NON-IMAGES AS A COUNTER-MEMORY DEVICE

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Abstract

The camera does not make the area it is aimed at clearly visible; it subtracts it, visualizes it with the effectiveness of a limiting gaze. Only one dimension of reality is presented to the viewer. The reality hidden from it continues to exist out of frame. In some films, on the other hand, the directors choose not to bring the characters on whom they have built the whole filmic universe into view; in other words, they make them invisible. In this way, an image universe is created that feeds off an identity or character that is hidden from the social gaze through a political expression, and creates meaning from his/her invisibility. In other words, the director turns to the political possibilities of his/her invisibility, and treats absence as a form of existence. The past, present and future are opened to discussion through his/her existence based on absence. When we look at the appearance of such characters or identities in recent Turkey cinema, it can be said that they are sometimes hidden by a story of a mass murder, sometimes of isolation, sometimes of an unsolved murder, and sometimes of an endless wait. In this study, all these invisible characters will be defined as *non-images* and the political meaning of absence will be emphasized. In addition, it will also be discussed how non-images can be thought together with Foucault's concept of *counter-memory* in films such as *Kaygı* (2017), *Küf* (2012) and *Babamın Sesi* (2012).

Keywords: Memory, counter-memory, collective crime, genocide, representation, absence.

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Öz

Kamera yöneldiği alanı apaçık görünür kılmaz; onu eksiltir, sınırlayıcı bir bakışın etkiselliğiyle imgeleştirir. Gerçekliğin yalnızca bir boyutu izleyiciye sunulur. Ondan gizlenen gerçeklik ise kadraj dışı olarak varlığını sürdürür. Kimi filmlerdeyse yönetmenler bütün filmik evreni üzerine inşa ettikleri karakterleri görüntüye getirmez, diğer bir deyişle onları görünmez kılar. Belki aynı anda politik bir terennümle toplumsal nazardan da saklanan bir kimlikten yahut karakterden beslenen, onun görünmemesinden anlam oluşturan bir imge evreni yaratılır böylelikle. Yani yönetmen onun görünmezliğinin politik olanaklarına yönelir, yokluğu bir tür varlık biçimi olarak ele alır. Geçmiş, şimdiki zaman ve gelecek zaman onun yokluk üzerinden kurulan bu varoluşu aracılığıyla tartışmaya açılır. Bu karakterlerin ya da kimliklerin yakın dönem Türkiye sinemasındaki beliriş biçimlerine bakıldığında bazen bir toplu katliamın, bazen bir tecridin, bazen faili meçhul cinayetin, bazen sonu gelmez bir bekleyişin öyküsüyle gizlendikleri söylenebilir. Ancak değinildiği gibi filmde bir görünmeyen olarak belirerek, imgesel düzeyde karşılık bulmazlar. Bu çalışmada tüm bu görünmeyen karakterler, yok-imgeler olarak tanımlanacak ve yokluğun politik anlamı üzerinde durulacaktır. Bununla beraber *Kaygı* (2017) , *Küf* (2012) ve *Babamın Sesi* (2012) gibi filmlerde yok-imgelerin Foucault'nun karşı tarih kavramı ile beraber nasıl düşünebileceği de yine tartışılmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hafıza, karşı-hafıza, kolektif suç, soykırım, temsil, yokluk.

INTRODUCTION

> *"Genocide is not an individual crime.*
>
> *Remember what you did to your neighbor and your sibling!"*
>
> *Caché, Michael Haneke, 2006*

This study will focus on how the characters who take place in narrative universes as invisible characters are used in the exposition and discussion of many political dilemmas such as othering, social domination, isolation or identity problems. These characters, who take place in the films to be discussed here and are expressed by a gap or deficiency in the narrative axes, allocate a field of thought in line with how a political issue can be thought together with the idea of "absence". In other words, keeping invisible characters out of the field of visibility creates a thought flow on how to construct a political discussion with the idea of their absence. The fact that these invisible characters are chosen from minority communities, subalterns or identities that cannot obtain adequate representation at the political level provides a basis for asking questions such as what happened to them, where they are now, or what is being tried to be erased from the social memory.

This study focuses not on the narrative structures of the movies like documentary or fiction, but on how these movies deal with absence as a fundamental element. In this sense, regardless of being documentary or fictional works, films are chosen based on their inclusion of absence in the scope of their narratives, and what kinds of potencies and opportunities they bring into question. Descriptive analysis method is adopted in the evaluation of these films, following the determination of a field of absence in them, This method makes it possible to ask questions and think on how the films make use of absence, how they include absence into the world of narrative, how they enhance meaning in the light of absence, and what the political/philosophical implications of the concept are.

