

**Silencing *On Board***  
**Silent Representations of Women in the New**  
**Turkish Cinema**

By  
Ozlem Guclu

*Submitted to*  
*Central European University*  
*Department of Gender Studies*

*In partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies*

Supervisor: Professor Jasmina Lukic

**Budapest, Hungary**  
**2007**

## **Abstract:**

This study explores the functions of the different forms of silences of the female characters on the New Turkish Cinema screen through representative examples. I discuss the functions of the silences of female stories, female point of view and female characters under the four main types of silences- *silencing silences*, *resisting silences*, *complete silences* and *speaking silences* in order to reveal both the dominant meanings and the possibilities and limits of the alternative meanings.

## Acknowledgements:

I want to thank my supervisor Jasmina Lukic for her tremendous support, and for everything she taught me. She is the one who always trusted in my work and motivated me every time I lost my patience and energy.

I want to thank all of my *dear* friends for making life bearable, easier and fun during the thesis writing period.

## **Table of Contents:**

<b>Introduction:</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: The New Turkish Cinema and Women's Silences</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1 The New Turkish Cinema:</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2 Women's Silences in the New Turkish Cinema:</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1.3 Typologies of Silence and Representative Examples:</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Silent Body- Silencing On Board</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>2.1 On Board: The Male Gaze at The Woman</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>2.2 The Male Gaze at Silent Woman:</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>2.3 Inscriptions on Her Body:</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter 3: The Possibilities and Limits of Resistance in Silencing Silences</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>Conclusion: Listening to the women's silences</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>Appendix: The stories of the movies</b> .....	<b>46</b>
<b>Bibliography:</b> .....	<b>54</b>

## Introduction:

In my thesis, I will focus on the silenced representations of women in the New Turkish Cinema since I noticed that there is a striking number of “silenced” female characters, both literally and symbolically, on the screen. My main questions are: what roles and positions are given to the silenced female characters? How these silences are functioning? What are the functions of these women’s silences in the New Turkish Cinema? By asking these questions my aim is to put this “silence” for rereading of the films from a feminist perspective in order to make them “speak” and to detect how contemporary Turkish cinema addresses gender issues and also how the social status of women is translated into filmic texts. My intention is to find what the different forms of women silences mean in the New Turkish Cinema’s language. I will try to find the answers through representative examples of the New Turkish Cinema from different genres and from both popular and art cinema productions and through a close- reading of *On Board*[*Gemide*] (Akar, 1998).

This topic is very important, firstly because there are so many “silenced” female characters on the screen that it does not seem to be a coincidence. However, most of the research on the New Turkish Cinema leaves the “silenced” representations of women outside its scope of reflection (Donmez-Colin, 2004, Koc, 2004). What is more, even the few film analyses that are performed from a gender perspective that acknowledge the presence of “women’s silences” as far as characters, stories or the gaze are concerned (Akbal Sualp, 2004; Suner, 2006), need to be critiqued for their lack of descriptive approach. If we want to understand the reasons for all “silenced” female representations and the functions they are given, we need to carry out a critical analysis of the representative films.

My research is primarily focused on film analysis. In the first part, in the section “Typologies of Silence and Representative Examples” I will propose a working typology of

silencing women in the New Turkish Cinema and introduce my characteristic examples; then I will propose a close-reading of *On Board*, a film, which involves the representative elements of *silencing silences*, that is, one of the categories I introduce within the proposed typology.

There are two main reasons for choosing *On Board* for a detailed analysis. First, it is one of the best known examples of the New Turkish Cinema and it is evaluated as an important piece with its success at national and international festivals<sup>1</sup> by cinema authorities in Turkey. However, the female character's highly and explicitly problematic silence has not been raised up as an issue, except one or two journal articles (Akbal Sualp, 1998, 1999; Algan, 1999).

The movie is illustrative for a certain kind of the representations of women through the body, gaze and voice. For my research I will also use other representative examples from the New Turkish Cinema, in which female characters are forced into different forms of silences, in order to analyze different forms, functions and meanings of silences which are attributed to female characters in different roles. I will also do discourse analysis of the press interviews with the directors, of the reviews, and of the poster of the movie since these materials can give us relevant clues for the systemic silencing (if there is any) behind the movie itself and help us understand how it is supported by opinion setters and authorities in the Turkish cinema.

In the first chapter, I will establish the characteristics of the New Turkish Cinema and offer its working definition for my thesis. Then I will discuss briefly the newness of the excess visibility of masculinities and the women's silences in the New Turkish Cinema. In the last part of that section, I will provide four main types of women's silences- *silencing silences*, *resisting silences*, *complete silence*, *speaking silences* -as a working typology in order to formulate the dominant meanings of silence in the New Turkish Cinema. Then I will

---

<sup>1</sup> 1999 Cannes Film Festival Selection Officielle Semaine Internationale De La Critique ; 8th Istanbul International Film Festival International Critics' Week ; 35<sup>th</sup> Antalya Film Festival Ministry of Culture Best Film Awards 2<sup>nd</sup> Best Film Award and Best Director Award; 11<sup>th</sup> Ankara International Film Festival Jury Special Award, Promising New Scenarist Award and Promising New Director Award; 10<sup>th</sup> Orhan Ariburnu Awards Best Film Award and Best Director Award.

present the main aspects and functions of these silences through the analysis of representative examples (for more detailed description of the examples, please see the appendix).

In the second chapter, I will analyze in detail *silencing silences* through the close-reading of the movie *On Board*. I will explore the different ways and various levels of control over the female character which is maintained through the male gaze, voice and social codes of patriarchy which is written on the female character's body. I will analyze the movie mainly through Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze which is based on reproduction of the culturally built notion of sexual difference on the screen through different techniques and strategies (1989); Kaja Silverman's theory about discursive power in filmic texts which is constructed on the gendered representations of voice and silence in Hollywood movies (1988); and Elizabeth Grosz's argument about the social, cultural, epistemic or disciplinary messages which are inscribed on bodies (1990). .

In the last chapter, I will explore the possibilities and limits of the female resistance in *On Board* in connection with the other movies of *silencing silences* since in my view, it is also crucial to search for the possibilities of alternative readings in order to understand the functions of these silences.

# Chapter 1: The New Turkish Cinema and Women's Silences

In this chapter, I will present the characteristics of the New Turkish Cinema and of the silent women representations. After that I will provide silence typologies for the female characters' silences in the New Turkish Cinema and discuss them through the representative examples.

## 1.1 The New Turkish Cinema:

Turkish cinema entered the 90s with a severe crisis which is named as “years of decadence” by Atilla Dorsay, who is one of the major authorities on cinema in Turkey. He named the two main causes of the crisis as the following: First, the arrangements which allowed American distribution companies to open branches in Turkey<sup>2</sup>. Second, the incipient private channel broadcasting which brought a new kind of understanding of entertainment to people's houses (Dorsay, 2004i: 12-13). As a result of these changes, the Turkish cinema productions declined and only a few of them had the opportunity to be screened.

After the crisis years, the mid 1990s witnessed a remarkable revival of Turkish cinema through popular films' achieving box-office success and through the art cinema productions' receiving acclaim and awards at both national and international festivals (Suner, 2004: 306).

Asuman Suner defines the characteristic of the New Turkish Cinema at the intersection of two main parameters: The national frame which is indicated by “Turkish” and the time frame which is indicated by “new”(2006: 28). The first parameter includes the effects of the economic, social and political context to the cinema while the second parameter is evaluated by starting a new epoch through the changes in the national cinema narration (Suner, 2006: 29).

---

<sup>2</sup> The changes in the Foreign Capital Law[Yabancı Sermaye Yasası] allowed foreign companies, especially American ones, to found a company for distribution and screening.



My understanding of the newness of the Turkish cinema follows Suner's framing. Some authors use "Turkish cinema in 90s" (Kirac 2000; Onaran & Vardar, 2005; Posteki, 2005i) instead of the New Turkish Cinema. But this kind of framing refers only to time and therefore it is not sufficient to connote the newness of this cinema. I deem fit and proper to use the New Turkish Cinema in the sense of the period, which not only indicates the time, but also the rupture with the previous, and the changes, which suggest new and different style or/and story formula in the national cinema narration.

Suner also brings another parameter to define the characteristic division in the New Turkish Cinema: "popular" and "art" cinema (2004, 2006) which is formulated by other authors in different ways: "mainstream / alternative" (Sirin, 1999), "commercial / independent" (Evren, 2003\ 2004; Guven, 2004; Kirac, 2000; Posteki, 2005i), "popular / independent" (Posteki, 2005ii). I want to use Suner's framing in my thesis since I found the other formulations problematic.

I choose to use popular cinema instead of "commercial" or "mainstream" since popular cinema refers to the intention of box-office success and also to the cinematic strategies and techniques (themes, narration, soundtrack, chosen actors, lighting...etc.) and marketing strategies (promotion campaigns, widespread distribution...etc.) which are used to make the movie popular. In my opinion, using commercial or mainstream for the popular cinema productions highlights only the intention of box-office success, but overlooks the rupture with the previous period in the sense of cinema techniques and how they are used in a new way for box-office success.

I choose to use art cinema instead of "alternative" or "independent". Firstly because, when independent is used in opposition to commercial, with its financial connotation, it also refers to popular productions as most of the directors from the popular wing, especially in the first years of the New Turkish Cinema, shot their films through their own funding. But art

wing's independence can not be reduced to economic independence. Art wing's productions also involve the independence from the dominant understanding of cinema in the sense of themes, narration, technique, production, of cinematography. Therefore usage of art wing implies both economic independence and alternative productions. One other reason is the usage of art cinema also indicates the received acclaim in the prestigious international festivals. Because with the awards of or with participation into these international festivals, with the success in the international arena, the films from this wing are "approved" as art.

The new epoch in the national cinema indicates the beginning of a period which the cinema industry managed to get over the industrial crisis especially by popular wing's productions which "are stylish, technically polished, and promote themselves with American-style marketing glitz"(Dorsay, 2004ii: 11). We can claim that the popular cinema does not create a new style but a new formula which is the combination of the classical themes which were used several times before (love versus money, personal integrity versus material success), with the Hollywood's polished style (Suner, 2004: 306). In addition to this, the popular cinema can be characterized by big-budget productions, star actors, intensive promotion in the media, and widespread distribution in the domestic market<sup>3</sup> (Suner, 2006: 33).

The popular wing of the New Turkish Cinema began with *The Bandit*[Eskiya] by Yavuz Turgul in 1996. *The Bandit* was the movie which used the story formula, which was mentioned above, for the first time. This formula was used again and again by the popular wing. *The Bandit* seen as the ideal combination of Hollywood style and local themes with sentimentalism and also sensitivity to social problems (Maktav, 2002-2003: 230). The movie's enormous box office success and the formula for it introduced a way out of the

---

<sup>3</sup> The star directors of popular wing are Yavuz Turgul, Sinan Cetin, Mustafa Altıoklar, Yılmaz Erdoğan. Star actors of the popular cinema are Sener Sen, Yılmaz Erdoğan, Cem Yılmaz, Okan Bayulgen, Mehmet Ali Erbil.

financial crisis which Turkish Cinema had had. And the box-office success starting with *The Bandit* continued thereafter.

