004), and the news about the death of guerillas in Hakkari in *Future Lasts Forever* are the examples of continuum of the violence in the present.

The difference among these films in terms of filmic time determines how film language operates in representing the structures of feeling; moreover, some of the strategies used in them have functions beyond forming the film language. In accordance with the preoccupation with the repressed and silenced memories and structures of feeling in society and in the history of Turkey, the truth about them are registered via specific formal strategies that operate in two levels: discursively and formally. Discursively, these films contribute to the memory activism in Turkey via creating spaces for discussing the past atrocities and problems regarding the repressed subjects. Formally, the claim of verisimilitude blurs the boundaries of fiction and documentary.

6.3 The Function of Sound

Spatial relations and epistles support the role of truth-telling, archive creating, and the structures of feeling generated in them, usually created via the use of sound. As in Avery Gordon's (2008) conceptualization, haunting raises specters

that “alters the experience of being in time” (p. xvi), and we cannot separate the past, present and future as we used to do. Specters are signs of the return of the repressed, what’s been concealed is alive and present. I approach specter as a metaphor indicating the link between certain forms and structures of feeling in a film and that I argue is mostly achieved via off-screen sound in these films. The off-screen sound is basically the asynchronous sound and image relation; unlike the conventional use of sound in cinema, the source of sound in not on screen. Michel Chion (1994) categorizes off-screen sound as active and passive; active off-screen sound incites to look at the source of the sound, as passive off-screen sound does not direct the audience to look elsewhere, but rather creates an atmosphere which stabilizes the image (p. 85). Hence curiosity is not a drive in narrative construction of these films, and the plot is driven by emotions rather than actions; the passive off-screen sound is used to stabilize the image to create overlapping temporalities. Another frequent quality of sound is that it does not share the same temporality as the image, which means that either the image or the sound belong to an earlier temporality. This is particularly true in the use of personal epistles, as in the example of *Voice of My Father*, in which the constant playing of audio recordings is not motivated within the plot, creating a convergence of different temporalities. This example would be evaluated as an example of sound flashback hence sound is from earlier in story than image. *Journey to the Sun* and *Waiting for the Clouds* also include similar examples of sound flashback. Although the traumatic event cannot directly be represented, it enters into the story through sound.

Sound without a source is uncanny. Chion’s passive off-screen indicates territory sounds or elements of auditory setting (p. 85), sounds that do not incite the audience to think about the absence of the source. Defining the asynchronous sound-image relation for the films in this study is rather ambiguous, remarkable off-screen sounds do not incite the audience to see the source, although usually the source appears on screen later. Sounds of helicopters, children shouting student oath, gunshots, praying, lament, trains, high-pitched engines, fire, water dropping, and send-off ceremony for soldiers, regardless if they remain off-screen or not,

constitute soundscape and atmosphere in these films and as well as inform about the territory; they evoke feelings of anxiety, distress, fear, oppression, and grief.

Characters narrating a past event is used as a repetitive form, especially considering the lack of flashbacks in their narrative presents the story information. In these scenes, characters are located in front of the camera, as if it is a documentary in which witnesses share their experience, or the relation between character and their voice is broken at some point. The character speaks with her back to the camera, distant from the camera so that the image-sound relation become ambiguous, or other images and/or characters appears on screen. The voice wanders around, dominating the space, emphasizing the effect of the speech as well as its content.

Unconventional use of sound in these films become a marker and reminder of repressed speech. Silence on the referred events and conditions are not expressed in words explicitly. Speaking about and representing a traumatic event are challenging enough, besides the oppression of the speech suspends the potential of uttering them. Moreover, forced silence is acknowledged in these films; breaking the conventional synchronicity of sound and image reveals that the sound of the image is restrained but the sound does not perish. Sound is the metaphor of the silenced memories that did not diminish but rather alive in the present, haunting the present. Although subjects were forcibly silenced, the truth remains in the memories.