Film directors match the imaginary absence with the absence in the social gaze by thinking about the possibility of absence in order to make the audience feel that something is being hidden throughout their narratives. This idea of absence is presented to the audience as a symbol of existence, and a thought flow network is created that can conflict with both memory and the current political regime. Here, by defining the idea of absence, which the director gives life to at the imaginary level, as *non-images*, it will be evaluated how the political discussions that it allows are handled in the selected films. In this sense, while examining films addressing the situations of absence through such concepts as mass murder, isolation, unsolved murder, social oppression devices, marginalization and creating enemies, it will be questioned why these characters are not seen, why they are not imaged like other characters, and what their absence means. In order to elaborate on these questions, it would be helpful to first focus on the documentaries *Shoah* (1985) by Claude Lanzmann, *Night and Fog* (1956) by Alain Resnais, and *The Act of Killing* (2012) by Joshua Oppenheimer, Christine Cyn and an anonymous director, all of which focus on the idea of absence.

In his documentary *Shoah*, Claude Lanzmann films what happened in the Auschwitz concentration camp, based only on the stories told by the witnesses. A major catastrophe is reflected in the present-day manifestations of concentration camps with desolate lands and abandoned buildings, as well as witness accounts. With this pattern of meaning he creates about emptiness and abandonment, the director films the settlements of the camps at length and expects his audience to see absence as a form of existence, in a sense. This argument he builds on the concept of absence goes beyond a space limited by images and makes visible a space that they cannot show. The spectator is left alone with imaginings of what once happened in these empty fields, on the roads, in abandoned buildings, or on the tracks. Contemplating the impossibility of describing the disaster, the documentary *Shoah*, in a sense,

gives a visual identity to the ideas discussed by Agamben in his work *The Witness and the Archive* (2000). Agamben, who discusses in detail that it is not possible to witness, and even if it is, what is witnessed cannot be conveyed, speaks of an intermediate region that goes beyond what is human, which he conceptualizes with the expression of *Musselman*. He emphasizes that only *Musselman*s can testify, but they also lack the ability to make sense of and express or convey what happened in concentration camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Speaking of the Holocaust, it is necessary to mention the documentary *Night and Fog* (1956), which looks for traces of past suffering in barbed wire, dilapidated buildings, watchtowers or mud puddles on the ground. In *Night and Fog*, the director of the film, Alain Resnais, places color images that offer impressions of the present against the black and white archival footage shot in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Making use of the voids, images of abandonment and silences throughout the film, the director carries the past into the present and questions the present. Traces of past suffering permeate all the spaces in the film. Resnais turns to the audience towards the end of his documentary, which makes the feeling of destruction intensely felt, and says, "As the memories fade, we seem to hope again. We assume that the disasters in the camps happened for the first and last time, we say that it happened somewhere only once. We ignore what is happening around us, and we turn our ears to the silent cries of humanity." With these words, Resnais underlines that the reasons behind the disaster and the perpetrators should not be mistakenly thought of as if they were in a distant past, and seems to say that the past is still with us in flowing water, in the blowing wind, on the ground we step on, on the path we walk.

Apart from these two documentaries directed by Lanzmann and Resnais, *The Act of Killing* is also a remarkable documentary that prompts reflection on the political possibilities of absence. Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer in collaboration with Christine Cyn and an anonymous director, *The Act of Killing* depicts how members of the Indonesian Communist Party and opponents of the junta were massacred after the 1965 military coup in Indonesia under the leadership of Suharto. In doing so, the film creates a space where they can calmly describe how they carried out the massacre, by turning the camera on the perpetrators themselves rather than on the victims. How over a million people were brutally and recklessly killed is heard from people who sing, dance, tease, have fun, and enjoy everything they do. While the relatives of the people who lost their lives are not included at any point in the movie, the narrative focuses entirely on how murderers such as Anwar Congo, who carried out the massacre and still roam freely in the streets today, carried out the murders. Many of

these people were members of a paramilitary gang, the Pancasila Youth, who slaughtered people at will, with the direct support of the Suharto administration. Throughout the film, they proudly tell how they were influenced by the gangster characters in American cinema, and how they used their murder methods while killing people. They even state that they developed different methods because they were uncomfortable with blood during the process, and they killed some people by strangling them.

This story of massacre, where there is no lack of joy, undoubtedly invites one to think about how bad an ordinary person can be and on the nature of evil. Hannah Arendt's book *The Banality of Evil* occupies a key position in this respect, as it is often mentioned in the critical texts on *The Act of Killing*. In her work, Arendt positions Adolf Eichmann, one of the main culprits of the Holocaust, as a bureaucrat who obeys orders but lacks the ability to think critically, and she carefully avoids portraying him as some kind of monster or wild creature. Based on Arendt's observations at the court regarding Eichmann, this depiction highlights an ordinary person who follows orders to the letter, in a cold-blooded manner and without reasoning. The perpetrators which *The Act of Killing* focuses on reflect in detail how they enjoyed the murders by displaying an appearance quite far from Eichmann's mood during the court process. However, in both cases, a questioning of one's conscience or an internal conflict are not seen. Ultimately, *The Act of Killing* presents a picture of how evil might manifest in an ordinary life, unlike many narratives that seek evil in a distant geography or in another identity. What the directors are doing with this documentary is to remove the screen from being a kind of consolation and comfort area, and allow people to question the time they are in right now.