Uygar Sirin argues about the movies from the popular cinema as follows: “[these movies] stood very close to each other in the sense of making mainstream cinema. With their stars, screenplays, directing, sound recordings, ‘polished’ pictures, soundtracks demonstrating power in the music markets, garish promotions, and also with their bill posters they fulfill the needs of the commercial cinema”<sup>4</sup> (1999, 88)

The changes in the art cinema begins with the films which have simple style, with the narration of marginalized lives, of Other lives, of the invisibles\ inaudibles and of “silenced” topics such as Kurdish identity, the state’s discrimination and assimilation policy on minorities, and with the new and young directors most of whom directed their first films in that epoch.<sup>5</sup> Most of these directors perform multiple roles in the production process such as writing, shooting and sometimes acting. The art cinema, which is characterized by small budget and independent productions which have limited distribution and promotion opportunities, initiates the new epoch in the national cinema industry by its rising success in the international arena.<sup>6</sup> Sirin also argues about the movies from the art wing in the same article by stating: “While these were happening in the ‘centre’, of course ‘periphery’ did not stand idle. Young movie makers’ increased interest in alternative cinema... reached the peak with the 1998 Antalya Golden Orange Festival.<sup>7</sup> *Somersault in a Coffin*, which was appreciated by most of the audience and received acclaim abroad, can be shown as the starting point for the revival of this wing”<sup>8</sup>(1999, 88).

---

<sup>4</sup> It is my translation.

<sup>5</sup> The crowning directors of the art wing are Serdar Akar, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Zeki Demirkubuz, Kudret Sabanci, Yesim Ustaoglu, Dervis Zaim.

<sup>6</sup> *Somersault in a Coffin* (Zaim, 1996) won FIPRESCI Jury Award. Innocence (Demirkubuz, 1997) won Angers Film Festival Award and Georges Sadoul Best Foreign Movie Award. On Board (Akar, 1998) was included in the Cannes Selection Officielle Semaine Internationale De La Critique.

<sup>7</sup> Antalya Golden Orange Festival is the most prestigious film festival in Turkey. It is the first national film festival which was organized in Turkey. 2007 will be the 44<sup>th</sup> year of the festival.

<sup>8</sup> It is my translation.

While *The Bandit* was the fireworker of the popular wing, in the same year, Dervis Zaim's *Sommersault in a Coffin*[Tabutta Rovasata] gave a start to the art cinema of the New Turkish Cinema by winning twenty one awards in national and international festivals. The success in the festivals enabled the art cinema to become visible. In addition to this visibility, this movie with its simplistic, unique and powerful style became a foreshadow of a new narration both in the art cinema and in Turkish cinema in general.

The other important point about the New Turkish Cinema is the newness of the noteworthy testosterone in the narration. Even though it has been discussed so many times by several authors that Turkish cinema is a male cinema in the sense of the male dominance in the industry (Abisel, 2005; Suner, 2006; Ulusay, 2004), it has never been so intense before in terms of representations and stories. Suner calls this period as “men's cinema” (2006), Gonul Collin-Donmez uses “macho cinema” (2006) instead, and Nejat Ulusay classifies some productions from both art and popular wing as “male movies” (2004).

The New Turkish Cinema is differentiated by its male centered stories and male point of view (Suner, 2006). Those movies stress on friendship among men, male bond, father-son relationships, through the stories which tell the relationships among men and their adventures.<sup>9</sup> Some movies do not stress male bond or male friendship, but tell the stories *of / through* the male characters, their lives, problems, conflicts, feelings and adventures<sup>10</sup>.

It is also crucial to indicate that these men's movies re-present manhood in association and in valuation with heterosexuality and rarely give place for homosexual masculinities. In most of the movies, the “hysteria” which can be evoked by the representation of

<sup>9</sup> Representative examples: *Istanbul Under My Wings* (Altıoklar, 1995); *The Bandit* (Turgul, 1996); *Hammam* (Özpetek, 1997); *Mixed Pizza* (Turagay, 1998); *Everything's Gonna Be Great*, 1998); *Propaganda* (Cetin, 1999) *Balalaika* (Özgenturk, 2000), *Hemso* (Ugur, 2001); *Wild Heart: The Hell of Boomerang* (Sinav, 2001); *Where are you Firuze?* (Akay, 2003); *Ivy Mansion- Life* (Oguz, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Representative examples: *Sommersault in a Coffin* (Zaim, 1996); *Innocence* (Demirkubuz, 1997); *On Board* (Akar, 1998); *A Madonna in Laleli* (Sabanci, 1998); *The Clouds of the May* (Ceylan, 1999); *Destiny* (Demirkubuz, 2001); *9* (Unal, 2001), *Confession* (Demirkubuz, 2002); *Distant* (Ceylan, 2002).

homosexuality is overcome through the jokes on homosexuality or through the mocking of the homosexual characters<sup>11</sup> (Ulusay, 2004: 155).

## 1.2 Women's Silences in the New Turkish Cinema:

If we take a look at how women are (in)visible on the screen in the New Turkish Cinema, it is not so hard to notice that female stories or female point of view are silenced. Moreover, we are faced with a striking number of “silenced” female characters, both literally and symbolically on the screen.

It is really “interesting” that the two movies, *The Bandit* and *Somersault in a Coffin*, which are considered as the beginning of the new epoch, the New Turkish Cinema, involve two silent female characters: Keje who chose not to speak in response to her forced marriage with a man she does not love and The Junkie Woman who is shown mostly while she is looking far away in mute pictures. Even though their silences function in different ways<sup>12</sup>, they have something very important in common: As Suner argues, they are represented as a shadow, as a ghost in the men's world which is told in those movies and we do not know what those women think, live or feel (2006: 311).

In the New Turkish Cinema's male world female characters, female point of view and female stories are mostly put into the outsider position or at least they are kept on the edges of the story. Suner argues that the New Turkish Cinema does not look at women directly, does not bring the female gaze to the films (2006: 292). She claims that while this position reproduces the strong patriarchal system in Turkey on the other hand it includes a self criticism since it is aware of the partnership with patriarchy by not trying to tell stories about women or to show female point of view (2006: 292). In my opinion, this approach can be considered as too optimistic and problematic since the New Turkish Cinema does not totally

---

<sup>11</sup> It is crucial to indicate that the representation of homosexuality in the New Turkish Cinema is limited by male homosexuality.

<sup>12</sup> The different functions of silences in these two examples will be discussed in the following section.

reject the representation of women but gives “proper” places to women as vehicles in the construction of the male subjectivity, the male stories or the male world.

Ulusay argues that the movies which could not kick women completely out, make them mute instead and therefore cast them out of the narration (Ulusay, 2004: 154). Women silences are mostly used for the male characters’ speeches about the world, for their narration, for their meeting with each other, for their conflicts, or their solidarity, for telling their stories<sup>13</sup>.

If we consider that voice and image operates together in the cinema, in several examples of the New Turkish Cinema, silencing female characters, representing them through the (different forms of ) silence also make reproducing male gaze’ s control over female body easier. It is the filmic techniques exclude female narrative and represent the female character as an object of desire and of male fantasies: a silent, obedient, beautiful, erotic image<sup>14</sup>. Therefore control over the female character is strengthened by the technique of imprisoning “woman” in a mute picture on the screen. The male gaze that dominates in the New Turkish Cinema positions female subject as only a body by defining her with reference to her “proper” / “silenced” place in the male world.

If we look at the cinema journals and magazines especially in the late 90s, we can see that women’s silences were covered and suppressed by the authors and authorities in media. With the exception of two or three articles (Akbal Sualp, 1998, 1999; Algan, 1999) no one brought women’s silences on the screen as an issue. No one made interviews with the silent characters of the movies or no one asked the directors anything about silent female characters. No one listened to the women’s silences. The problem of silence was overseen and was silenced and normalized which makes me claim that the silencing of women in the New

---

<sup>13</sup> Functions of women’s silences will be discussed in detail through the representative movies of the New Turkish Cinema in the following section and also in the second chapter.

<sup>14</sup> These filmic techniques will be discussed in the second chapter in detail.

Turkish Cinema has a systemic character which is supported by the media and opinion setters of the cinema.

Representations are not independent from and participate in certain power relations through which discourses around sexual difference and subjects of those discourses are produced (Kuhn, 1997: 204). In this sense, representations can be regarded as strategies of normalization and as forms of regulation (1997: 204). Therefore, representations of women which are produced in films cannot be considered only as “harmless” images, rather they set in play certain power relations through which discourses around sexual differences and gender roles are re\produced. It is very urgent to analyze representations of women in the New Turkish Cinema since they function as re\producing gender distinctions and hierarchy and the definition of “woman” with the support of the media and of the opinion setters of Turkish cinema.

Female characters are stuck in a labyrinth, which keep them “outside”, “outsider”, “other”, from which they can not escape easily. It is time to ask the question which was posed by Sualp: “Which unspeakable words and unarticulated dilemmas are represented by silent women, or what does the director could not say?”<sup>15</sup>(Akbal Sualp, 1998: 13).

### 1.3 Typologies of Silence and Representative Examples:

I introduce four main types of women’s silences which are used in the New Turkish Cinema: *silencing silences*, *resisting silences*, *complete silences* and *speaking silences*.<sup>16</sup>This a working typology which makes formulating the dominant meaning / message of silence in the New Turkish Cinema possible. The literature, which I use in this study, on silent representations of female characters mostly focuses on “female” meaning of silence and its possibility of performing resistance to the symbolic order which is identified with male power

---

<sup>15</sup> It is my translation.

<sup>16</sup> This is a working typology of silences in the New Turkish Cinema.

and domination (Kaplan, 1993; Silverman, 1988, 1990) which is not enough to understand different forms of silences in different contexts. But the typology I suggest reveals that there is neither one meaning of female silence nor of resistance on the screen. And power relations around speech and silence can change depending on silence's use together with other filmic elements.

*Silencing silences* are used to keep female characters on the edges of the story through overlooking the female stories and the female point of view. In this type of silencing, female characters are represented as vehicles for the male stories. Female characters are used as the tool for the male characters to meet with each other, to enter the conflict or to tell their own stories.

Another silencing way in this typology is keeping female characters under control with the support of the film techniques and strategies. This kind of control is exercised through overstressing the beauty through fetishization of female body, and victimization and/ or punishment of the female body.<sup>17</sup> In most of the movies, female characters are represented as objects of the male gaze, objects of crime or / and of punishment, and objects of desire. Therefore, their silent presences are put into a safe or “proper” place which minimizes the female silence's possibility of evoking subversive readings and of disrupting the male order in the movie.

*Istanbul Under My Arms* (Altıoklar, 1995), *Everything's Gonna Be Great* (Vargi, 1998), *The Ivy Mansion- Life* (Oguz, 2003) are movies from the popular cinema which silence women especially through narration. Female characters who cannot speak because of several reasons, because of not knowing Turkish or of illness, are kept on the edges of the story which provides double silencing of women in the movies. In *Istanbul My Arms*, the silent female

---

<sup>17</sup> These techniques and strategies are going to be deeply discussed on the example of *On Board* in the following chapter.



character, who is a slave of the main male character, is a foreigner and cannot speak Turkish. In *Everything's Gonna Be Great*, one of the brother's girlfriends who is Japanese and a tourist in Turkey and cannot speak Turkish. In *The Ivy Mansion- Life*, the main female character enters a coma in the beginning of the movie and speaks only at the end.

*Somersault in a Coffin*, *Innocence*, *On Board*, and *A Madonna in Laleli* (Sabanci, 1998), are examples from the art cinema in the New Turkish Cinema, and all of them represent one of the very important characteristics of that wing: All these films are about the Others in the system, about the marginalized ones in the society, about the ones who are “not worth worrying about”: drug addicts, homeless people, alcoholics, poor people, pimps, prostitutes, criminals. They tell the stories of the ones who live as outsiders *inside* the society, of the “wastes” of the society. But there is always the Other of the Other. The story which tells about the lives on the margins is not balanced between male and female characters and mostly make the female character the Other of the Other.