6.4 The Fiction over Documentary

Özgür Çiçek's (2016) definition of Kurdish films made in Turkey as a site where certain unrepresented fact about the history of Turkey is revealed (p. 75) could be extended beyond the framework of the Kurdish film. In this study, there are only two films that would not fit into the discussions on Kurdish cinema framework: *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Mold*. Nevertheless, Çiçek's argument extends to these films, considering their thematic preoccupations on similar

atrocities in the history of Turkey. Borrowing Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of minor literature and Deleuze's work *Cinema II: Time-Image*, Çiçek describes Kurdish cinema as a minor filmmaking practice and argues that time in some examples of Kurdish cinema indicates "the time of an unrepresented national past that is narrativized through cinema" (p. 83). Çiçek specifically addresses to *On the Way to School* (Özgür Doğan & Orhan Eskiköy, 2009)—a film about a Turkish elementary school teacher who is assigned to teach in a Kurdish village where students do not speak Turkish. This film is significant for creating a discursive space for discussing the lack of education in the mother tongue for Kurdish citizens. Although the film does not have script, cast, and a staged setting, it is perceived as fiction by some critics, and the film competed in the best film categories in national festivals. The form of the film has been discussed as a documentary film with element of fiction, and vice versa. Çiçek argues that labeling this film as a fiction reveals the tension in the Turkish imagination "the fear of dealing with the "real"" (p. 78). The denial about the Kurdish conflict is embedded in the Turkish consciousness so deeply that it limits the perception about the film form. The fear of dealing with the truth direct audience to frame the film as fiction—unreal. But at the same time directors construct a conception of a narrative that fictionalize the real story and this directs the audience to think that this film could only be "a fictive narrative" (p. 79). This argument exemplifies how the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction would be blurred when a film is a site for negotiating history and memory. The ambiguity is not just about the form of the film—which might not always be clear-cut—but also about the reception. The political atmosphere and the political consciousness of audience frame the reception of a film. Although this project started years ago, the premier was in Turkey in 2009 which coincided with the democratic opening. In an interview, the co-director Orhan Eskiköy states that they would only dream about the screening in theatres because they thought it would be banned by the state (Günsever, 2009). But the democratic opening changed the political atmosphere that enables public discussion. On the other hand, Çiçek's argument reveals the barriers in the public discussion even during the mildest political atmosphere.

On the Way to School is an exception for being a documentary received as fiction hence it is mostly the other way around. The films in this study use various documentary strategies, especially by using epistles as documents of history. The most striking example is *Voice of My Father*—made by the same filmmakers & producers of *On the Way to School*—would be discussed with its ambiguous boundaries on the documentary and fiction form. The film is based on the true story of co-director Zeynel Doğan's family, family members play themselves and the actual sound recordings of the family are used. Nevertheless, this film is categorized as fiction for having a staged setting, script, acting, and the real story is fictionalized. Although Basê did not experience the Maraş Massacre in real life, this event is at the core of the film. This film project was initiated as a documentary but later directors decided to make it a fiction film. In an interview, as co-director Zeynel Doğan tells the story of this decision, he narrates his dialogue with his mother Basê. She opposes to act as if she experienced the Maraş massacre and Doğan persuades her by telling that she knows these things happened, and even worse happened (Günerbüyük, 2012). Doğan tries to persuade his mother into acting but his argumentation reveals the truth claiming motivation shared in these films. Although all of them are fiction films, there is a strong connection to actual events that attach documentary value to fiction films.

As Marie-Aude Baronian (2010) discusses the lack of image on the Armenian genocide, she stresses the importance of the fictional image in the face of denial. She argues that fiction refers "on the one hand, to the different ways the genocide has been experienced and viewed; on the other, it refers to the only possible modus or expression in the face of the lack of visual means that should have been available" (p. 209).