The fact that the pains of the past are infiltrated into the present while preserving their actuality also finds its counterpart in the imaginary world of films such as *Kaygı, Küf* and *Babanın Sesi*, which will be evaluated within the scope of this article. *Kaygı* deals with a mass murder that has been erased from the social memory but slowly reveals itself by digging behind the walls, *Küf* deals with the victim of an unsolved murder embodied by the long wait of a father, and *Babamın Sesi* deals with the trauma of a massacre on a family and society, narrated by a father who is not shown but included in the narrative only through sound recordings. Such situations are included in the narratives through non-images and connect the past to the present. In order to question the legitimacy of the present or the normality of current political manifestations, it is necessary to mention the ideas of Michel Foucault, who pursues the evaluation of the past from an alternative perspective. In this direction, Foucault's

concept of counter-memory, which allows one to look through the eyes of people who are deliberately ignored or who are not added to the history they live in by staying under the shadow of those who have won the wars, is also important in the context of evaluating the aforementioned films.

1. ON THE POSSIBILITY OF THE CONCEPT OF COUNTER-MEMORY

Michel Foucault (1993, pp. 35-7) argues that the perception of certainty, which came to the fore with the influence of Hegel's philosophy, also shows its effect on the comprehension and treatment of history. Foucault goes beyond the aura of certainty created by Hegelian ideas, which limits the possibility and scope of thinking and prevents it from being in flux and uninterrupted, and erodes a fait accompli perception regarding the evaluation of history, rejecting direct acceptance. In a sense, this opposition also paves the way for Foucault's reading of alternative history.

Michel Foucault states that the official understanding of history, which is based on the discursive assumption of only conveying history as it is, by wearing the veil of epistemological innocence, has continued its existence with a similar functionality from antiquity to the present day and almost without any changes. In this sense, in Foucault's words, official history is a creator and reinforcer of power, just like sanctification rites and ceremonies (2008, p. 78). In the words of Poster (2006, p. 84), historiography for Foucault is also a form of knowledge and power. It is an effort to control and tame the past under the guise of knowing it. The historian constructs today with texts that will support the current system and power. In a way, Foucault's main issue lies here: to re-evaluate the events from a new perspective by undermining the directly accepted discourses of the past and judgments associated with certainty in order to understand the present.

The basic method that determines Foucault's understanding of history is the *genealogie* method, which he borrows from Nietzsche's philosophy. Through this method, Foucault tries to grasp the background of events, by exposing the complexity of historical events and replacing the understanding of continuity with the understanding of discontinuity; in other words, to make many overlooked or hidden images visible. As a follower of a Nietzschean route, Foucault opposes the structure of history that eliminates differences while embracing only the mission of preservation. In addition to this, he places the constant mobility of the information in the process of being, which can always change, opposite the aspect that is in a fixed place while hiding behind the epistemological mask of innocence, feeding today's

regime with a sense of nostalgia. Behind this understanding of his is the effort to make sense of the present, as well as the relationship between power and knowledge. Moreover, there is criticism of a jurisdiction that intimidates, excludes and is shaped within the framework of the laws it determines while establishing its own power area.

In his introductory text to Foucault's *The Subject and Power*, Ferda Keskin draws attention to the side of the *genealogie* method which makes counter-memory possible, rejecting fixed essences and bringing different identities to the fore. *Genealogie* seeks to decipher and decompose a given identity rather than find its origin. The main concern of this method is to deny that what history has written has an immutable truth. In this sense, he states that historical information does not follow a continuity that preserves its meaning after it is written; on the contrary, many interventions, mistakes and deviations throughout the process have an effect on the process. In this sense, it becomes clear with the *genealogie* method that the identities and limitations imposed on us are not obligatory and can be overcome. In a sense, this method is a methodological tool of rejecting the identities given to humanity (2005a, pp. 22-23).

The constant state of motion between the power balances, which is at the basis of Foucault's understanding of power, also shows itself in his approach to history. In this direction, it would be meaningful to say that the changes that can be seen in the transition from a power form established on the land to a power form that Foucault defines as biopower also manifests itself in the field of history and that knowledge itself is put into practice as a power reinforcer.

It is possible to say that the official history approach as described by Foucault, which can be defined as one of the practices implemented by the power in order to keep the masses under control, mediated the adoption of monopolized knowledge production practices and the unilateral interpretation of history by the people under the rule. Official history infiltrates micro-domains through the channels created by oral or written tools that both confirm and strengthen the power, creating a field of acceptances that are conventional as well as established. Official history, which makes a huge tribute to heroism from a minor situation, functions as a law for those who are subject to power and a kind of experience for those who come after (Foucault, 2008, p. 79).

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situation, acts as a law for those who are subject to power, and a kind of quoting the experience for those who come after the period of power (Foucault, 2008, p. 79).

Foucault states that the traditional principle of history is to increase the glory of the powerful while spreading the law (2008, p. 78). While increasing the magic and brilliance of power, it also opens the way for it to be approved as a structure that is in the hands of the decision maker, has no mistakes and always realizes the truth. People are expected to accept the control and practices that this mechanism exerts on them as a natural process and to swear allegiance to the power. In other words, the official understanding of history, equipped with the effects of the position of power, makes people legally dependent on the power on the basis of the continuity of the law on the one hand, and serves to fascinate people through the transfer of heroism on the other.

