

**Bringing the Past into the Present:
Cinematic Representation of History in Turkey
since the mid-1990s**

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Esin Paa Cengiz, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Date: 15/09/2014

ABSTRACT

Historicizing plays a crucial role in the building of nation-states, and during the nation-building process, dominant forms of history have promoted certain ethnicities and cultures over others insofar as the nation relied upon those ‘official’ histories which asserted the ‘continuity’ and ‘progress’ of a particular social group. However, through the agency of films in contemporary Turkey, contested versions of the past are coming to light and challenging the dominant discourses on history that have imagined the nation as a homogeneous entity and national history as a set of ‘glorious’ moments. As a result, the historical film form in Turkey has emerged as a site for the exploration of history, memory, trauma and historical representation in relation to the discourses that surround these fields.

In this regard, this thesis examines cinematic representations of history in Turkey through an exploration of the similar and disparate ways that filmic representations since the mid-1990s have attempted to come to terms with the dark moments of the national past. By delving into the intimate and intricate relationship between history, memory, trauma and cinematic representation, this study proposes that the filmic representations of the past in Turkey that have been produced in the last two decades do not consolidate or challenge conventional ways of engaging with the past solely through their subject-matters and themes. In contrast, these films tend to either bolster or undermine traditional discourses on historical representation through the forms they deploy. By examining the cinematic treatment of both conventional stories and the traumatic moments of the national past, this thesis brings to the fore three divergent tendencies in representations of the past in contemporary cinema in Turkey and identifies a new historical film form which offers a critical route for engaging with questions about representations of the past in narratives, histories and films.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

Questions on Representing the Past

This thesis examines the cinematic representations of the past in Turkey since the mid-1990s through an exploration of the similar and disparate ways that filmic representations come to terms with the national past. By delving into the intimate and intricate relationship between history, memory, trauma and cinematic representation, this study proposes that filmic representations of the past in Turkey that have been produced since the mid-1990s do not consolidate or challenge conventional ways of engaging with the past solely with their subject-matters and themes, as is predominantly suggested in scholarly works on cinema in Turkey. In contrast, they tend to either bolster or undermine traditional discourses on historical representation, including films, through the *form* they deploy. Based on this model, this thesis aims to bring to the fore three divergent tendencies of representing the past in contemporary cinema in Turkey.

Starting in the mid-1990s, there has been profound interest in Turkey in re-shaping the national past and this interest has grown as time goes by. In addition to the discourses of the current government, there has been a marked increase in scholarly works, television series, oral history projects and films that narrate different pasts and contest ‘official’ narratives. These contested narratives have mainly focused on traumatizing events and the memories of diverse communities that have been suppressed by the state. They have sought to tell stories that have been excluded from the national narrative, such as the annihilation of diverse communities and atrocities carried out by the state to ‘forge’ and ‘sustain’ a homogenous national identity in the nation-building process and in subsequent decades. Thus, these works have been perceived as primal attempts to track down ways to confound dominant histories by evoking traumatic memories. Concurrently in Turkey, interest in re-shaping the national past has also become visible in the narration of conventional stories. These renowned stories of conquests, triumphs and victories have always had an established existence in historical texts, as well as in literature and cinema, and they constantly emphasise the ‘gloriousness’ of the national past, the ‘unity’ of the

nation and the 'homogenous' status of national identity. As a result of the promulgation of contested narratives that have eroded discourses on 'unity', 'homogeneousness' and 'glory', however, conventional narratives have also been remoulded in terms of their takes on the national past. As a result, historical representations have emerged that aim to respond to the demands of previously silenced communities and the divulging of the appalling acts committed by the state.

Films have played a crucial role in these on-going negotiations in which there is an observable effort to find ways to come to terms with the past and re-define what national history *is*. This impulse to revise what the past means for the nation in the present day has coincided with a drastic increase in film productions and a revival of the film industry in Turkey, and since the mid-1990s more and more films have been made that represent both iteratively accounted and discounted past events. Each film that takes the past of Turkey as its subject, however, has either relied on or challenged conventional discourses that surround historical representations, and accordingly this has resulted in the emergence of divergent filmic tendencies.