I argue that her discussion would be extended to the films in this study. I do not intend to compare the problem of accessing visual archive of the 90s to that of the Armenian genocide, which I believe would be injudicious in terms of their historical and social context, but I discuss them together in terms of the very limited public images available. More importantly, I believe that these filmmakers did not

choose to employ the fiction form just because they could not reach a sufficient archive of visuals, but rather because they intended to relay the different ways these atrocities have been experienced by ordinary people. Moreover, the fiction form enables to recreate images that would contribute to function as a material to postmemory.

The documentary value of fiction is also discussed by Ayça Çiftçi (2016), who emphasizes that Kurdish films are one of the major media of publicizing Kurdish memories (p. 88), and illustrates the strategies filmmakers use for building "an on-screen historical archive of the Kurdish issue in Turkey" (p. 101). Çiftçi underlines the importance of breaking the void of representation; the images of Kurdish geography were created by the state in accordance with the official approach towards Kurdish conflict. These films created the representation of Kurdish geography for the first time; the images of cities, mountains, landscape gained a documentary value for the audience who were only subjected to representations produced by the state before. In addition to Çiftçi's argument, the newly represented geography is depicted as privileged via an open form mise-en scene that is marked with signs of occupation. The juxtaposition of occupation and praise for the geography reflect the dilemma on the Kurdish conflict. The oppression does not turn the Kurdish geography into a dystopic space, but contrary to public opinion that encodes western cities safe and eastern cities dangerous—labeled with "terrorism", western cities are represented as claustrophobic. Kurdish geography is reclaimed in these films as open, warm, and hopeful, where characters feel free and hopeful despite the oppression and mourning experienced there.

Epistolarity is discussed as a primary method of engaging with the past in this study, a strategy to include private memories into the discussion on history. In a similar vein, Çiftçi discusses the use of epistles in terms of the problems of accessing historical archives on the Kurdish conflict (p. 100). Consequently, filmmakers substitute archival material with personal collections, and thus epistles function as markers of memory in the films. Epistles gain archival quality, and thus also the films. Çiçek describes these films as a fictive archive, and Çiftçi argues that

they perform a certain claim of truth-telling (p. 105). Both analyses ground their arguments on the strategies these films use, such as the representation of space and use of personal archives. In addition to articulating these films as sites of memory, I argue that these films operate at an affective level that turns structures of feeling aroused from certain atrocities into publicly accessible affects that hold the possibility of evolving into a collective consciousness. As articulated by Marianne Hirsch (1997), collective memory is not only shaped by personal recollections but as the concept postmemory suggests, the mediated images, stories, objects, behaviors and affects constitute it for the next generations. The contribution of these films into memory activism in Turkey is not limited to producing archival imagery, but also making feelings accessible that hold the potential for breaking the psychological gap within society.

6.5 The Value of Registering the Truth

The films in this study share a film language enabling registering truth and affect about the repressed history of atrocities in Turkey that is argued to be continuing into present. The reception of these films in Turkey is not covered in the study, but I should note that they create a discursive space for talking about certain events, histories, and situations in society that have been neglected for so long. Discursive space is not only created via their aesthetics; just by making a film about certain events, they fill the void of representation. This study rather focused on the strategies employed to overcome the silence and repression, as well as the trouble of making films about unreconciled facts, an act that also constitutes a political stand against the hegemonic political discourse in Turkey. Inquiring into the language of this political stand reveals the conflicting systems of understanding the society as well as creating an alternative film language and rethinking the functions of storytelling.

The emphasis on registering truth bring forward the question of choosing fiction as the primary film form instead of documentary, which is conventionally

more accurate for this function. Çiçek's argument on the function of fictionalizing a real story in *On the Way to School* is to lead the audience to think that this story could only be a fictive narrative. This function is a criticism of the perception of the reality. This argument cannot be extended to the films that are only perceived as fiction, as opposed to *On the Way to School* that is also defined as an example of the documentary form. The films discussed here are examples of politically engaged cinema and I argue that the historical framework these films were made, the period of arguably mild political environment for the history of Turkey, created a period in filmmaking in Turkey in which political engagement necessitated registering truth. These films are not made for documenting, but the political responsibility and the approach of filmmakers made fiction films gain a truth registering duty. Moreover, the form of fiction, via setting a fictive atmosphere, holds the potential of substituting what history and facts cannot, opening ways of engagement with the feelings generated from the original event and that were passed to the next generations. Although the past is not reconciled, the ways of engaging with the past are being constructed, which is to some extent a contribution to social dialogue and the struggle for peace.