Official historiography, by maintaining its traditional functionality, is used as one of the direct power practices, as a way of preventing individuals subject to power from settling in an oppositional point, criticizing the power position or opposing the power discourses that have an impact on their lives. It is aimed to maintain the current order by creating a state of inactivity that constantly affects people. Official history is the history of an order in which opposing voices are suppressed, cynicism spreads and the powerful is the only voice. It consists of a narrative that is connected by a kind of continuity thesis, determined by cause-and-effect relationships. The breaking moments are ignored, and there is no place for fragments, spaces or shadows. The legitimacy of today's events is explained in terms of a perspective that depends on official historical narratives. This is what Foucault means by the continuity thesis. Official history is the legitimacy of the day, a kind of fulcrum of today's power practices. It is presented as a one-dimensional aspect of the truth that is being lived, and it is expected to be accepted. Discontinuity, which Foucault places against the continuity thesis, is an area where breaks and ruptures occur. Discontinuity stands out as a term that indicates starting over and producing as much as it indicates a breaking moment. This term calls reconsideration and creation onto the stage of history (Revel, 2005, p. 41).

The historical approach which Foucault put forward with his discontinuity emphasis excludes the official history approach which renders impossible all differences, moments of rupture or rethinking. Rather, it is a point of view in which all colors are included and differences are observed, which takes interest in what actually happens, what is replaced, removed or transformed (Foucault, 2003, pp. 178-9).

The official history, bound together by the thesis of continuity, is the history of the power-holder, the dominant, the ruling. This history does not include the history of the minorities, of the unvoiced; on the contrary, it excludes them. The power, which represents the majority in terms of its power, stands on the side of the victor and reflects only the voices of those who have a loud voice. The voices of the defeated, on the other hand, are not heard, and what they have experienced is rendered invisible. As Foucault states, this process in which a new discourse, law and obligation is put into action on the side of the victor emerges on the other side as costs such as slavery, tribute and subjugation. Foucault opposes this production of truth, in which only one part is assumed to be a whole, and he places the concept of counter-memory against it. Through the concept of counter-memory, he states that the official history, which is expected to be adopted and accepted without question, does not reflect the history of everyone (Foucault, 2008, p. 81).

The concept of counter-memory is the memory of those who have been defeated, those whose rights have been usurped, and those who have been rendered invisible in the social structure. It makes visible or heard those who are condemned to silence and ignored through the devices of power. It becomes a voice for those who cannot be heard, accompanies them in moments when they are surrounded by silence, guides them to continue their existence. It allows them to resist in all impossibility and lack, and to remember what potential they have in the face of power, sometimes just by surviving. It takes them from the land of despair and makes them subjects of hope. Excluded, obscured memories and experiences are transferred to the future through counter-memory. These memories, which do not comply with the official history and are not included in the common social memory, undermine the established with a disintegrating effect. As underlined by Jose Medina, through counter-memory, those who remember information that is not included in the scope of official history reach those who have memories like themselves and enable their memories to be revived (2011, p. 12-17). They nurture people who have had similar experiences to their own and empower them. Memories get stronger by crowding. In this context, counter-memory is also the rebellion of the information that is tried to be subjugated. In other words, Foucault's concept of counter-memory can also be considered as an effort that deconstructs the linear operation of history, tries to bring to the surface as essential elements of the historical scene individual life experiences, instant experiences, silent screams, shadows, and buried individual memories that official history tries to hide.

The defense of counter-memory also creates a field of struggle against the blinding enlightenment of official history, which illuminates one side while leaving the other side in the dark by ignoring it. Counter-memory, as Foucault positions it, reveals how the glare and the magic of the powerful can be deceiving, hiding behind a dazzling halo of light, leaving one side in darkness. What Foucault is trying to do with the concept of counter-memory is to pit the history of the defeated against the official history, which is always on the side of the victors. It is to be a voice for the silent masses who could not speak until today, whose words were taken from them, who were condemned to various forms of domination and who were exploited (Foucault, 2005b, p. 171).

Starting from the next chapter of this study, a discussion will be carried out on how identities which are silenced by the state's oppression and ideology devices and moved out of the field of visibility find an expression in cinema, specifically in the selected Turkey films, based on Foucault's thoughts on the concept of counter-memory. Foucault states that people who are deprived of speech cannot speak, and even if they do, they cannot speak their own language because a foreign language and concepts that they do not belong to were imposed on them. According to Foucault, all these utterances, thoughts and concepts imposed on them are almost a trace of their wounds. They permeate their thoughts and even the posture of their bodies (2005b, p. 172). The figures that embody silence and invisibility of identity, who have to live with the wounds they carry on their bodies and minds, are defined as non-images within the scope of the study. In this direction, it will be discussed how non-images are used as a counter-memory device in the films to be discussed, and how the filmmakers feed on these moments of invisibility and silence.