In *Somersault in a Coffin*, through the story of the main character Mahsun we watch the lives of the subalterns who are imprisoned in the big city. The story of the film tells the hard life *outside* by showing Mahsun's struggle to stay alive. The only woman character in the film is a heroin addict. While we can see how the male characters try to stay alive, their hard lives in the streets, their friendship, the solidarity among them, we do not see how this woman manages to survive. We just *see* her presence. The only thing we know about her is that she is an addict and she uses prostitution to find the money for heroin. The image of her most often used in the film is while she is sitting in a café, looking at the sea without saying a word. She sometimes talks to Mahsun about everyday, trivial issues, but she herself and her story are silenced both through the narration and the camera.

In *Innocence*, the main character Yusuf is released from prison after ten years. He was sentenced for an honor crime for killing the lover of his married sister and shooting her in the

tongue, which made her become mute. In other words, Yusuf punished her sister's disobedience to the rules of the patriarchal society by making her silent. She threatened the male order by her uncontrolled sexuality and is punished with being imprisoned in silence. Her ability of speaking is taken from her and therefore she is reduced to the object position and to a mute body on behalf of which male characters (can) speak.

In the scene in which Yusuf comes to visit his muted sister and her husband, we see the husband's complaints about her. He tells Yusuf that her behavior and her refusal to communicate with him in some way kill him since she treats him like an enemy. Then he beats her with his belt. We see her falling down and then the camera only shows the husband beating her with a belt. In this scene, we see her being punished because of her "crime" - her uncontrolled sexuality - which makes the husband have the fear of not being good enough. In Karen Horney's view, man's fear of woman is very much connected with not being good or man enough since within the script of heterosexual sex men are expected to be sexual, powerful and in control (1967, quoted in Ussher, 1997: 89). She argues that any kind of failure might suggest that a man is not "man" (1967, quoted in Ussher, 1997: 89). Here, the husband's punishment can be seen as a response to her uncontrolled sexuality which evokes this "manly" fear, fear of rejection and lacking. But at the same time, she is represented as the victim of the crime through the beating scenes. Therefore, the husband's vulnerability and loss of control are annihilated through the female character's victimization.

In *On Board*, which is going to be analyzed in more detail in the following chapter, a female prostitute, who is the only female character in the movie, is a foreigner and does not know any Turkish. She does not speak a single word in the film. She represents the trouble in these men's world and a threat to the order. And as a threat, she is controlled through different filmic techniques and strategies. She is harassed and raped again and again but we do not hear any word or see any reaction from her. During the film, she is carried from one place to

another like an object. Her make up never spoils although she is kidnapped and raped. Her mute, beautiful, obedient existence represents the object of desire of sailors, their fantasies, and their fears.

*A Madonna in Laleli* and *On Board* have an interconnected story since *On Board* tells the events going on the ship after the fight of sailors with the pimps<sup>18</sup>, *A Madonna in Laleli* tells the story as it happened on the land. The Woman is the only common character of these movies. She does not speak in this movie, too. She is silenced not only by mute representation, but also by reducing her to a body through fetishism (close-ups of her body parts) and voyeurism through punishing her and victimization. She is represented as mute in the face of violence in this movie too. Her body is cut, and sewed for hymen reconstruction surgery in order to raise her price for prostitution, but we do not see any mark of pain or of horror on her face. Again here, she is the object of crime and of punishment together. Violence to her body is the punishment of prostitution, of her uncontrollable sexuality, of her as a threat. On the other hand, she is victimized through this violence especially with the scene in which she is shown on the gynecologist's examination table in the middle of a blood bath.

But it is crucial to indicate that even in the *silencing silences* there are some moments at which female characters' silent presences open up a possibility for subversive readings and for resistance, which will be examined in the third chapter.

In *resisting silences*, different from the *silencing silences*, we see female characters who are using silence as a resistance to the rules of the patriarchal system and as a response to the decisions which are made on behalf of them. Therefore they manage to overturn the passive message of silence.

---

<sup>18</sup> For the story of *On Board* see appendix 1.

*The Bandit*, tells the story of Baran the Bandit. After his release from prison, he goes to Istanbul to get revenge upon his former best friend Berfo who snitched on him to the police in order to marry Baran's lover Keje. Along the way, Baran meets with Cumali, who is a tough young man and a dealer, and becomes a friend to him. The story begins with Baran's search for his love Keje, but later focuses on the friendship of Baran and Cumali and ends with Baran's killing and dying for Cumali.

As we can understand from the summary, *The Bandit* is a film about men's world. A male story from a male point of view about how to stay alive in the men's world and how hard it is. The main female character chose silence after her forced marriage with Berfo and have not spoken any word during 35 years. After her marriage, "Keje neither speaks a word nor give a child," as Berfo says. This is the resistance to the forced marriage and the rules and destinies which are prewritten for women in the society.

In *Mrs. Salkim's Diamonds* (Ustaoglu, 1999), we see another example of *resisting silences*. The movie tells the story of the changing lives of the minorities in Turkey after the law which established a tax- wealth tax<sup>19</sup> - on minorities who live in Turkey. The female character Nora, who is under psychiatric treatment, is represented sometimes silent and sometimes talking. But she talks completely from some other world, a world of memory, she talks in her *own* time and *own* place and about her *own* topic. Again, her topic is related with repression, because of her being sterile, she has been raped by her father-in-law, Sabit Pasa (later in the movie we learn that her husband is sterile). Nora rejects entering into any kind of dialogue with her husband when he comes to visit her. She just asks him "Do I know you sir?" or tells him when he brings a present to her "I do not know you sir, I cannot accept your

---

<sup>19</sup> Wealth tax was a Turkish tax levied on the wealthy citizens in Turkey in 1942 with purpose to finance Turkey's emergency military expenditures in World War II. It was imposed on the fixed assets of all citizens. However non-Muslims such as Jews, Armenians, Greeks were taxed far more heavily than Muslims by the reason of reducing the minority populations' control over the economy. Lots of people who could not pay the amount demanded for the tax within 30 days were arrested and sent to forced labor camp in Askale in eastern Turkey.

present”. When she starts talking, she talks in monologues and tells about the rape, the father-in-law, and about her not being sterile. And also we learn about the rape, which is a family secret, from the scenes which reveal Nora’s remembering, thoughts, and her memory. At the end of the movie, she kills herself. We see her in the middle of the blood bath, we understand that the blood flows from the vagina to the legs while she is saying “I have an intimate talk with Sabit Pasa, he will be there in a minute. I am giving birth to the son he wants, his seed”<sup>20</sup>.

If we think about Nora’s silence and her monologues, she completely uses silence as a resistance to the patriarchal order and to the family which chooses silence in response to her being raped. She uses silence as a strategy to resist the whole family’s silence and the male rule which gives the right to Sabit Pasa to “inseminate” her. Her monologues also expose her power over the male discourse as she talks in her own rules and about the unspeakable ones, the family secret, and the marks of violence on her body and on her memory. Therefore, Nora’s silence both gives voice to unspeakables and resists speech of the male order.

In addition, the scenes which show her remembering and her memory expose the secret, which is her silenced reality, as she remembers, thinks and feels. Therefore, with these scenes, the story manages to provide a female of view, it is told through Nora’s point of view and her perception, and also make us sense a link between Nora’s pain and the violence towards women in the “real” world.

It has to be mentioned that just like the resisting points in *silencing silences*, there are silencing points in *resisting silences*. Keje starts speaking when she meets with Baran after 35 years. But it is “interesting” that after that moment the story turns into a male friendship / father-son relationship between Baran and Cumali and she is kept mostly outside of the story and we do not *see* her speech on the screen. That brings us to the point that even though

---

<sup>20</sup> It is my translation.

female characters' silences mark a gap through which resistance can take place, in some instances they can not get rid of being kept outside the narration and of being excluded from the symbolic.

*Mrs. Salkim's Diamonds* is one of the movies in the New Turkish Cinema which manages to overturn the dominant message of silence- passivity, obedience- and to perform resistance to both patriarchal order and male discourse. It shows the female experience with a female point of view which allows the spectator to see women's lives, feelings and concerns. But on the other hand, it does that through self- destructiveness of the female character which is going to be discussed in detail in the third chapter.

In *complete silences*, female character is not seen on the screen, but she is the utter vehicle of the story. The story starts and goes on because of her. The other characters speak about her, but she does not have any chance to speak since she is not present. This type of silence can also be defined through Teresa de Lauretis's concept of "non-being of *woman*" (1990: 115). She explains "non-being of *woman*" as follows:

the paradox of a being that is at once captive and absent in discourse, constantly spoken of but of itself inaudible or inexpressible, displayed as spectacle and still unrepresented or unrepresentable, invisible yet constituted as the object and the guarantee of vision; a being whose existence and specificity are simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled (Lauretis, 1990: 115).

The movie 9 (Unal, 2002) is an example of *complete silences*. The movie tells the story of an investigation of the murder and rape of a homeless young woman, whose nickname is Hedgehog, in one of the districts of Istanbul. We see people from the district being interrogated in a room by the police. They all tell that they are liked by their neighbors, they are good citizens, they have simple and quiet lives and they have no connection with the girl and the murder. But as the story develops, and their lives are scratched by the questions of the police, we are faced with their contradictory testimonies about each other. Throughout the

movie, we listen to the story of murder and who Hedgehog is from different perspectives, and through the story of her, the suspects actually tell their identities, lives, and relationships.

In this movie Hedgehog is completely silenced since she is the one who is spoken of and no chance to reply. One suspect tells that she is a Jew, the other tells that she is a Romanian or a Russian prostitute. Some tell that she is mad, some tell that she is smart. Who is she? She is a non-being in Lauretis's term: She is the one who is constantly spoken of but inaudible and whose existence is asserted and denied, negated and controlled simultaneously by the *visible* characters' testimonies and by the movies itself. She is investigated through the movie, and since there is not one and the only truth, she is positioned as an uncatchable, unreachable image. At the end of the movie, the key to identify the murderer is given to the spectacle and therefore the investigation is accomplished.

In the *speaking silences*, the movies speak the silence of women and how they are silenced in society. In *Waiting for the Clouds* (Ustaoglu, 2003), the story of a silenced woman who goes on a journey to find her suppressed voice, words and speech is exposed. Ayse has kept silent about her Greek origin, and her true identity for half a century because of the assimilation policies starting with the Turkish nation building process<sup>21</sup>. When her sister dies, she unlocks memories of her family's forced deportation, starts speaking in her own language and she embarks on a journey to find her long-lost brother. The story of suppression and

---

<sup>21</sup> "In the 1970s, the Turkish Republic was a country in great social and political upheaval, and its gargantuan neighbour, the Soviet Union, was a constant source of fear and paranoia. Turkish Communists and anyone else deemed an "other" were watched closely by the government. Intolerance and suspicion reigned supreme. This atmosphere was especially intense in Turkey's north-eastern region which includes the Black Sea city of Trabzon, only a few hundred kilometres from the border with Soviet Georgia.

Since antiquity, north-eastern Turkey was a crossroads of Greek and Turkish cultures, and these co-existed peacefully until the fall of the heterogeneous Ottoman Empire during WWI. Not far west of Trabzon is Trebolu, a fishing village formerly populated by Pontic Greeks, and this town provides the setting for WAITING FOR THE CLOUDS. Through one of Trebolu's elderly inhabitants, a woman named Ayse, we will learn of one nearly-forgotten episode of the war, a terrible result of Turkish-Greek animosity, in which the Ottoman army in the winter of 1916 evacuated villages west of Russian-occupied Trabzon. Greek residents were forced to suffer hasty, haphazard and deadly deportations in what was an early example of ethnic cleansing (cited from the production company's web site [http://www.flyingmoon.com/eng/clouds\\_e.html](http://www.flyingmoon.com/eng/clouds_e.html))".

assimilation in Turkey speaks through her silenced language, identity, and religion. The unspeakable speaks through her silence.

As we see in most of these examples, in the New Turkish Cinema female stories are written on silences and women are defined, described and controlled by male stories and gaze. Women characters are the tools which are used for the male characters' speeches about world, for their narration, for their meeting with each other, for their conflicts, for their solidarity, and for telling their stories. Male characters and their stories in these films talk through women's muteness. We are faced again and again with women who are reduced to silence.