6.6 Conclusion

Situating the context where the past is remembered is an essential method when working with memory, as its situatedness will provide an insight into the factors shaping the way the past is remembered. Radstone (2000b) describes these factors as triggered associations of memory that refer to ways the past is associated in today's context. Methodologically, this approach suggests looking at indirect references of the past to capture its effects on the present rather than sticking to the ontology of the past event. The films in this study are examples of deferred vision which includes structures of feeling generated from traumatic events. As discussing the films about the history of Turkey made in the late 1990s, Tuna Erdem (2001) argues that the narrational strategies used for engaging with the past function to

inform about the present relation with the past (p. 179). These films were made at a considerably open atmosphere for the history of Turkey. The long silences and repressed memories were given voice to in the Kurdish solution and EU harmonization processes. This period encouraged subjects to speak for themselves and make their memories public. This was an important break for the public discussions in Turkey that had only space for the dominant discourses before. As Nurdan Gürbilek argues for the 1980s, even the periods that speech exploded was also marked by repression on the speech. Being able to talk about a subject for the first time in the public was also an instrument of preventing the speech for specific groups—the leftists, the Kurds, Armenians. Even this considerably democratic period did not open a space for each group to express themselves. These films are filled with hesitations to speak openly. Their language reflects an artistic expression as well as an attempt to speak up against the forced silence. They register the repressed truth, reveal how the past is being lived and sustained in the present and constitute a postmemory for the future generations. Moreover, they become materials to analyze the discussions and strategies developed for the struggle against the oppression in this specific period of time in the history of Turkey, and also the role of cinema in this struggle.

Becoming an archive is one of the ways of speaking up and resisting forced silence. The hegemonic power accesses, interprets and constitutes archives as debated by Jacques Derrida (1995), hence controlling archives is an important instrument of political power. Among these debates, becoming archive is an important resistance within the context of Turkey because the lack of archive prevents to discuss the reliability and objectivity of the archive. Being excluded from the means of representation brings the urgency of documenting. These films, first of all, hold the responsibility and need to say “we exist” and “these atrocities are happening to us”. Speaking up, constituting archives for the future becomes the political responsibility. They produce the means for the postmemory, so that the generations might learn about the past that put an end to the continuum of violence.

CONCLUSION

This thesis concentrated on the relation between memory and the film form, focusing on films that engage with the traumatic past in Turkey, and examining the strategies employed in order to respond to the challenges of making films about the repressed subjects. I analyzed *Journey to the Sun* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 1999), *The Photograph* (Kazım Öz, 2001), *Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004), *Future Lasts Forever* (Özcan Alper, 2011), *Voice of My Father* (Orhan Eskiköy, Zeynel Doğan, 2012), *Mold* (Ali Aydın, 2012), and *Song of My Mother* (Erol Mintaş, 2014) in this study since they engage with some of the traumatic aspects of the history of Turkey, such as forced deportation, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and ethnic and religious massacres. I specifically focused on the films made in the 2000s, a decade which had a relatively mild political atmosphere within the context of the turbulent history of Turkey. The political atmosphere enabled a discursive space in which the repressed and silenced memories were discussed in public for the first time. Emerging in this political atmosphere, these films have transnational characteristics. As debated in the second chapter, they are produced in the transnational mode and positioned to be attentive to politics and power, and critical of a hegemonic national identity. The critical position of filmmakers to the dominant ideology in Turkey determines themes, and the film language employed in the films underlies my decision to use the accented style as a critical and formal tool for analyzing their films. The preoccupation with the traumatic past in Turkey is a political stance all by itself. As I discussed in chapter three and emphasized throughout the thesis, thematic preoccupations and formal strategies enable an audience to see an unofficial version of history. These films register the repressed and silenced memories, as well as structures of feeling emerged as a consequence of not coming to terms with the past.