2. THE DROWNED AND THE SAVED

Theodor W. Adorno's statement "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." does not only suggest that Auschwitz cannot be represented in an aesthetic narrative in general, but also points out the need for a new narrative form that can make this possible. Can the Holocaust be represented? Perhaps the first answer to this question is that it is not possible to represent one of the greatest disasters in human history. So much so that Arendt (1993, pp. 13-14) states that while they were discussing the issue with her husband, they thought that what they heard at first was too terrible to be true, and that people could not go that far. But she states that she was in for a real shock as the evidence came to light. Of course, says Arendt, a people can have an enemy just as every person has an enemy. This is completely natural. But what happened in Auschwitz is completely different. A huge chasm opened up there. A situation

other than anything that can be compensated in politics. As Arendt puts forward, the methods applied, the production of corpses, create a situation that people cannot comprehend and can never come to terms with. On the other hand, as Ulus Baker has stated, trying to see and present the concentration camps as an ultra, extreme situation may mean refusing to grasp the logic of that atrocious organization of the Nazis, and therefore refusing to recognize a threat that can still visit humanity (Baker, 2011, p. 179). In that case, it would be a more appropriate approach to accept the existence of the threat as a situation that can infiltrate every moment, rather than belonging only to a distant past.

When this extraordinary situation, which had not been experienced before throughout the history of humanity, created a crisis about how images should be produced, filmmakers also attempted to seek new ways of representation outside the existing narrative methods and aesthetic forms. Undoubtedly, as Arslan underlines, films produced in line with the discussion about the narrative possibilities of cinema and how the disaster should be portrayed in cinema do not prepare the ground for the production of a politics that will prevent these disasters from happening again. However, these films can produce ruptures, breaks and new states of subjectivity that lead to this kind of politics. They can pave the way for subjectivities that think together what is here and what is not, making them politically active. Moreover, they show the potential to confront us with the impossibility of moving on by ignoring our complicity with a culture that has produced horror (Arslan, 2020, pp. 43-309).

In this respect, it is important to evaluate the traces of non-images, which appear as an original form in trauma representations and are based on the idea of absence, through the documentary films mentioned at the beginning of the study and examples from Turkey cinema. The moments of absence, which appear before the audience with these films and are surrounded by non-images, inevitably encourage the audience to think about what causes the absence, to become conscious of what is happening and to rethink the images. Similar to what Serdar Öztürk suggests, this form can make the audience question the absence and pave the way for it not only to remain at a virtual level, but also to move to the actual (2018, pp. 137-142). While non-images visualize disaster in this sense, instead of archival images or heaps of corpses, they present an image regime where lands of murdered people, abandoned houses, derelict places, pits, mud puddles, forests or meadows are shown. This is an unbearably powerful image type as Baker puts it. It calls for high vision (Baker, 2011, p. 175). The viewer is called outside of an area determined only by framing and demarcated and into an

intermediate area that can be seen with the mind and can activate many senses at the same time.

In this context, *Night and Fog*, one of the documentary works mentioned in this study, is the scene of a formalist search for Resnais in a similar fashion. Bringing the traces of the past to the present, *Night and Fog* removes the boundaries between two temporalities with the connection it establishes between archive images and the emptiness and abandonment of the present time. The specificity of the film stems from its character inherent in the narrative structure, allowing for this intertemporal combination and intertwining. This narrative structure is evident from the very first moments. At these moments, the color images that mark the present time in the film are followed by archive images. With this transition to the march of Nazi soldiers, the past and the present begin to be undermined. Resnais maintains this kind of transitivity throughout the film, creating an ambiguous flow in which the border between two times is removed, instead of temporalities running parallel to each other. This ambiguity enables a perspective change in which the past haunting the present is visible (Yıldız, 2015, p. 112).

Libby Saxton, while evaluating Alain Resnais's style that blurs the boundaries of these times and that he maintains throughout his documentary, suggests that the use of color images of today together with black and white archive images of the past, as well as the use of the camera by Resnais, shift the ground under the feet of the audience and presents them with different perspectives. Saxton states that in this way, the director creates a space where the viewer cannot isolate himself/herself from the camps of concentration and extermination, and prevents the viewer from looking at what is happening from a safe distance (Saxton, 2011, pp. 145-47).

Alain Resnais gives in *Night and Fog* the first indications of a sense of time that he would later trace in films such as *Last Year at Marienbad* and *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. In this direction, Resnais aims to find the trauma of the past in the present, almost as a psychoanalyst, as Arslan points out. His treatment of time is not linear but circular. In his imagination, a linear flow and cause-and-effect relationship disappear. In other words, he brings forward an understanding of time based on the present which has been overrun by things that have remained in the past. One of the issues that come to the fore with this understanding of time is how to live together with the historical object, the past, the injustices experienced in the past, and the other is the form of the relationship to be established with the past in order to learn to live with it. According to Arslan, the first of these is the issue of

ethics, political justice, responsibility, and the second is of the cinematic form or aesthetic preference (Arslan, 2020, p. 21).