But the silence on the screen cannot simply be formulated through the opposition of *speaking silences* and non-being of woman. Because there is no complete *silencing silence* and *resisting silence* does not completely overcome silencing. Since they are intertwined, only the dominant message / meaning can be formulated under these four titles. Otherwise there are instances even in the very radical examples of *silencing silences* where female characters manage or at least attempt to escape the controlling power of the male gaze or narration and resist or subvert / disrupt the whole silencing system. Because, even though there is a continuous attempt to reduce female characters to a body through a silent picture or to keep them on the edges of the story through silencing their stories, feelings, thoughts, they are present, they are there and that presence in itself opens up the possibility of escaping from that systemic control.

## Chapter 2: Silent Body- Silencing On Board

In this chapter I will analyze in detail *silencing silences* through the movie *On Board*. It is one of the representative examples of *silencing silences* which exercises control over the female character in different ways and on various levels. A particularly shown controlling tool



proves to be the male gaze which reduces female character “to-be-looked-at-ness”(Mulvey, 1989). Rewriting social codes of patriarchy on / through the female body is another important controlling mechanism clearly present in this film.

## **2.1 *On Board: The Male Gaze at The Woman***

The cinematic apparatus refers to what Kaplan argues: “the cinema works to suppress discourse, to permit only certain ‘speakers’, only certain ‘speech’”(1993: 12). Laura Mulvey’s essay on “Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema” is very important to show the distinction between the male gaze and the female image since it allows us to see how the male gaze, which reduces female characters “to-be-looked-at-ness”, functions as a controlling gaze in the film and therefore how cinema operates as a gendered / gendering apparatus of the social order by permitting mostly male gendered “speakers”, mostly male “speech”.

As Mulvey argues, the magic of the cinema lies in its “skilled and satisfying manipulation of visual pleasure” (1989: 16). Central to this visual pleasure is “scopophilia” or “pleasure in looking” (Mulvey, 1989) which is defined as “taking people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze” (Mulvey, 1989: 16). She claims that scopophilia starts from using another person as an erotic object through sight and is developed through narcissism and the formation of the ego which comes from identification with the image seen on the screen (Mulvey, 1989: 18).

“In a world ordered by sexual imbalance” (Mulvey, 1989: 19) cinema as a gendered\gendering apparatus (re)produces the culturally built notion of sexual difference - active male and passive female- through the male gaze. As Mulvey argues, the determining\active male gaze projects its fantasies to the female figure and the woman, with her passiveness\receptiveness of the gaze, connotes only “to-be-looked-at-ness”(1989:19). She argues that the male character carries the story forward, making things happen, controls

the film fantasy and functions as the representative of power, as the bearer of the look while the female character is reduced to her passive spectacle position (1989: 20).

This active / passive split of looking is sustained in cinema with three sets of looks. The first one is the camera's look, which "comes into play in the very act of filming" (Kaplan, 1993: 15), which technically seems neutral, but is voyeuristic (Kaplan, 1993: 30). The other two are characters' looks at each other within the film text itself and the audience's look which is made to identify with the male gaze, "and to objectify the women on the screen" (Kaplan, 1993: 15).

Mulvey argues that woman as an image always threatens to evoke the castration anxiety it signifies and there are two ways to escape from this. First is through voyeurism, which is eroticization of woman, investigating woman, or showing her in a victim position, and then either punishing, demystifying or saving her. Voyeurism "is involved pleasure through control or domination and with punishing the woman" (Kaplan, 1993: 31) that affirms mastery of the male character (Mulvey, 1989). Second is through fetishism which shows woman's body with extreme aesthetic perfection. Fetishistic strategy focuses on fragments of woman's body in close-ups. Therefore the female character is valued only for her erotic look, beauty and desirability (Mulvey, 1989).

In the example of *On Board*, both voyeurism and fetishism are used through the camera's look. Camera gazes at fragments of the female character's body in close-ups. We see only her legs, lips, and breasts through the camera's gaze several times. These close-ups start with her first scene on the ship. After they bring the female character to the ship, we see her legs in close-up while Boxer is laying her in bed. In the scenes during which Boxer rapes her, the camera focuses on her breasts. In the scene just before she is been raped by Ali, the

camera shows her legs and hips in close-ups. In one of the scenes in the Captain's room, the camera shoots her legs under the table in close-up.

In and through those scenes, the Woman is positioned as an object for the male gaze and is constructed as "to-be-looked-at". The images of her in close-ups shows her fetishized place. And fetishistic technique both poses and resolves the problem that the female character represents a sexual threat through an overt valuation only of her beauty, erotic look and desirability: "In film, fetishism often takes the form of a sexualization of women's bodies or parts of their bodies, ascribing a phallic connotation to a female body part (legs, breasts) in order to reclaim the woman and rid oneself of the threat of otherness generally and the threat of castration specifically" (Walters, 1999: 236).

These fetishistic close-ups also work together with voyeuristic techniques in order to emphasize male character's control over her body. One of the close-ups shows her legs together with Boxer's hands petting her and then stripping her knickers off. In another scene, we see her legs in close-up again while she is being carried by Boxer who rapes her in the following scene by which the affirmation of the mastery\domination of the male character is completed.

The close-ups commence with her being brought to the ship in order to "save" her from the pimps. This is also an indicator of male control and domination over female character and therefore voyeurism. The female character, as a threat, is "saved" from the pimps that is the first level of control and of resolving the threat. And her body is shown in fragments and in a completely eroticized fetishistic way which fixes her as an image and makes every detail of her knowable.

Another level of control which is connected with the voyeuristic technique is maintained through the victimization of the female character. The female character, who is

“saved” from the pimps by the male characters at the beginning of the movie, is shown as vulnerable and as a victim. It is not wrong to say that she is victimized through rape and persecution by the male characters. But the usage of this voyeuristic technique sustains sadistic pleasure which is coming from looking at the control and domination of the male characters over her body. Victimization affirms male mastery through presenting her body in a helpless and vulnerable position which can also be read as a method of resolving the threat by positioning her in a “safe” place for the enjoyment of the male gaze. Her hands and her mouth are shown tied in a striking numbers of scenes.

The close-ups which show her with tied hands and her unsuccessful attempts to escape put stress on her helplessness and the male characters’ domination. These unsuccessful attempts indicate that she can not go anywhere and therefore she as a threat is not dangerous anymore or she is not a threat anymore. The film ends with her being left wounded in the street. It is also usage of voyeuristic technique. She is punished for ruining the “order” on board and is thrown out.

Robin Wood argues that the creatures in horror movies represent both the aggressor and the victim since they are the representation of the *other* (1985, quoted in Akbal Sualp, 1999: 15). Since the target of the violence are the *others* which these creatures represent, they become the object of crime and of punishment and are wrecked by the violence of the movie (Wood, 1985, quoted in Akbal Sualp, 1999: 15). The Woman is also represented as victim and threat. She is the threat to the “order” of the ship, and therefore to the male order but at the same time she is victimized through the scenes that I mentioned above. She becomes the object of the crime -rape and harassment, but she also becomes the object of punishment. She is raped several times which is the punishment for her “sexual availability”, for her accessible body as a prostitute. She is left wounded which is the punishment for threatening and ruining the “order” on board.

Mulvey argues that women in Hollywood movies tend to slow down the narrative since action is mostly frozen to pose female characters to afford the opportunity for their erotic objectification (Carroll, 1990: 351). Noel Carroll gives Raquel Welch's statue-like posing as an example to indicate the opportunity which is given to male viewers to appreciate her beauty (1990: 351): "Women are passive; men are active. Men carry the narrative action forward; women are the stuff of ocular spectacle, there to serve as the locus of the male's desire to savor them visually"(Carroll, 1993: 351).

Mulvey's argument is valid for the Woman in *On Board*. Most of the scenes showing her are composed of close-ups to her body parts and of cuts to her body in which she is posed like a mannequin. In a striking number of scenes, she is posed just lying down on a bed or just sitting with her beautiful, unspoiled, provocative appearance. In some of these "just appearance" scenes, she is posed with tied hands and mouth which strengthens her "frozen" pose and therefore her erotic objectification through a reinforcement of her helplessness and stuckness. In some other scenes in which we see the Woman in action, her action is frozen by close-ups of her body parts. These scenes freeze the action by overemphasizing her erotic and beautiful look. Therefore, her being reduced to "to-be-looked-at-ness" and her sexual objectification is maintained.

The Woman is shown with aesthetic perfection which indicates another level of control over her. Her body and appearance are shown as "too good to be true". Although she is raped, harassed and persecuted, her hair, clothing, and make-up are not spoiled. She is always posed in full make-up. Her hairdo always looks as if it was just dressed. She is fixed in a perfect and ideal appearance that keeps her, as a threat, under control. This aesthetic perfection positions her in a "safe" place for the male gaze. In one of the scenes, when she is drinking soup after she has been raped three times and slapped by one of the male characters, the camera moves close-up to her face and to her lips. Here, her lipstick seems perfect and she

is shot while drinking the soup in an erotic way! We always see her in a beautiful, desirable, erotic look.

In one of the Turkish newspapers, the director of the film explains the reason of “the hyper testosterone”(“Ellerine Saglik Kaptan”, 1998) of the movie as follows: “The woman in the movie causes this. She is foreigner, vulnerable and a beautiful kind[sic!]”<sup>22</sup> (“Ellerine Saglik Kaptan”, 1998). This statement also very well reveals the perception of woman as a threat and also the controlling ways of the threat. She is a threat as a beautiful “kind” and the threat is brought under control through positioning her beauty in a “safe” eroticized place, like a “blow up sex doll” (Algan, 1999; Akbal Sualp, 1999). As Akbal Sualp argues, the woman stays alive till the end of the movie in order to function as a blow up sex doll and to maintain the balance of the supply and demand for sex (1999: 19).

Her “always” perfect presentation especially during the rape and harassment scenes converts rape and sexual harassment into a spectacle. Necla Algan claims that if in a rape scene, a woman is shown in a look which stresses above all her beauty, her unspoiled make-up and hairdo after continued rape and harassment, it evokes pornography in our minds (1999, 57). Riza Kirac states as a response to Algan’s claim that he finds the rape scenes in this movie extremely ordinary (2000, 13). He adds that pornography requires “details”, superficial relations, unbearable male domination, groundless violence and desire of voyeurism which can not be found in *On Board* (2000, 13). I can claim that all those elements are very well standing in the movie. The “details”, which Kirac sees as the requirements for pornography, are provided by close-ups to the woman’s body parts. Superficial relations and groundless violence can easily be seen in male character’s relation with the woman. Desire of voyeurism is presented through camera’s look and male characters’ looks at the woman.

---

<sup>22</sup> It is my translation.

But still, even though “sexual availability” is pre-related to pornography and therefore it is hard to make a clear distinction, I do not read those scenes as pornographic. In my opinion, these scenes evoke the idea of her “sexual availability” rather than an utterly pornographic image. At the same time, however, these scenes normalize pornography by presenting it as a part of life in which woman is always sexually available to men and to the male gaze.

Her sexual availability is supplied in some scenes and in different ways. When the Captain allows her to sit with the sailors at the same table, she wants to drink whisky and smoke a joint with them as if they were friends, who did not rape or harass her. In another scene, after Ali harasses her, the others see the bruise on her face. Ali denies having done it. The Captain asks her if Ali tells the truth or not. She mimes that she fell down and protects him without any reason. Therefore she defends the harassment. The other stress on sexual availability is the look on her face in the rape scenes which is in between sleepy and unconscious. We can also claim that her always perfect and always full make-up, her dressing, her stylized appearance are the tools which are used for emphasize on her “sexual availability”.