Truth claiming operates at two levels. First of all, a silenced history is brought forward in these films by drawing convergences between the personal experience and the political and social structures. The characters are carefully

chosen as ordinary people whose lives are shattered by the turbulent politics in Turkey. Secondly, the void of representation of the Kurdish experience is filled by these films. Characters practice their culture and speak their own language. By representing the Kurdish guerillas as characters, these films produce a counter image of the Kurdish guerillas as ordinary individuals, on contrary to the public discourse that perceive them as inhuman terrorists. In *The Photograph*, the bus journey of a soldier and a guerilla juxtapose their experiences and propose to understand them as ordinary individuals whose lives are directed by the politics of war. The Kurdish perspective on the conflict with the state and the armed struggle is conveyed by indicating the social conditions and historical facts unknown to the public eye. Thus, the hegemonic discourse on the Kurds as separatist terrorists is challenged, and the demands of the Kurds are placed within a social and historical context. As I argued in the fifth chapter, the misconception about the region as a dangerous space of terrorism is reversed by representing the Kurdish region as open and beautiful. The lack of public imagery about the region is fulfilled by the images of the Kurdish cities and nature. *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Mold*, as two exceptions among the films of this study, do not engage with the Kurdish conflict but with other atrocities in the history of Turkey. In *Waiting for the Clouds*, the double identity of Ayşe/Eleni reveals and registers a repressed subject: non-Muslims who had to convert to survive.

As I frequently emphasize in this study, the fictive images produced in these films gain an archival value for registering the truth. The representation of the Kurdish geography and cities gain a documentary value for the audience, who have been unfamiliar with the region. The epistles, as discussed in the fourth chapter, substitute and problematize the lack of archive, as well as becoming the archives by themselves. The neglected history is told through personal narratives, and the mass epistles are used to indicate the conflicting memories between the official and personal narratives. The subjects, themes, and the style of these films introduce the repressed and silenced past, and convey the continuum of violence in the present. Despite the preoccupation with the past, the present structures of power are the main focus in them. The continuum of violence is often emphasized as a consequence of

not dealing with the past. As I argued in the sixth chapter, the formal strategies employed in these films constitute a language against silence and repression that communicates the experience of the oppressed, fulfilling the political duty of registering the truth about the consequences of the past atrocities.

In this thesis, I have been interested in the "how" questions and thus focused on the formal strategies developed to engage with the traumatic past and its function within the memory activism in Turkey. Throughout this thesis, I argued that the political atmosphere in Turkey determined the forms of engaging with the past. The films analyzed in this study emerged during a period of political transformation. This period is defined with its considerably mild political atmosphere due to the EU harmonization process that enabled the democratic opening and the Kurdish solution process. Consequently, the voice of the repressed gained public access, as the silenced memories were discussed in public for the first time. Although the preoccupation with memory, and specifically memory activism, in Turkey began earlier, its reach and sphere of influence broadened in this period. I propose to value these films for their archival quality. These films contribute to the memory work in Turkey by creating visual resources that register the truth about the repressed and silenced past, as they transmit experiences that could constitute memory. They hold the potential for creating public dialogues through presenting an underestimated and ignored knowledge about the past.

In this period of political transformation, Turkey did not come to terms with the past, but rather the need for reconciliation became the prominent political perspective. The inspiration for this thesis was conceived in 2012, and I started writing it in 2015. After the election in 2015 on June 7th, the political atmosphere described in this study regressed. According to the information gathered by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey Documentation Center there has been at least 289 officially confirmed 24/7 and/or open-ended curfews in 11 cities and at least 49 districts of Turkey—in Kurdish regions—between 16 August 2015 and 1 January 2018 (Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, 2018). An attempted coup on July 15, 2016 transformed the political, social, and economic conditions of Turkey.