This narrative style, in which the boundaries between the times are blurred, carries the crimes of the past to the present, that is, to these moments of absence and emptiness that Resnais creates by using non-images. The traces of the disaster are no longer an event followed in comfortable spaces through a distant past, and have evolved to a point where the viewer of the documentary questions his own ethical position today. Wrapping the pains of the past with an invisible imagination, non-images have an impact on the political determinations of remembering. In other words, they bring the pain to the present by taking the pain out of the discourse of "it happened once" together with the emphasis on absence. Here, the past or historical object, which is described with the use of non-images, is positioned as an ignored point within the present, and demands its own share of truth as absence. It invites us to recognize our own role in its formation and to take responsibility. It calls upon us to traverse and assume our destiny as linguistic, ethical, political subjects (Arslan, 2020, p. 21).

Shoah, directed by Claude Lanzmann, on the other hand, positions non-existence as a form of existence by directly putting non-images into use, without resorting to archival images, unlike what Resnais does. According to Lanzmann, since no archival document or a fugitive photograph can represent the absoluteness of Shoah's horror, he shapes his film around a confrontational actuality without resorting to such documents. Therefore, Lanzmann carries out a performative operation by relying on memory and testimonies on the plane of words (Baker, 2011, pp. 171-172) The narrative universe of the film consists of dead moments surrounding a thick silence that conventional narrative forms do not accept. The nexus between past and present is made visible through personal recollections. The documentary, which proceeds through the testimonies in the concentration and extermination camps, visualizes the traumatic dimension of the disaster with the emotions and shock moments in the facial expressions of the witnesses as they try to remember the past. Throughout his narrative, Lanzmann visualizes the countryside bearing the traces of this great disaster, trees blown by the wind, fallen leaves, empty train cars, or abandoned spaces. The pain, suffering and cruelty of the past have now been replaced by a great void. The non-images form, which stands out as a form of expression in the representation of this great destruction, equates the disaster with absence, the voices rising from nature and a pair of old eyes wandering into the distance.

The other documentary mentioned in this study, *The Act of Killing*, reverses the position of the audience, who is always identified with the victims in the classical narrative universe, and invites them to take the ethical responsibility of the position taken against the massacres. The intertwining of the re-enactments of how the massacres were performed with the improvised moments creates a visual space in which the ghosts and horrors of the past are carried to the present. In short, the directors who made all three documentaries, while emphasizing the political value of remembering and reminding through these three films, demand from their viewers to realize how the past has spread to the present and to build the future through the moment of confrontation with this sense of awareness.

When we look at the manifestations of this absence-based cinematic and ethical understanding in Turkey cinema, the film that will be considered as the first example of the use of non-images is *Kaygı*, directed by Ceylan Özgün Çelik. While using absence as a path to remembering, the film creates a field of thought where remembrance can be used as a resistance and counter-memory argument. While the non-images form is used in response to a social reality that has been erased from the social memory, the memory of the film's protagonist, Hasret, which opposes the dominant narratives, takes place as a counter-memory practice. Similar to what Umut Tümay Arslan (2020, pp, 217-218) said about the movie *Caché*, *Kaygı* does not attempt to represent a historical truth as a consumable one at any time, but instead attempts to understand how this truth can be hidden and how a present can be rebuilt in oblivion. It is concerned with how forgetting can spread to a whole social stratum through which ways.

Hasret, who works as an editor for a news channel, has nightmares about what happened to her parents for a while. These nightmares force her to reconsider what she knows about the loss of her family. Hasret's questioning about her own past gradually extends to the memory of the whole society. Her past is connected with the Sivas massacre, one of the traumas experienced in the country's recent history. At this point, her own past and the past of the country are intertwined, creating an area where personal memory and social memory come together. In addition, Hasret's effort to remember what happened also makes it visible how one of the biggest massacres in the recent history of the country was erased by the media and other power devices.

As Foucault emphasizes while defining the knowledge and power relation regarding the forms of social control, *Kaygı* describes a social structure in which the perpetrator is nobody and everybody at the same time (Poster, 2006, p. 87), and depicts a social structure devoid of

social consciousness, where the ties between the present and the past are broken, by giving references in parallel with dystopian literary texts such as *Nineteen Eighty-Four, We, Fahrenheit 451* and *Brave New World*. Memory loss, which affects the whole society as a serious disease, causes individuals to break their continuity and ties with the society and their own subjectivity.

In the context of the relationship that the film establishes with social memory, the rapid transformation of living places with the urban transformation in the background, the change of street names and the destruction of cultural and historical places give this state of forgetting a spatial theme. In this sense, the deletion of places from social memory along with events stands out as a factor that accelerates the amnesia of the society while eliminating the sense of belonging of people. In other words, while the one-sided broadcasting approach, driven by power, manipulates the facts, the urban transformation mediates the eroding of the visual texture and instilling it in the minds with a sense of meaninglessness. The past is rearranged as cities are relentlessly transformed behind the endless noise of construction. An order is built that makes one forget everything.

As mentioned, the broadcasting policy of the channel Hasret works in has an impact on the depiction of this story of forgetting, which reminds us of the lines;

"Now we are standing at the shore of a thought serene/

to not to forget because we are at the effortless land of forgetting"

a poem by Onat Kutlar (1999, p. 77).