This stress on her “sexual availability” is a strategy to make the guilt of rape and of groundless violence on her ambiguous. It is used to show that at some point she provokes all this violence with her beauty and desirability and therefore that she is also partly responsible.

Fetishistic strategy is also used in the bar scenes. When Ali and Boxer go to the bar, we first hear and then see that a porn movie is being shown. First, the camera shows the people in the bar watching porn, and the look of movie characters at porn. And then it focuses on the breasts and legs of a woman in the porn movie. This bar scene is repeated two more times and completely in the same way. These scenes in which the camera gazes at the porn movie, the porn movie’s characters are reduced to body and positioned fetishistically as

objects of the male gaze. Women in the porn movies are also fixed, controlled, being served for the pleasure of the male gaze through the fragmentation of their body.

In this context, the porn movies in the bar scenes and how they are shown can be read as an allegory for the male gaze's objectification of the woman in the movie. Coward argues that voyeurism provides sexual pleasure by looking rather than being close to the sexual object of desire which enables a voyeur to always stay in control (quoted in, Walters, 1999: 235). Showing the women in the porn movie serves for the utter pleasure in looking. Firstly because the porn characters are located at a distance in relation to the voyeurs, which allows both the characters in the movie and the spectator of the movie to maintain control, mastery and domination. And secondly, the close-ups on the women's body parts overemphasize the "first" and "only" function of those women, i.e. "to-be-looked-at-ness", which maintains another level of control through the erotic objectification. Those women on the porn screen are posed there just to provide and to represent utter pleasure to the male gaze. Those women who are brought to our screen by the camera's look function "as an organizing spectacle, as the lack which structures the symbolic order and sustains the relay of male glances" (Silverman, 131, quoted in Walters, 1999: 235).

Beauty is the only intention of the director about the female character since he says in an interview that the criteria according to which he chose the actress is beauty whereas he chose the actors according to acting training: "We chose the actors from the ones who received acting training...The female character is a foreigner and must have been beautiful...Since we could not find someone adequate from Turkey, someone from stage management went to Romania and found Ella Manea there"<sup>23</sup> (Edirne, 1998).

The intention of showing her through a fetishistic strategy is also visible in the poster of the movie and also the photos of the movie which were published in the press. If we look at

---

<sup>23</sup> It is my translation.



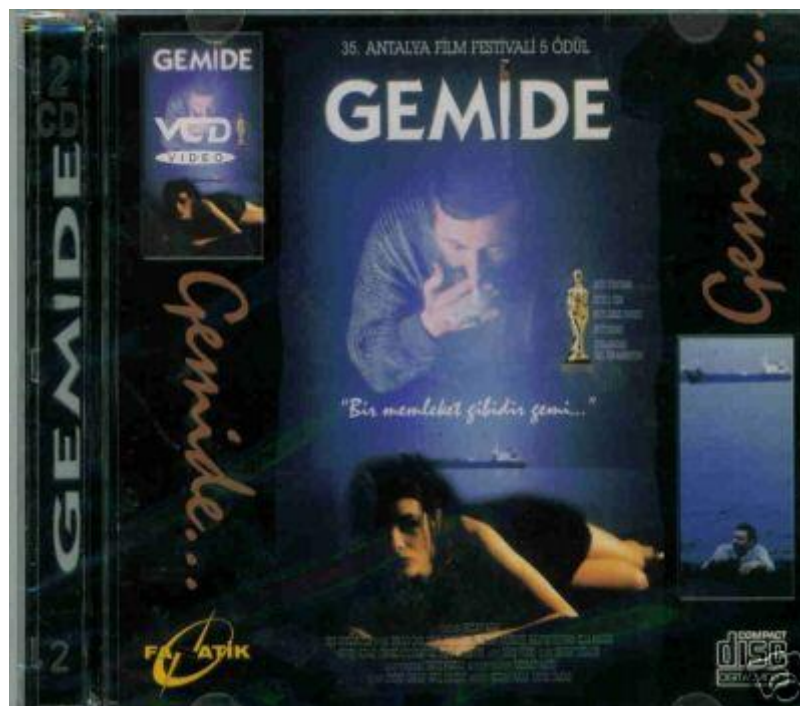
the press photo and poster below, we can clearly see that she is posed in a completely eroticized way for the enjoyment of the male gaze. The fact that her pose which is used on the poster does not hold a place in the movie where the pose of the Captain and of Boxer are taken from the movie very well proves the intention behind it. The eroticized pose of her on the poster, like in the movie, serves for reducing her to a body whose function is first and foremost to be seen (Mulvey, 1989). She is valued above all for what her appearance connotes, for her beauty and for her sexual desirability. She is made the object of the erotic contemplation which removes the threat and also provides enjoyment for the male gaze. In my opinion, it is also the answer for the very important question which was brought by Sualp in her article about *On Board*: “Why this [woman] character is left as a dim rape object while the character of Captain is created with so much effort?”<sup>24</sup> (1999: 20).



**Figure 2.1.1** Press photo

---

<sup>24</sup> It is my translation.



**Figure 2.1.2** The poster of *On Board* which is taken from the VCD cover.

Fetishistic strategy is not only used through the camera's gaze but also through characters' looks. We see Boxer's look at her legs, her breasts and her body especially in the rape scenes. We see Ali's look at her breasts when he sees Boxer is raping her. Kamil looks at her body from head to toe with an annoying smile on his face when she is kept in the Captain's room. In another scene, we see him peeping at her when she is peeing. While Ali is raping her, the camera focuses on Kamil's face and shows him masturbating. All those scenes show that she is put under surveillance by male characters through the gaze.

Through fetishism and voyeurism, the male gaze functions as a control mechanism over her. She is reduced to a passive spectacle position and to an image, fantasy, fear -mute, beautiful, objectified, obedient, waiting to be demystified. Like it is written on the DVD cover of the movie: "Woman represents desire, enjoyment, threatening mystic power"<sup>25</sup>. As we

<sup>25</sup> It is my translation.

clearly see, there are many aspects of constructing woman as a sexualized spectacle. Camera shots, costume, make-up, hairdo, director's intention, bill poster of the movie, press photos, they all contribute to "the pre-determining how the woman is to be looked at" (Chaudhuri, 2006: 35).

## **2.2 The Male Gaze at Silent Woman:**

The female character in the movie is represented in silent form. The Woman is a foreign prostitute and cannot speak Turkish. Throughout the whole movie she does not speak. Therefore, the question has to be asked is what happens when the male gaze is directed towards a silenced woman.

In "Acoustic Mirror" Kaja Silverman highlights the importance of the female voice in her critique of Hollywood's representations of women. Her claim about Hollywood Cinema is also valid for the New Turkish Cinema. She argues that in cinema the male subject has the discursive power while the female subject is excluded from it (1988: 164). And female subjectivity has a "receptivity" to the male voice as well as to his gaze that keeps her under double surveillance (Silverman, 1990:312). This means what we (do not) hear in the movie is obedience to the system and successful surveillance of the femininity by reducing women to muteness and to an object position. Male subjects in the cinema control the discursive power by holding and using the discursive practices.

Bonitzer argues that "the voice-over represents the authority and the power, that of disposing the image and of that which it reflects from a place which is absolutely other. Absolutely other and absolutely indeterminable" (quoted in Silverman 1990: 312). This disembodied form aligns male subject with transcendence, authoritative knowledge, potency, and with the law of the father (Silverman, 1990: 312). According to Silverman's theory, the

male subject is ideally realized when he is heard but not seen, when the phallus is left in unchallengeable possession of the scene (1990: 312).

*On Board* starts with a male voice-over and the way it is used confirms Silverman's argument. The disembodied male voice represents the authoritative knowledge and the law, not only by voice-over, but also by talking about the order, rules, laws, regulations and control on board. The usage of voice-over at the beginning of the film presents the male authority\ dominance in filmic language.

Silverman claims that to permit the female subject to be seen without being heard would be to activate the hermeneutic and cultural codes which define woman as a dark continent, inaccessible to definitive male interpretation and positions her away from male control (1990:313). But, when we consider that Silverman talks about voiceless / mute women characters, silence, depending on its use, does not always challenge the male control over women since in cinema, voice and image operate together. In the example of *On Board*, although the prostitute is mute, and "inaccessible to definitive male interpretation", this muteness does not position her away from male control since the male control is maintained over the female character through her body, by rape and through her image, by the male gaze.

If we consider the filmic techniques which are discussed in the previous section in detail, *On Board* excludes female narrative and represents the female character as an object of desire and of male fantasies: a silent, obedient, beautiful, erotic image. In the example of *On Board*, we clearly see that control over the woman is strengthened by the technique of imprisoning "woman" in a mute picture on the screen. The male gaze that dominates in the movie positions female subject as only a body by defining her with reference to her "proper"\ "silenced" place in the male world.

## 2.3 Inscriptions on Her Body:

Elizabeth Grosz argues that the body is a surface through which social, surgical, epistemic, or disciplinary messages can be inscribed (1990: 62). Therefore, body-subjects are significations, social texts capable of being read or interpreted (Grosz, 1990: 63). If we consider the relation between body and power, Foucault argues that power functions directly on bodies, materiality of power, by means of disciplinary practices (quoted in Grosz, 1990: 64). Therefore, power is a material force that does and makes things through the body. “The body is that materiality, almost a medium on which power operates and through which it functions” (Grosz, 1994: 146). It is an effect, target and object of a certain mode of corporeal inscription.

In the movie, the female body is controlled through rape and through the codes that define “prostitute’s body” in the sense of sexual availability. In both ways, social codes and meanings (of patriarchal order) which are inscribed on the female body are reestablished. Carole Pateman argues that the prostitute implies the meaning of being readily available for all men (1988: 189). Prostitution is a part of the exercise of the law of male sex-right and one of the ways in which men are ensured access to women’s bodies (Pateman, 1988: 194). The prostitute’s body reveals the patriarchal codes written on the female body.

In the movie, we clearly see how the prostitute’s body is perceived / shown as “readily available for all men” through the rape scenes, through her “always” beautiful “manipulative” appearance, and also through the repetition of “unimportance” of raping a prostitute. This repetition is a very important tool to express not only the prostitute’s “sexual availability”, but also the right of raping a prostitute. Kamil tells Boxer and Ali after learning that they raped her: “You fucked her. That’s ok! No cop is going to lock you up because of a whore”.

In the movie, the access to a “sexually available” female body also functions as the proof of what it means to be a man. Boxer and Ali always have a fight for who “fucks” her

“best” or for who “managed to fuck” her: Boxer asks Ali: “You haven’t managed to fuck a woman in an hour”. In those scenes, the sailors fight about “fucking” a woman, the indifference between fuck and rape in sailors talks also indicates the association between the patriarchal male sex right and rape. In a Foucauldian sense, rape scenes in the movie are the embodiment of male power which functions on female body as a disciplinary practice for rewriting and reaffirming the patriarchal right and heteronormative order: “ Rape and violence effectively silence and subdue the woman in film (Modleski, 2005: 15).

Virginity is another inscription on the female body which also functions as a disciplinary practice for reproducing the male control over female bodies to sustain the patriarchal order. Because especially in the Turkish context, virginity functions as the way for “valuation” of the female body. It is the mark of the status of woman in Turkey and represents the sexual “honor” of woman.

Virginity is the inscription on female body which functions as a signifier of social codes and therefore as a control mechanism. But, virginity of the prostitute can be read as the conflicting inscriptions on one body since it completely overturns the message and codes. The accessible prostitute’s body and its meanings conflict with inaccessibility of virgin’s body and its messages. But, these changing and conflicting messages do not let the control over female body disappear, instead this control changes its form. Different disciplinary techniques are set to work since these conflicting inscriptions changes the expectations and fantasies of male characters in the film and also expectations of the viewer. After the acknowledgement of the Woman’s virginity in the movie, one of rapists starts to think about marrying her and the captain starts showing concern for her: “If she was a virgin then you should have thought twice. She could have been your sister”. They start thinking about other and “appropriate” ways to maintain the control over her again: “She is cute. She can sleep in this room. No one will touch or harm her. She will help Kamil. Cook. Clean up. You’ll have a good time”.