In this context, this thesis examines films that centre on the celebrated moments of the national past such as the nation-building process that led to the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 and the peak decades of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, it delves into films that attend to the moments that have been iteratively represented in the cinema of Turkey since the advent of filmmaking practices in the early 1900s. It also examines films that focus on traumatizing events, moments and memories that are excluded from the national narrative and that have not been dealt with in cinematic representations until recently. All these representations of the past that emerged in Turkish cinema starting in the mid-1990s have one main trait in common: all challenge, to varying degrees, predominant historical narratives.

However, I contend that these films diverge in the disparate ways they engage with the discourses that revolve around memory, history, trauma and cinematic representations. That is to say that some films that this thesis examines deploy formal structures that dismiss crucial questions about how the past can be represented in any medium, as voiced in a spate of fields including history, trauma theory, and memory and film studies. As the third and fourth chapters of this

thesis discuss, this dismissal reverberates in their formal structures because the means of cinematic representation they utilize serve to ensure the claim that cinema can seamlessly provide ‘full’ and ‘direct’ access to the past ‘as it happened’. In contrast, as the fifth chapter of this thesis sets forth, other films ponder over the question of whether or not, or to what extent, cinema can represent the past. And by using narratological devices such films undermine discourses which claim that the past can be ‘unmediatedly’ represented in film.

At this point, two narrational strategies come to mind: realist and reflexive formal structures. These are films that rely on the presumption that cinema can represent ‘reality’ and hence create the impression that spectators look through the window of the screen ‘directly’ at a ‘real’ world, as opposed to films that adopt reflexive forms and lay themselves bare as representations and as *constructs*. In relation to this distinction, Robert Stam points out that there has been a common tendency in film theory to position realism and reflexivity as strictly oppositional polarities of cinematic representation and antithetical terms (1992: 13-17). In this tradition, realism was seen as ‘reactionary’ by definition and reflexivity came to be regarded as ‘revolutionary’ and thus it was seen as a political obligation to challenge the hegemony of some cultures over others (1992: 12-14). For Stam, however, it is a mistake to define these narrational strategies as oppositional because ‘they are interpenetrating tendencies quite capable of existing within the same frame’ as many films combine a measure of realism with reflexive techniques in the same way that many reflexive films that highlight their own nature as constructs speak about ‘realities’ of the world (1992: 16). Also, he maintains that reflexivity can be co-opted eminently and re-appropriated by hegemonic cultures and it cannot always be read as a political contrast (1992: 16). The way out of this impasse, Stam suggests, is to ask what kind of realism and reflexivity we are speaking about, for they have historically been defined in disparate ways. Thus, rather than quickly privileging texts that adopt reflexive structures and declaring them to be ‘revolutionary’, he proposes that we should closely examine them.

As the fourth chapter of this thesis also indicates, some films deploy reflexive structures yet they do not bring out ‘revolutionary’ histories. Instead, they form conventional narratives as they utilize reflexive structures to consolidate traditional discourses on historical representation that claim the past

can be accessed ‘unmediatedly’ and in this way, the ‘truth’ about historical events can be revealed. However, the films that are analysed in the fifth chapter adopt reflexive structures not to fortify but to dismantle claims of traditional historiography and discourses on providing an ‘authentic’ and ‘unmediated’ historical representation, and hence they produce unconventional histories. Thus, rather than dividing films into two categories as reflexive and realist and designating realist films as ‘conventional histories’ and reflexive films as ‘unconventional historical narratives’, we should pay particular attention to the following questions: Why do these films deploy such structures? How do realist and reflexive strategies operate in them? And what do these films tell us about the events they narrate and about historiography in general, by utilizing these techniques?

The answers to these questions depend very much on a close and elaborate analysis of the use of narratological devices and means of cinematic representation in films. Thus, in order to detect what sort of discourses on historical representations and dominant versions of the past in ‘official’ histories exist in films, a special focus should be devoted to their *form*.