Even the name of this channel, Tek TV ("tek" means "one and only"), gives the audience the first indications about a social structure in which monophony prevails, as well as the character of the government, which uses the media as an ideological device for its directives to reach the masses by suppressing plurality. In the film, while the discourses that the government tries to consolidate through the media channel aim to fix the society within the given norms, the construction of the past as desired also serves to prevent the formation of social memory as a resistance. While the gap between the existing reality that Hasret observes and the reality that the channel presents to its viewers gradually widens, the ground on which Hasret stands becomes slippery in the same direction, causing the character to gradually lose reality.

Hasret's experiences lead her to a moment of confrontation about what the truth is. This moment of confrontation lays the groundwork for one of the greatest traumas in the history of a country to come out of Hasret's story of confronting her own past. At this moment, a layer is

formed where individual memory connects to collective memory. While Hasret confronts her own past, that is, what is hidden from her, the society also confronts its forgotten recent history. It is understood that the historical object that the power has erased from social memory and prevented from being visible or known is the Sivas Massacre and the victims of the massacre. It turns out that the director took the massacre and its victims out of the frame and conveyed the issue using non-images form.

Hasret's recollection, which opposes normative expectations, is placed at the center of the narrative as an instrument of resistance and counter-memory. In this sense, the film depicts what is hidden as an area of debris that overflows from the mind and spreads to the environment, and points to counter-memory as the element that will allocate a new order by removing these ruins and destruction. In order for Hasret to make the counter-memory work, she must face reality not only for herself but also for the society, by removing the false fabric on the surface. Her recollection implants a memory that does not fit into established knowledge production practices, as Foucault describes. Around this idea, the film invites the audience not to forget and to always remember, so that the social memory can exist with all its vitality and power. The moment of Hasret's confrontation is also a sign that the massacre was not an event that happened and ended in a period of history, and that the wounds have been carried to the present. In this sense, the film seems to remind us that a responsible future is only possible by confronting and owning the wounds.

Another film that deals with another wound in the history of Turkey, again a social massacre, by using the non-images narrative form is *Babamın Sesi*. The film, co-directed by Orhan Eskiköy and Zeynel Doğan, focuses on the Alevi massacre in Kahramanmaraş in 1978. Shedding light on a dark period in which one killed his neighbor just because of his sect, through a unique cinematic language, *Babamın Sesi* utilizes the narrative possibilities provided by non-images, and uses the area outside the frame to describe a past time full of ruins. The original sound application, which is inherent in the narrative universe of the film, brings the wounds of the past to the present, making it possible for both the protagonist of the film and the audience to confront the past. It is possible to say that the sound track, when considered independently from the images in the film, is a living testimony of a period beyond being a narrative element. Along with this, it is seen that the sound recordings take place in the world of meaning established by the film as a kind of connection that binds the parts in the film, as the main element that introduces the characters. Due to the application of

the non-images narrative form, what is not included in the image becomes the voice of the unexplained (Kablamacı, 2016, p. 280).

The main character of the movie, Mehmet, comes to visit his mother Base, who lives alone, also to listen to the tapes containing his father's audio recordings. This is exactly one of the *ghost houses* described by Asuman Suner, which are frequently visited in the new Turkey cinema, where traumatic experiences from the past are felt again and again, where past crimes are revealed, and where horrors roam under the normal and ordinary appearances (Suner, 2015, p. 16). After searching this house, Mehmet learns about the effect of a massacre on his family, which he had no idea about before, and how it separated them from each other, through audio recordings and newspapers of the period. In this way, the thing that the father reflected on the tapes in a fragile and sad way and hidden from the children is revealed.

Dealing with how a mass murder traumatizes a family and society, *Babamın Sesi* inserts the counter-memory hidden in the sound recordings into the dreary silence of the present. Sound recordings become evidence of the existence of something that is not shown to the audience. All that Mehmet tries to learn, the reasons why his brother left home and why his father turned into an immigrant laborer are all hidden in these tapes. Audio recordings answer questions that the footage in the movie doesn't: The mother's having to live with the burden of the past, the dead silence that descended on the house. As the recordings are revealed, voices from the past haunt the present and the silence of the routine is broken. Against the imposed collective memory, a different kind of remembrance opens up. *Babamın Sesi* does not transfer past experiences into visual language. Damaged past and everything that happened years ago is included in the narrative in the form of non-images. The sound recordings, which replace the images in the film, not only convey the traumatic experience of the past, but are also used as a counter-historical device by bringing to the present the common history of the families who were oppressed, silenced and who suffered losses. A history that speaks from the shadows, as Foucault describes it, comes to life. This is a history that does not conform to the normative expectations of the dominant ideology and has a disintegrating effect. While using the non-images form as a narrative model in which the counter-memory is revealed, the film destabilizes and nullifies the dominant history by re-activating the memories that are ignored by it. Along with this, *Babamın Sesi* also functions as a counter-historical device in itself, thanks to the fact that people who lived through the period took part in the film crew and original sound recordings from the family archives were used in the film.