The state of emergency was declared on July 20, 2016 for three months and it has been extended for the seventh time as of May 2018. The possibilities of dialogue and reconciliation are replaced by the polarizing discourses.

Mithat Sancar (2007) argues that the relation with the traumatic past in Turkey is centered upon repression and forgetting, and that the state uses prohibition of remembrance as a means of enforcing this (p. 255). This creates a society in which the perpetrator and the survivor have to live together. No apology or remorse is generated in public that would acknowledge the events as something that should not have happened. Even the right to mourn is either suspended or prevented for the survivor. As the psychological gap within the society is widened, the language of polarization is fixed in the public discourse. As long as the past atrocities are not dealt with and reconciled, extrajudicial acts, violence, hate, and lynching will be established in the society, and the only way of changing this situation, according to Sancar, is dealing with the past in a way that compensates the injustice for the survivors (p. 256). An open and free space of discussion is a must for this process, so that the repressed and silenced subjects would speak up and register their realities. However, the process of coming into terms with the past is not depended upon the survivors, but rather the public which should develop a political will to listen and compensate.

The regression in politics does not negate the efforts during this period. I should also underline that even during this period, freedom of speech had its limitations. The period was always limited to the AKP's political agenda, but the minoritarian could make use of this period to publicize their memories to some extent. A careful look at the period reveals that the discourse on certain atrocities did not change, and thus the ground for discussion could only open in a very limited manner. The discussions of the Armenian genocide are one of the best examples of these limitations. The farthest the discussion could have gotten had been reducing the genocide into deportation. If we consider films as a reflection of the social conversation, the lack of films on 1915 reveal this interaction. I observe that the catastrophic event could only appear as a motif or detail in the cinema in Turkey,

though this notion requires further research. As the constituent atrocity in the history of Turkey, genocide is the core absence in public discourse, and correspondingly in the cinema in Turkey.

I examined the language of these films to understand their memory making function within the memory activism in Turkey. In addition to publicizing the silenced and absent memories and the burden of the past in the present, they have become the records of a specific period in Turkey in which the possibility of dialogue was emerging. As I illustrated with various approaches on the relationship of memory and cinema in the first chapter, I referred to memory making and depository functions of cinema. I value these films as materials of postmemory. Truth claiming characteristics of these films make them materials for transmitting an alternative history. The subjects with no personal access to these memories might be engaged with these narratives that will eventually contribute to creating an open and free space of discussion. These efforts, I hope, will evolve into a political will that acknowledges and compensates the past atrocities in Turkey.

The periodization in this study excluded the formerly made films that engage with the traumatic past in Turkey, likewise the descendent. As an idea for a further research, a comparative study of the films that engage with the traumatic past in Turkey and emerged in different periods would reveal the changing strategies to cope with the silence and repression. As I indicated in the various chapters, the lack of flashback in the cinema in Turkey is also a subject of further study to understand the film language in Turkey. My focus on the formal strategies also excluded the representation of the characters. The gendered aspect of characterization is another potentially vital research topic, as the old women are repetitively portrayed as the keepers of memory.

I observe that the interest in memory has declined since 2015 due to the changing political atmosphere. As the politics of fear and oppression become synonymous with the regime, speaking up against the injustice become the urgent and challenging agenda. The urgency of the now suspends the need to confront the past, although the latter is the prerequisite of the change. This thesis is significant

for focusing on film form to understand the language that emerged as a response to the politics of forgetting. Although the political period I focused on regressed, this subject of study is not outdated. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to understanding the strategies that emerged against the repressive authorities. I hope this thesis, the works I was inspired by, as well as future pieces of research, film, and any other medium, will trigger the emancipatory and hopeful politics.

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