This thesis, in this sense, problematizes realist and reflexive forms of historical representation in films when they rely on the presumption that cinema can represent the ‘reality’ of past events and thus provide ‘full’ and ‘direct’ access to ‘the way they happened’. By relying on realist and reflexive structures, some films take deep-seated questions on historical representation for granted and utilize tools and discourses that are employed by traditional historiography to establish ‘authority’, such as discourses on ‘authenticity’ which frame representations as ‘an unmediated windows’ onto the past. And in this respect, this thesis privileges *reflexive* structures that do not operate to ‘verify’ and ‘authenticate’ the stories that films tell or position filmic representations as an ‘unmediated’ window onto the past but work to undermine discourses of traditional historiography and lay themselves bare as constructs. In other words, I take up reflexivity as a critical and crucial tool that can be used to undermine pre-existing historical narratives and discourses attached to them *only* when it is deployed to interrogate traditional methods of forming historical narratives, including filmic representations.

The questions I have just raised about realist and reflexive structures do not merely build on theoretical deliberations in the field of film studies, nor do they single out a consideration of the status of dominant historical narratives, including previous historical films, as the only way to critically engage with cinematic representations of the past in films in Turkey. In other words, in order to examine how the films taken up in this thesis treat the past and historical representations and how they formulate and propose particular outlines to come to terms with dark moments, I build on those theoretical discussions in trauma theory, history, and memory studies as well as film theory, with a focus on the national context and on the formal structures of the films.

The predominant view in trauma theory suggests that when faced with a catastrophic event, memory goes into a state of crisis and refuses to register knowledge of what happened (Caruth 1995; Caruth 1996; Laub 1995; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995; Kaplan and Wang 2004; Hodgkin and Radstone 2006). Since, as these scholars maintain, trauma disrupts the processing of memories and precludes the possibility of experiencing the event at the time of its occurrence, the notion of ‘unrepresentability’ and how traumatizing events can be communicated through representation dominates central discussions in trauma theory. Similar debates permeate the field of history as well, as postmodern accounts of history have sought to make the claim that any representation of the past goes through a process that includes selection, arrangement, organization, interpretation, invention and narration. Hence the presumption that the past can be directly and unproblematically represented in historical narratives is problematized and the idea that history is never ‘impartial’, ‘pure’ and ‘objective’ but always a narrative, always a representation and not a reflection of ‘what really happened in the past’, has become prevalent (Ankersmit 1989; White 1975; White 1985; White 1988; Carr 2001; Eaglestone 2001; Munslow 2006; Jenkins 2010; Connerton 2011).

Such contentions in these fields have raised questions regarding power relations: who produces histories and for what reason, and in what ways those histories are being produced. They have also drawn attention to the intimate and intricate relationship between memory, trauma and history that go against the grain of conventional approaches which regard to them as being oppositional, antithetical and incompatible modes of communicating the past. In all these

debates in memory studies, trauma theory and the field of history, one can observe that the central question of communicating with the past revolves around the possibility of representation and *form*; in other words, how the past, be it traumatic or otherwise, can be represented in any medium by reflecting on the process in which the past is moulded as narratives and histories.

These debates on the significance of *form* have also been exhaustively theorized in film studies. In their preoccupation with how the past can be represented in cinema, historians, trauma scholars and film scholars alike tend to suggest that, with its experimental and non-realist forms, as well as self-conscious and reflexive structures that constantly call attention to the nature of film as a *construct*, the medium of film carries with it the potential to encourage a critical awareness with existing versions of the past as histories and as narratives (Tribe 1977; Davis 1988; Williams 1993; Rosenstone 1995a; Rosenstone 1995b; Rosenstone 1995c; Rosenstone 1996; Rosenstone 2006; Landy 2000; Walker 2001; Walker 2004; Walker 2009; Marks 2000; Hirsch 2004; Kaplan and Wang 2004; Burgoyne 2008; Burgoyne 2010). In other words, these scholars propose that the medium of film can stimulate critical engagement with the past and the ways we construct it as narratives and histories by problematizing the very notion that the past can be accessed directly and unproblematically through the forms they deploy.