Küf, directed by Ali Aydın, on the other hand, uses the non-images narrative structure to tell the story of a father waiting for his son, who disappeared after being detained during a protest at the university. Basri, who writes petitions to find out the whereabouts of his son, who has been missing for years, cannot reach any results for a long time. No one gives the slightest information about the whereabouts of his son. However, Basri continues to write petitions to get news from his son, despite the state officials despising, belittling and even torturing him many times. The son, who is a lost subject in the film, that is, a non-image, is the sole reason for Basri's survival and existence. For Basri, there is no handle other than his own truth, no safe shelter from the shadow of the truth (Köse, 2016, p. 145).

This determined wait of Basri, which spans many years, finally ends when he is given a small chest that is said to contain the remains of his son. The lost son, who could not be heard from for years, is just a detail that has no importance for the state. A father who has spent his entire life in anticipation, and a mother who died in despair without ever hearing from her son, would not be recorded in official history. This loss, which Ali Aydın describes using the form of non-images, also reveals an area where violence is clearly used against those who oppose the state. This is an area where the law does not work, where the law is suspended and violence is applied irresponsibly. Basri's act of remembering, which the state tries to suppress by vulgarly saying "forget", positions memory as a tool of resistance by producing a counter-memory that does not comply with official knowledge production practices.

The non-images narrative form surrounding all these films, followed by an inquiry into the absence that emerges out of it, leads the viewers to a tendency to overcome all kinds of historical and social determination, with a counter-memory formed by struggles and objections to the given, and the line of escape offered by it, as Köse expresses (2016, p, 138). In response to the need to be fixed in an enclosed space individually or socially, it instills a consciousness of rootlessness. As Kablamacı (2016, p. 283) underlines, the state of silence surrounding the moments when absence prevails in the image is at least as important as dialogue, because in these moments of silence accumulated in the image, longing, uncertainty, uneasiness or fear are expressed, or the invisible is shown. The sound track separates from the image and reveals what we cannot see or what we overlook.

CONCLUSION

The idea of absence has undoubtedly visited cinema many times, starting from the theory of intervals, in which Dziga Vertov produces meaning through the interconnection between two

images, although they have different implications. Robert Bresson, who is after the transcendental image, does not show the execution of the action, but produces the meaning with the sounds heard outside the frame. In *Son of Saul*, László Nemes blurs a part of the image by restricting the depth of sharpness with selective depth of field application, and creates a reflection on how much we can see by making the image a divided surface, also creating a thought flow network on absence.

When we look at the reflection of absence in Turkey cinema, it is possible to encounter many films in which political and ethical issues are opened for discussion. In the documentary *Ben Uçtum Sen Kaldın* (2012) by Mizgin Müjde Arslan, absence is associated with a father who disappeared years ago and allows a story of confrontation to be conveyed. In *Ana Dilim Nerede?* (2012) by Veli Kahraman, on the other hand, absence is paired with a dying mother tongue. In *Gelecek Uzun Sürer* (2011) by Özcan Alper, it is seen that absence again lays the groundwork for a story of loss and confrontation with the past. In *Tepenin Ardı* (2012) by Emin Alper, which focuses on the issue of otherness, the Yörüks, who are considered to be responsible for all evil, are presented in the form of non-images.

Documentaries and fictional films which are examined through the idea of absence in the study turn to the source of invisibility by using the form of non-images. They treat absence as a form of being and image, and create a discussion area about why the absent is not brought into view. Documentaries dealing with the Holocaust or the mass murders in Indonesia have traces of how today's order or politics were established, how what was dismissed as happening "in the far end of the world" or "once in a while" has infiltrated into the present. The past comes together with the absence in the form of a being through non-images and invites the audience to take responsibility for imagining a peaceful future.

In the Turkey films examined, a different way of remembering is constantly opened up. Under the decisiveness of a Foucauldian counter-memory, the past is brought to the present against what is dictated and imposed, sometimes through sound recordings, sometimes through a character alone in a quiet night, sometimes through the opening of a chest.

In *Kaygı*, a massacre erased from the social memory by the ideological apparatus of the state is matched with the invisible. This absence is combined in the mind of the protagonist firstly with a feeling of intense lack. Then we witness that the protagonist is gradually drawn into a claustrophobic atmosphere as in Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965). The exit from this mood takes place with the policy of remembering and reminding against the forgetting of the majority. Hasret's individual memory turns into a Foucauldian counter-memory instrument,

bringing both mental and spatial criticism to the agenda. It reminds us that our memory is transformed not only by social events that are forgotten and devalued, but also by cultural spaces that are not protected, burned down and destroyed. When we look at the movie *Babamın Sesi*, we can see that the sound recordings are used as a kind of counter-memory device, and memories of the others that are not articulated within the memory of the majority are revealed through these sound recordings, which come out of their hiding places, making today's legitimacy questionable. In the last film we have discussed, *Küf*, the act of remembering combined with individual resistance makes visible the disproportionate use of force and lawlessness of the state.

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