The social codes and meanings of the patriarchal order are inscribed on her silent body. Walters argues that although images are filled with dominant cultural messages and we are not totally free to make resistant readings, we are not also completely passive recipients (1999:247). She claims that meaning is not just apparent in a text, rather it is made during the interaction between viewer and image. But she also accepts that images are mostly filled with dominant cultural codes and messages that makes it harder to read the text against the grain.(1999: 247). Therefore, Walters alerts us to the dangers of missing the importance of “(unequal) power of mass-produced imagery”(1999: 247) since it is very hard to be resistant, if we are surrounded by the same message, and also by a certain manipulated image.

Women become visible on the screen mostly through absence or lack. Like their presence in patriarchal society, a subject position is not given to the women characters in *On Board*. Because “the ship is like a country” in which women are represented by an object of desire, by an image, by a picture, by muteness, by “proper” places which represent male fantasies and anxieties that are projected onto the female image (Mulvey, 1989). We do not / can not know what these women think, live, feel. Because “the ship is like a country” where even the talk is “about” women, they are spoken according to the phallographic codes (Dallery, 1989: 53), according to the male language which are written on their bodies. Even when she manages to escape from the control of the male gaze, she faces another level of control over her since “woman” is not the maker of the meaning in *On Board*, rather she is “the bearer of the meaning”( Mulvey, quoted in Kibbey, 2005: 40).

Adrienne Rich claims that all silence has a meaning (1979: 308). As we see in the example of *On Board*, the meanings of silence on the Turkish cinematic language are written on female bodies through the inscriptions of social order and by “masculine” pens\male gaze.

### Chapter 3: The Possibilities and Limits of Resistance in *Silencing Silences*

As I tried to show in the previous chapter, *On Board* is one of the radical examples of *silencing silences*. On the other hand, as was discussed in the first chapter, it is almost impossible to completely silence the female character on the screen, that is to deprive her of any expression, thought, views, and standing, since her very presence on the screen gives her at least some space to react, and eventually, to return the gaze to the camera, and / or the male characters.

Hence in this chapter, I will search for the resisting points in the example of *On Board* without overlooking the controlling power of male gaze and of the main line of narration on female character in the movie. I will explore the moments in which the female character manages or at least attempts to escape from the control (despite the director's intention to avoid it which was discussed in the previous chapter).

Mulvey defines the female gaze through narcissism and through a masochistic identification with one's own objectification (1989). In her theory, "there is no space for an authentic female gaze" since the spectator is addressed as male and "the female viewers are forced to look with the male protagonist" (Walters, 1999: 236). Therefore her theory asserts a monolithic male gaze and has been criticized and reevaluated because of not leaving any space for the female spectator other than the "positions of utter absence or self-negating masochism" (Walters, 1999: 238). As I will argue in this chapter, even the examples of filmic texts which dominantly serve to the enjoyment of the male gaze may also involve potentials for different / conflicting / alternative responses from the spectator.



And this also brings to the stage the feminist works on audiences and spectatorship and the “possibility” of the distinction between the actual experiences of women and the assumption of textual analysis on women’s experiences of watching a movie. I accept the possibility of the distinction between the actual experiences of women and the assumptions of textual analysis on women’s experience, but my concern about *On Board*, which I tried to introduce in the previous chapter, are the techniques which are used throughout the whole of the movie to make disruptive potentials of female silence’s against the controlling power of the male gaze almost impossible.<sup>26</sup>

Now I want to discuss the female silence’s possibilities and limits of evoking subversive readings, of female resistance, and of disrupting the silencing system since although the controlling power of silencing system is tight, it is impossible to maintain that control completely.

As I explained earlier, I have differentiated between four types of silences. Among them, it is obvious that *resisting silences* have a higher potential to subvert the dominant meaning. In *resisting silences* female characters use silence as a resistance to the rules of the patriarchal system and to the male right to speak on behalf of women. By using silence as a form of resistance, they manage to turn the passive message of their silencing into agency. But that does not completely overcome silencing even in those filmic texts, since it continues on different levels such as keeping the female character on the edges of the story.

On the other hand, my claim is that there is no complete *silencing silence*. The silent presence of the female character in some points opens up the possibility of resistance and subversive readings. Even though most of the time the female character in *On Board* cannot get rid of the control of the male gaze, and the control over her body keeps going on different levels, in some instances she manages or at least attempts to perform acts as resistance.

---

<sup>26</sup> This refers to movie characters and the spectator is not the concern of this research.

In this regard, first I want to explore the possibilities and the limits of the return female gaze. Because if the female character returns the gaze to the men in the film and to the camera, that means she escapes, at least to a certain extent, the controlling power of the male gaze and of dominant meanings of the film. Therefore, she can find a way to perform resistance to the male objectification.

In my view, the Woman in *On Board* returns the gaze to the men in the movie, she returns the gaze when she enters into relations with them, especially in the scenes in which she eats, drinks whisky and smokes marihuana with them. So it may look logical to claim by returning the gaze she wants to escape the actual control of men, as much as the control of the male gaze, by becoming equal with them.

On the other hand, these attempts are used to stress her sexual availability, which reveals that her resistance or attempt to escape is shortlived and is taken back under control almost immediately. It is also very true for this case what Kaplan claims : “Men do not simply look; their gaze carries with it the power of action and of possession which is lacking in the female gaze. Women receive and return a gaze, but cannot act upon it” (Kaplan, 1993: 31). Male gaze control her attempts to be equal, to have the agency by presenting these attempts as her sexually availableness.

Her sexual availability is also overemphasized through her continuous returns with an unspoiled and unhurt look on her face. In my opinion, while this return represents the perfect, ideal, obedient, unspoiled, unhurt blow up doll fantasy, it also may open up the possibility of resistance. Because her continuous return in an untouched by violence way can be read as a resistance to victimization techniques which are used to take her under control. She annihilates the “safe” place where she is put into and returns as a threat each time. Even though she is kept under control on different levels and she continues to represent a threat to the male order. In my opinion, Modleski’s argument for Woman in the movie *Vertigo* is also

valid for the Woman in *On Board*: “the way in which Woman keeps uncannily returning, keeps reminding man of what he in turn keeps trying to overcome, to master”(2005: 94).

If we consider the female character’s return of the gaze to the camera, throughout the whole movie, we see her looking at the camera two times. Actually by those looks she returns the gaze to the camera and attempts to escape from the control of the male gaze. But, right after such attempts, she is left wounded on the street and the Captain says after that: “We did the best!”. Her role ends there, and the board crew goes on together, and therefore the male mastery is reaffirmed. In the last scene of the movie, we see the Captain saying “Where were we?” which is the sentence he always repeats while telling his stories to others\us. It is the last and utmost voyeuristic control over the Woman since in the end she also becomes one of images in his stories. Therefore, she completely loses the opportunity to reappear on the screen, that is, to return the gaze.

In other representative examples of *silencing* silences, which were discussed in chapter one, we also recognize resistance to victimization. In *Innocence*, even though the woman is silenced both literally and symbolically through the male violence, we can see that she is also using her silence as a kind of resistance. Although she is made mute as a punishment, and she is still being punished by beating, she destroys the “safe” place where she is put into using her silence against her husband; through her husband’s complaints we get to understand that she is “treating him as an enemy”. Actually, she turns her silencing into resistance through the complete refusal of communication. Therefore, her muteness returns as a threat to the husband’s / male order. While her being left mute is the punishment for her uncontrolled sexuality, her being beaten is the punishment for her resisting in her uncontrolled silence.

Going back to *On Board*, I want to point to another scene in which we may see resistance and agency. In the scene at the end of the movie, while Ali is raping the Woman,

she pushes herself to the knife and tries to kill herself. At this point, she decides to kill herself and does the action which can be read as her resistance to the actual violence, thus overturning the passive, obedient object message which is written on her body. She voluntarily pushes herself to the knife instead of being the object of the rape at knife point. In other words, at the end she rejects to be the object of the crime, and resists the control over her body, and becomes the active subject who does the action. Even at the cost of self-destruction, she becomes the one who controls the story with her action in that instance. Therefore she also disrupts the male order on the ship.

This scene also points to an important aspect of these kind of movies. The crucial point about the female resistance in the *silencing silences* is the self-destructive feature of the female agency. Female characters can only manage to perform full agency through self-destructive actions. As we have seen in the example of *On Board*, the Woman could perform full agency only when she destroys or attempts to destroy herself. In my view, it is the only scene where she could completely escape the controlling power of the male gaze. It is also valid for the movie *Innocence* since the female character performs agency at the price of being beaten by her husband. Even though she is resisting through her muteness, in the end it turns into the reason for her destruction.

Self-destructiveness as a condition for the female agency is also evident in the representative examples of the *resisting silences* in New Turkish Cinema. In *Mrs. Salkim's Diamonds*, Nora uses silence as a resistance to the speech of the patriarchal order, but at the end of the movie she kills herself.

As I have discussed so far, the movies which use *silencing silences* and *resisting silences* allow female characters to perform resistance in some instances, but allow them to perform full agency mostly in the condition of self-destructiveness. The example from *speaking silences*, *Waiting for the Clouds*, is an example of real agency of the female

character. This is because the silencing and suppression of minorities in Turkey speaks through her silenced language and identity and also through her journey to find her suppressed voice. Through her story, but not through the destruction of the female character, we are shown how people are forced to give up their language and identity. At the end of the movie, she finds her long-lost brother in Greece. Her brother tells her that she is not his sister as she has been absent in his life. He shows her his family pictures and says that she is in none of them. After that, she puts a very old family picture on the table to show him that she is there. Then the movie ends with the images from the forced deportation of Greeks through which the whole the suppressed history becomes visible and audible on the screen. Eleni's silenced story make the silence of suppressed visible and heard. Her silence speaks the unspeakable.

If we compare self-destructive female resistances with the female agency in *Waiting for the Clouds*, a crucial question arises: is this self-destructiveness really a resistance, is it disrupting the system? Or is it in some way, as I will try to argue here, giving a space for the female audience to bear with those violent images?

The self-destructiveness of the female agency goes together with the gender based violence in those movies. Female characters are mostly presented as both object of the crime and of the groundless punishment. In *On Board*, the Woman is a prostitute and in that role she represents uncontrolled sexuality; because of that she is punished by rape, persecution and at the end by being left to die. In *Innocence*, the female character does not obey the rules of marriage. She again represents the uncontrolled sexuality and is punished by being left mute and being beaten. In *Mrs. Salkim's Diamonds*, the heroine is punished by rape because she is wrongly accused of being sterile.

In all of these movies, we face explicitly shown overemphasized gender based violence. Of course as Modleski argues "one might ask why, if a sordid crime like rape /

murderer is to be depicted at all, it should not be shown ‘in all its horror’” (2005: 114). I discussed in the previous chapter how and why this explicitness is used as a controlling mechanism over the female body. But this ugly explicitness of the gender based violence and self-destructive agency of female characters in these movies may also work as exposing the ugly explicitness of the violence of the system itself. They may work as unmasking the female horrors of everyday life by revealing the gender based violence which is hidden behind the thick walls of the personal sphere. The rape scenes in *On Board*, the hymen reconstruction surgery scenes in *A Madonna in Laleli*, Nora’s being raped by her father-in-law in *Mrs. Salkim’s Diamonds*, or the scene in which the husband is beating the muted wife with his belt, those scenes are the most disturbing scenes that the Turkish cinema has offered so far in terms of gender based violence from everyday life. Therefore, those scenes may open up the possibility for unmasking the experience of women’s oppression under patriarchy and how it destroys women. So they can offer for the female audience something different than masochism or male gaze’s enjoyment.