The way this thesis privileges reflexivity as a narrational strategy that can be used to interrogate traditional history and historiography, then, is founded on the scholarly deliberations in these fields. And based on those, this thesis asserts that rather than subject-matter and the themes of films, it is their formal structures that bring out the ways they operate either to secure or dismantle conventional discourses on historical representation.¹ In this regard, instead of examining the films taken up in this thesis solely within the scope of the political, historical and cinematic contexts of Turkey and frame them as culturally specific tendencies, I aim to position them in a broader context. And by taking into consideration

¹ Here it should be noted that in her article 'The Popular Film as a Progressive Text', Elizabeth Cowie explains that 'the "content" of [any] narrative is crucially dependent on the form through which it is constructed; the form is thus not a simple expression of an already-existing content, but a *system* of representation through which a "content" is constituted' (1988: 113). By *form*, therefore, I am referring to all cinematic devices by which the film's narrative is presented.

theoretical views about the representation of the past in trauma theory, memory studies, history and film studies, as well as by considering how these films have been debated and conceptualized in scholarly works in Turkey, I argue that particular attention should be devoted to the *form* of filmic representations in order to dig into the disparate routes they attempt to access and communicate past experiences and events and narrate different pasts. With this goal in mind and with a special focus on *form* as a tool that can bolster and undermine traditional discourses on the past, this study aims to contribute to scholarly works on cinematic representation of the past in Turkey and also studies on historical film in a broader sense.

At this stage, it should be noted that in spite of these theoretical discussions that place emphasis on the significance of *form*, apart from a few instances such as Erdem (2001) and Gökçe (2009), film scholars in Turkey tend to focus extensively on production details, subject matter, themes and narrative features in their studies of cinematic representations of the past and shun the examination of formal structures (Mersin 2010; Yüksel 2012; Suner 2009; Suner 2010; Duruel-Erkılıç 2012). This leads them to ignore central debates in the fields of film studies and history, as well as in memory studies and trauma theory, that raise critical questions about how historical narratives, including films, give shape to the past with their formal structures and what sorts of meanings they may engender. As I will discuss throughout this thesis, in disregarding the *form* of cinematic representations, these scholarly works tend to rely on and re-produce conventional discourses on these intimate and intricate modes of engaging with the past and overlook the strength of the medium of film, which is based on its utilization of narratological devices, to concretize and dismantle traditional discourses in these fields.

Also, in the limited number of scholarly works on the topic of cinematic representations of the past in Turkey in films made after the mid-1990s (Suner 2009; Suner 2010; Duruel-Erkılıç 2012), there is a frequent tendency to see the films that are analysed in the third chapter of this thesis as straightforward historical films. In these works, and in articles that have been published in cinema journals and newspapers, these films are often seen as a reiteration of entrenched discourses on the ‘gloriousness’ of national history that had also resonated in previous historical films (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012: 158-163; Günerbüyük 2012).

However, there is considerable reluctance to treat the films taken up in the fourth and fifth chapter as constituents of the historical film form. A look at the recent publications on cinema in Turkey reveals that the films I analyse in chapter four and five are conceptualized as exemplars of ‘memory cinema’ (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012), ‘minority films’, (Mersin 2010; Yüksel 2012) and ‘political cinema’ (Suner 2009 and 2010). What is striking about these theories is that although they often invoke ‘history’ and ‘the past’ and provide examinations of how these films establish a relationship with entrenched historical narratives as the basis of their conceptualizations, scholars seem to refrain from referring to these films as ‘historical film forms’.² From time to time, they justify such a position and note that they analyse these films within the categories of ‘memory’, ‘political’ or ‘minority’ cinema instead of historical films on the grounds that some cinematic representations produce ‘objective’ accounts about the past and thus can be considered to be ‘historical’ films whereas others come up with ‘subjective’ accounts and thus cannot be classified as historical films (Suner 2010: 26). Also, the majority of the studies on cinema in Turkey construe historical films in relation to their ‘faithfulness’ to ‘historical reality’ and based on this perception they classify films as those which adhere to ‘historical reality’ and thus make ‘good’ films, in contrast with those which ‘distort’ it and thus fall into the category of ‘poor’ films (Güven 2009; Mersin 2010; Duruel-Erkılıç 2012; Yüksel 2012). As is discussed throughout this thesis, such conceptualizations also reflect how scholarly works on historical films in Turkey, by limiting their scope within the boundaries of the national context, overlook larger theories on historical representation in the fields of history, trauma theory, memory and film studies and end up reiterating traditional discourses.