For *On Board* as a movie was not made with the main intention to link the sexual violence to the system of male dominance, rather it emphasizes in some points, both through the scenario and the representation of the Woman as sexually available, that raping a prostitute is not a crime. So as Modleski states, there is a dilemma for a female character who is continually charged with sexual guilt, uncontrollable sexuality, even when they are victims of male violence which reveals the point that female characters are reduced to object positions in men’s relations with each other (2005: 25). But, does the female spectator read it as it is presented? Even though most of these movies are reproducing the gender based violence, since women are the objects of rape and honor crime, they open up the possibility for subversive readings by exposing, voluntarily or involuntarily, the patriarchal system’s violent control over women.

In this regard, I argue that these movies do not reflect or involve female point of view, female desire and do not question the patriarchal system or gender based violence itself. Therefore, to celebrate these movies as a criticism of the system would be naïve. I argue that these movies work in cooperation with patriarchy because of reproducing the definition and “proper” place of “woman” through these silent representations. But, on the other hand, I claim that at least, these movies involve the possibility of being read as the reflections (but not allegory) of heterosexual male control over women’s bodies and lives, of exclusion of women from the ship / country and of disorder on the ship / in the country which may function as unmasking the male dominant system. It is possible because, female characters’ silences in these movies tell us stories of women’s silencing in Turkey from different perspectives, including class, ethnicity and religion.

## Conclusion: Listening to the women's silences

In my thesis, I discussed the silent representations of women in the New Turkish Cinema through representative examples. I attempted to listen to the silences of women and to find how the silence of female stories, female point of view, of female characters function in the New Turkish Cinema. Using the four main types of silences, I found the dominant meanings and functions of the silences.

The analysis of the representative examples brought me to the conclusion that there is no clear cut division between the *speaking silences* and *resisting silences* since they are all linked to each other. There are some instances even in the very radical examples of *silencing silences*, such as *On Board*, where the female characters manages to or at least attempts to escape from the controlling power of the male gaze and the main line of the narration. It is impossible to completely silence the female character since her very presence on the screen gives her at least some space to overturn the passive, obedient message of her silent presence.

I argued that in the examples from the New Turkish Cinema, except the *speaking silences*, female stories are used as tools for supporting the male character's speeches and stories. Those movies do not reflect or involve the female point of view, female desire and do not question the gender based violence which they explicitly present. Therefore, those movies work in cooperation with patriarchy through defining and describing the female characters with a reference to their "proper" that is "silenced" places in the male world.

On the other hand, I claimed that those movies involve the possibility of exposing the patriarchal system's violent control over women through showing overemphasized gender based violence explicitly. Those movies may work as unmasking the every day violence with which women face behind the doors and walls of the personal sphere.

The main contribution of my thesis to the existing literature on Turkish cinema is the detailed and critical analysis of the functions of women's silences in the New Turkish



Cinema. Secondly, the working typology of silences that I provided in the third chapter assists in our understanding of the different forms, meanings and functions of the women's silences. This typology will serve as a basis for future studies on women's silences on the Turkish cinema screen. Thirdly, while traversing both dominant meanings and alternative readings this study may open a way for further gender based film analyses in Turkey.

Finally, it is crucial to mention that this study presented how women's silences function, but did not offer a more detailed answer to the very important question: why women are represented as silenced in the New Turkish Cinema. In my opinion, it is impossible to offer a more comprehensive answer for "why" and "how" for women's silences without examining the social and political context of Turkey in the given time period, and also without a detailed analysis of how masculinities are represented in the same movies. My thesis must be seen as the first step towards such a kind of intertextual analysis which I am planning to do as a PhD research.

## Appendix: The stories of the movies

### *On Board* [Gemide]

**Director:** Serdar Akar

**Screenplay:** Serdar Akar, Uğur Çakar

**Actors:** Erkan Can (Captain), Naci Taşdöğen (Boxer), Yıldırım Şahinler (Ali), Haldun Boysan (Kamil), Ella Manea (Woman).

**Production:** Yeni Sinemacılık Ltd. Şti.

**Year:** 1998

Four sailors aboard a harbor silt-cleaner live a routine life revolving around talk, drink and marihuana. Their only image of the outside world, and primarily of male/ female relationships, comes from the stories of Captain. Their isolation is shattered one night when Boxer returns beaten up and robbed of their dinner money. Drunk and stoned, they hunt down the thieves; the captain accidentally kills one. The sailors “save” a beautiful foreign prostitute, who is with those thieves\ pimps. Captain orders Boxer to take her back. Boxer says that he did, but actually he did not and he ties her up in the hold. She is raped several times by him and by Ali. But after that, Boxer is full of dread when he thinks what could happen if Captain understands that he is lying. Together with Ali, they decide to throw her out. But Captain sees them while they are trying to throw her off the ship. They bring her to Captain’s room instead. Also, it becomes clear that the robbery never happened, Boxer was lying, and that the man in the fight was not killed. One night Ali takes the woman from the room at knife- point, but he is seen while raping the woman by Boxer. They start fighting and while they are fighting, the woman pushes her body back and the knife is stuck in her back. Then Captain decides to bring her to the doctor. But when they see a police car coming, they leave her wounded on the street and run away. The film ends with 4 men sitting on the coast, with Captain starting telling one of his stories, as if nothing had happened.

***A Madonna in Laleli*[Laleli'de Bir Azize]****Director:** Kudret Sabanci**Screenplay:** Kudret Sabanci, Serdar Akar, Onder Cakar**Actors:** Guven Kirac (Aziz), Istar Gokseven (Makor), Cengiz Kucukayvaz (Doktor), Ella Manea (Woman)**Production:** Yeni Sinemacilik**Year:** 1999

Aziz, Makor and Doktor are three friends who are guarding the big boss' Romanian prostitutes. When a rich guy, who is working in Laleli, wants a virgin woman in exchange for 1 billion Turkish Liras, they decide to make a business for themselves without telling their boss. They find a Romanian woman, but the woman is not a virgin. They bring her to a doctor for hymen reconstruction surgery. But the Woman gets really sick because of the surgery, so they take her to their home that night. When Makor and Doktor notice that the Woman's hair is a wig, they decide to cheat Aziz and tell him that she runs away but they can find another one for 500 million Turkish Liras. They just dye her hair to black and sell the same woman to Aziz. After that, while they are taking her to the guy, they have a fight with sailors and the sailors kidnap the Woman. So the big boss, and the guy start hunting them. At the end of the movie, Aziz, Makor and Doktor find the sailors' ship, but when they get on board, they are faced with an empty ship.

***Everything's Gonna Be Great*[Her Sey Cok Guzel Olacak]****Director:** Omer Vargi**Screenplay:** Hakan Haksun, Omer Vargi, Cem Yilmaz

**Actors:** Cem Yilmaz (Altan), Mazhar Alanson (Nuri), Ceyda Duvenci (Arzu), Selim Nasit Ozcan (Father)

**Production:** Filma Cass

**Year:** 1998

Altan, and Nuri are brothers and have not seen each other for 3 years. Altan meets with Nuri in a fast food restaurant after a fight he has. Altan is a low-level criminal severely lacking in skill and luck, and searching for an idea to make big money. He steals drugs from the pharmaceutical warehouse that his brother manages. And then Altan heads to the seashore with his brother to sell the drugs. But a gang of drug dealers learn that someone is dealing drugs in their territory and search for him.

### ***Innocence***[Masumiyet]

**Director:** Zeki Demirkubuz

**Screenplay:** Zeki Demirkubuz

**Actors:** Guven Kirac (Yusuf), Derya Alabora (Ugur), Haluk Bilginer (Bekir), Ajlan Aktug (Husband of Yusuf's Sister), Nihal G.Koldas (Yusuf's Sister).

**Production:** Mavi Film

**Year:** 1997

After murdering his married sister's lover, Yusuf shoots his sister in the tongue which renders her mute. He is released from prison 10 years later, and goes to visit his mute sister, who is now suffering abuse from a husband who beats her. Yusuf moves into a hotel and meets there Bekir and Ugur. Ugur does prostitution to send money to the man she loves who is a multiple murderer serving a life sentence. Bekir is in love with Ugur and guarding her in the prostitution business. Yusuf becomes friends with Bekir. After Bekir kills himself in the hotel, Yusuf takes his place and fall in love with Ugur. But his love is unrequited. One day Ugur

disappears. Yusuf starts seeking her. At the end of the movie, we see in the news that Ugur and her lover die in a car accident.

**Istanbul Under My Arms[Istanbul Kanatlarimin Altinda]:**

**Director:** Mustafa Altıoklar

**Screenplay:** Mustafa Altıoklar

**Actors:** Ege Aydan (Hazerfen), Beatriz Rico (Francesca), Okan Bayulgen (Lagari), Haluk Bilginir (Evliya Celebi), Burak Sergen (Murat IV), Savas Ay (Bekri), Zuhall Olcay (Sultan Kosem)

**Production:** Umut Sanat

**Year:** 1995

The movie tells the story of four friends' seeking the way to fly like birds in 17<sup>th</sup> century Istanbul. The slave of Hazarfen, Francesca, helps them through the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci. Hazarfen manage to perform his flying from Galata Tower. But instead of being rewarded, he is exiled to Algeria by the order of the Sultan Murat the IV.

***Mrs's Salkim's Diamonds*[Salkim Hanimin Taneleri]**

**Director:** Tomris Giritlioglu

**Screenplay:** Ethen Mahcupyan & Tamer Baran

**Actors:** Hulya Avsar (Nora), Kamuran Usluer (Halit), Zafer Algoz (Durmus), Guven Kirac (Bekir), Zuhall Olcay (Nefise), Ugur Polat (Levon), Derya Alabora (Nimet).

**Production:** Avsar Film

**Year:** 1999

Nimet and Durmus emmigrate from Nigde to Istanbul. They move to their fellow townsman Bekir's house. Bekir works as an office boy for Halit. Halit helps Durmus find a job, but

Durmus covets Halit's fortune, mansion and mistress Nefise. In these days Turkish government levies Wealth Tax on the wealthy citizens. Halit has to put his assets on sale in order to pay his wife Nora's tax. Nora is under going treatment in a mental institution because of being raped by her father-in- law. Since lots of people put their assets on sale to pay the taxes in that time, the prices decline. Durmus buys Halit's mansion. Halit's mistress starts living with Durmus. Durmus takes Halit's place just as he dreamed about. Halit cannot pay all of the tax and is sent to a forced labor camp in Askale and dies there while he is trying to run away. At the same time in Istanbul, Nora kills herself.

***Somersault in a Coffin***[Tabutta Rovesata]

**Director:** Dervis Zaim

**Screenplay:** Dervis Zaim

**Actors:** Ahmet Ugurlu (Mahsun), Tuncel Kurtiz (Reis), Aysen Aydemir (Woman)

**Production:**

**Year:** 1996

Mahsun earns some money, which is just enough to eat and drink with, only when he works for Reis in a fishing boat. But the main problem for him is finding shelter at night. Winters in Istanbul can be very cold, and one of his friends, in a similar situation, died from exposure. Mahsun, who is a hardened criminal, cannot even get himself put in jail anymore, though this would solve his shelter problems. Instead, he steals cars at night so that he can sleep in them. Rather than arresting him when they catch him stealing, the police simply administer a brutal beating. The owner of a teashop hires him to clean the toilets and gives him a room to sleep in. But he loses this room and job because of the Woman with whom he falls in love. The Woman is a heroine addict and does prostitution for making money for heroine. When she tells Mahsun that she has no place to stay, Mahsun tells her to stay in his room. But she uses

the room for prostitution. When he notices this, he gets completely mad and upset. One day the Woman begs him to ride her to Taksim to find heroine. Mahsun steals a car and they go to Taksim. After she gets high, Mahsun steals Reis' boat and puts to sea with her. They are grounded on the rocks. Reis beats him. At the end, we hear the news telling Mahsun has been busted while he is trying to eat a peacock which he steals from the national park.

***The Bandit[Eskiya]***

**Director:** Yavuz Turgul

**Screenplay:** Yavuz Turgul

**Actors:** Sener Sen (Baran), Ugur Yucel (Cumali), Sermin Hurmeric (Keje), Kamuran Usluer (Berfo), Yesim Salkim (Emel)

**Production:** Filma Cass

**Year:** 1996

Baran the Bandit, after his release from prison, heads for Istanbul to get revenge upon his former best friend Berfo who snitched on him to the police in order to marry Baran's lover Keje. Along the way, he meets with Cumali, who is a young dealer and becomes friend with him. Baran finds Keje in Berfo's mansion and Keje speaks first time after 35 years of silence. He tells Keje that he will come back to take her. But Cumali gets in trouble with a crime boss, steals the boss' money to save his girlfriend's brother from the jail. But the girlfriend cheats him and we understand that the guy who is introduced by her as brother is her lover. The boss treats Cumali by death if he does not pay the money which he stole from the boss. To save Cumali's life, Baran make an agreement with Berfo, gives up Keje in exchange for the money. But the check which is given by Berfo is bogus. Cumali is shot by the boss' bouncers. Baran kills Berfo as a revenge. And he is shot by the police at the end.

**The Ivy Mansion- Life[Asmali Konak- Hayat]****Director:** Abdullah Oguz**Screenplay:** Mahinur Ergun & Abdullah Oguz**Actors:** Ozcan Deniz (Seymen), Nurgul Yesilcay (Bahar), Selda Alkor (Sumbul), Menderes Samancilar (Bekir), Ipek Tuzcuoglu (Dicle), Ege Aydan (Yaman), Efsun Alper (Ayse Melek), Kenan Bal (Ali)**Prosuction:** ANS Production**Year:** 2003

Seymen and Bahar travel to the United States to fight Bahar's illness. One night, while Seymen and Bahar are walking on the street, one guy with a gun tries to rob them. Seymen fights with the robber, and shoots Bahar by accident. She enters into a coma, and Seymen loses his memory. He starts living in the streets. Their family starts searching for them, they find Bahar but they cannot find Seymen easily. Family members come to the States and find him with the help of a private detective and personal connections. Seymen starts seeing a psychiatrist. Bahar comes out of coma miraculously. At the end, they are rejoined.

***Waiting for the Clouds*[Bulutlari Beklerken]****Director:** Yesim Ustaoglu**Screenplay:** Yesim Ustaoglu & Petros Markaris**Actors:** Ruchan Caliskur (Ayse / Eleni), Ridvan Yagci (Mehmet), Dimitris Kabederis (Tanasis), Ismail Baykan (Cengiz)**Production:** Silkroad, Flying Moon Filmproduktion, Ideefixe Films.**Year:** 2003

Ayse feels lost and alone when her sister dies. She begins to act distant and aloof with everyone in the village. Ayse and other villagers make the long hike up into the highlands for



a wedding, but she does not participate in the celebration, and she refuses to go back to village. She withdraws in her tiny cabin and remains isolated high among the clouds. Ayse's odd behavior starts rumors among the villagers. Suspensions also arise with the arrival of the stranger Tanasis. Ayse and Tanasis have something in common: ethnic background. Ayse was born as Eleni, as a child of an Orthodox Pontus Greek family. For 50 years, she hides her true identity. She confesses that she has been burdened with the guilt for abandoning her younger brother during the forced deportation of Greeks when they were children. Instead of going with him to Greece, she chose to stay in safety with an adoptive family. To find her long-lost brother, her long-lost identity, her long-lost language, her long-lost name and her long-lost, suppressed voice Ayse goes on a journey to Greece.(synopsis abridged and adapted from the production company web site: <http://www.silkroadproduction.com/pdfs.presskit.pdf>>)

## Bibliography:

- Abisel, Nilgun. (2005). *Türk Sinemasi Üzerine Yazılar* [Essays on Turkish Cinema]. Ankara: Phoenix.
- Akbal Sualp, Tul. (1998). “Allegori ve Temsil: Korkunun Yuzu ve Cigligin Izlegi Filmler”[Allegory and Representation: The Films as Face of Horror and as Theme of Scream]. *25.Kare*, 22, 11-13.
- Akbal Sualp, Z.Tul. (1999). “Allegori ve Temsil: Korkunun Yuzu ve Cigligin Izlegi Filmler III”[Allegory and Representation: The Films as Face of Horror and as Theme of Scream III]. *25.Kare*, 26, 13-20.
- Algan, Necla. (1999). “Türk Sinemasi’ 98: Avci, Agir Roman ve Gemide”[ Turkish Cinema’98 : Haunter, Heavy Roman and On Board]. *25.Kare*, 26, 55-58.
- Carroll, Noel. (1990). “The Image of Women in Film: ADefense of a Paradigm”. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 48\ 4, 349-360.
- Chaudhuri, Shohini. (2006). *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Terasa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed*. London: Routledge.
- Collin- Donmez, (2005). *Kadin, Islam ve Sinema*[Woman, Islam and Cinema]. Istanbul: Agora Kitapligi.
- Dallery, Arleen B. (1989). “The Politics of Writing (the) Body: Écriture Féminine”. In Bordo & Jagger (eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge. Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. New Brunswick/London: Rutgers University Press. 52-67.
- Dorsay, Atilla. (2004i). *Sinemamizda Cokus ve Ronesans Yillari*[The Years of Decadence and Renaissance in Our Cinema]. Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2004ii). “Back from Neon Oblivion: Turkish Cinema Gets a New Lease on Life”. *Film Comment*, Vol:34, No: 6. 11-12.

- Edirne, Senem. (1998, December). "Bir Memleket Gibidir Gemi"[“The Ship Is Like A Country”]. *Sinema*, 47, 76-79.
- Ellerine Saglik Kaptan. (1998, December 07). *Hurriyet*. (Anonymous Interview from <<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=-51704>>)
- Evren, Burcak. (2003-2004). "Turk sinemasinda yeni bir donem: Bagimsiz"[A new epoch in Turkish cinema: Independeny]. *Antrakt*, 75-76, 14-18.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. (1990). "Inscriptions and body-maps: representations and the corporeal". In Terry Threadgold, Anne Cranny-Francis (eds.), *Feminine Masculine and Representaiton*. London: Allen&Unwin. 62-74.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Toward A Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Guyen, Yusuf. (2004). "Turk Sinemasinin Son Donemi"[Last Period in Turkish cinema]. *Yeni Film*, 7, 27-35.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. (1993). *Women & Film: Both Sides of the Camera*. London: Routledge.
- Kibbey, Ann. (2005). *Theory of The Image: Capitalism, Contemporary Film and Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kirac, Riza. (2000). "Siddet, Oryantalizm ve Minimalizm: 90'li Yillarda Turk Sinemasina Genel Bir Bakis"[Violence, Orientalism and Minimalism: A View to the Turksih Cinema in 90s]. 25. *Kare*, 31, 11-17.
- Kuhn, Annette. (1997). "The Body and Cinema: Some Problems for Feminism". In Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (eds.), *Writing on the Body*. New York: Columbia University Press. 195-207.
- Lauretis, Teresa de. (1990). "Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory And Historical Conciousness". *Feminist Studies*, 1, 115- 150.

- Maktav, Hilmi. (2001-2002). "Turk sinemasinda yeni bir donem"[A new epoch in Turkish cinema]. *Birikim*, 152-153, 225-233.
- Modleski, Tania. (2005). *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*. London: Routledge.
- Mulvey, Laura. (1989). *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Onaran, Alim & Vardar, Bulent. (2005). *20. Yuzyilin Son Bes Yilinda Turk Sinemasi*[Turkish Cinema in the Last Five Years of 20th Century]. Istanbul: Beta.
- Pateman, Carole. (1988). "What's Wrong with Prostitution?". In *The Sexual Contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 189-218.
- Posteki, Nigar. (2005i). *1990 Sonrasi Turk Sinemasi*[Turkish cinema after 1990]. Istanbul: Es Yayinlari.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2005ii). *Turk Sinemasina Yeni Bir Bakis: Yonetmen Sinemasi*[A New Look at Turkish Cinema: Director's Cinema]. Istanbul: Es Yayinlari.
- Rich, Adrienne. (1979). *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*. New York: W.W.Norton.
- Silverman, Kaja. (1988). *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1990). "Dis-Embodying the Female Voice". In Patricia Erens (ed.), *Issues in Feminist Film Criticism*. Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press. 309-327.
- Sirin, Uygur. (1999, January). " "Turk sinemasinda taslar yerine oturuyor gibi..."[It looks like the stones are finding their places in Turkish cinema...]. *Sinema*, 48, 88-89.
- Suner, Asuman. (2004). "Horror of a different kind: dissonant voices of the new Turkish cinema". *Screen*, 45: 4, 305-323.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2006). *Hayalet Ev: Yeni Turk Sinemasinda Aidiet, Kimlik ve*

*Bellek[Phantom House: Belonging, Identity and Memory in the New Turkish Cinema]*. Istanbul: Metis Yayinlari.

Ulusay, Nejat. (2004). “Gunumuz Turk Sinemasinda ‘Erkek Filmleri’”[‘Male Movies’ in the Contemporary Turkish Cinema]. *Toplum ve Bilim*, 101, 144-161.

Ussher, Jane M. (1997). *Fantasies of Femininity: Reframing the Boundaries of Sex*. New J. : Rutgers University Press.

Walters, Susana Danuta. (1999). “Sex, Text and Context: (In) Between Feminism and Cultural Studies”. In M.M. Ferree, J. Lorber and B.B. Hess (eds.), *Revisioning Gender*. London: Sage. 222-257.

#### **Films Cited:**

Akar, Serdar. (Director / Author). (1998). *Gemide*[On Board]. Turkey: Yeni Sinemacilik.

Altıoklar, Mustafa. (Director / Author). (1995). *Istanbul Kanatlarimin Altinda*[Istanbul Under My Wings]. Turkey, Spain, Netherlands: Umut Sanat.

Demirkubuz, Zeki. (Director / Author). (1997). *Masumiyet*[Innocence]. Turkey: Mavi Film.

Giritlioglu, Tomris. (Director). (1999). *Salkim Hanimin Taneleri*[Mrs.Salkim’s Diamonds]. Turkey: Avsar Film.

Oguz, Abdullah. (Director / Author). (2003). *Asmali Konak- Hayat*[The Ivy Mansion- Life]. Turkey: ANS Production.

Sabancı, Kudret. (Director / Author). (1999). *Laleli’de Bir Azize*[A Madonna in Laleli]. Turkey: Yeni Sinemacilik.

Turgul, Yavuz. (Director / Author). (1996). *Eskiya*[The Bandit]. Turkey: Filma Cass.

Unal, Umit. (Director / Author). (2001). 9. Turkey: PTT Film & Sayisal Video.

Ustaoglu, Yesim. (Director / Author). (2003). *Bulutlari Beklerken*[Waiting for the Clouds].

Turkey, Greece, France, Germany: Silkroad, Flying Moon Filmproduktion, Ideefixe Films.

Vargi, Omer. (Director / Author). (1998). *Her Sey Cok Guzel Olacak*[Everything's Gonna Be Great]. Turkey: Filma Cass.

Zaim, Dervis. (Director / Author). (1996). *Tabutta Rovasata*[Somersault in a Coffin]. Turkey: Istisnai Filmler.