Within this framework, this study seeks to conceptualise three divergent cinematic tendencies in Turkey. The first tendency, which is taken up in the third chapter, illustrates how conventional histories are being transformed by the emergence of unconventional ones. As seen in films like *Veda/Farewell* (Zülfü

² Övgü Gökçe’s article ‘(Cannot) Remember: Landscapes of Loss in Contemporary Turkish Cinema’ (2009) and Tuna Erdem’s article ‘Geçmiş Zamanın Peşinde: Üç Tarihsel Dönem, Üç Sinemasal Anlatı’ (*In Pursuit of the Past: Three Historical Periods, Three Cinematic Narratives*, 2001) can be considered to be two of very few exceptions to this common tendency. Both scholars analyse contemporary films in Turkey that have been frequently described as ‘minority cinema’, ‘political films’ and ‘memory films’ as historical film forms with a specific focus on films’ formal structures.

Livaneli, 2010) which deal with the establishment of the republic and *Fetih 1453/Conquest 1453* (Faruk Aksoy, 2012) which centres on the conquest of Constantinople, this tendency brings to the fore the notion that the past is re-appropriated and re-shaped in representations in light of the needs of present-day discourses. These films also epitomize how imaginings of a purely ‘glorious’ past have gone into crisis. This is because, unlike entrenched historical narratives that place emphasis on the ‘homogeneity’ of national identity and history merely as a set of ‘glorious’ moments, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* suggest that victories, conquests and triumphs are haunted by traumatizing events. And accordingly, both films seek out ways to come to terms with them. To do so, they portray oppressed communities which were excluded from historical representation as intrinsic constituents of the nation. *Farewell* attempts to justify the appalling practices of the nation-building process by situating Turks as victims of equally traumatizing events, while *Conquest 1453* celebrates diversity and the multicultural character of the Ottoman Empire by underscoring how difference was embraced. The ‘invincible’ and ‘omnipotent’ formulations of Turkish leaders, soldiers and heroes in pre-existing historical texts are also transformed in both films, as they are portrayed as being weak and desperate individuals in crisis.

However, it should be stressed that these films do not call for a scrutiny of the process by which the past is constructed as narratives and histories, and also as films. Instead, they treat memory, history and cinematic representation as unproblematic fields. Thus, by deploying conventional codes of cinematic representation and adopting traditional discourses on memory, history and historical film, they attempt to ‘domesticate’ traumas so that they can move on. In this respect, their formal structures both work to re-establish the ‘authority’ of the conventional histories they tell, which has been shaken by unconventional histories, and at the same time indicate the impossibility of narrating histories in Turkey in the present day solely as a set of ‘glorious’ moments.

I explore a second tendency in the fourth chapter by analysing two recent films, *Güz Sancısı / Pains of Autumn* (Tomris Giritlioğlu, 2009) and *Nefes /The Breath* (Levent Semerci, 2009). These films may, at first glance, seem to depart from the characteristics that are deployed by *Conquest 1453* and *Farewell*. Instead of the celebrated moments of the national past, *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* focus on two traumatic moments, those are the Pogrom of 6-7 September and the

war in Kurdistan; to put it another way, they centre on events that have been excluded from the national narrative. And unlike *Conquest 1453* and *Farewell, Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* deploy reflexive structures that call attention to themselves as representations. With a close formal analysis, I demonstrate that these films differ little from the first tendency because they deploy reflexive structures that do not question the ‘accessibility’ of traumatic pasts and conventional codes of cinematic representation, nor do they scrutinize the process by which historical narratives are produced. In contrast, *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* deploy them to narrate traumas as easily comprehensible narratives. Instead of addressing deep-seated questions about traumatic memory and its retrievability, both films exhibit a *will to history*, a desire and obsession to represent these events on film, so that they can be fixed and incorporated into the realm of history. They do so to extract a ‘buried truth’ about the past so that it can be re-inserted into the national narrative as a ‘missing piece’ and the ‘gaps’ in history can be ‘completed’. For this reason, *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* seek out ways to construct a straightforward narrative in which traumatic events can be assimilated and given meaning. In their obsession with representing particular events, both films rely on the medium of film in light of the presumption that it can capture and represent ‘objectively’ the ‘realities’ of the world as ‘they are’. Hence, they do not utilize reflexive structures as tools for questioning discourses on representing ‘reality’ and instead deploy them to consolidate these discourses with their positioning of spectators as ‘external’ and ‘omnipotent’ observers of ‘history as it happens’. In short, these films do not question ‘official’ narratives and conventional approaches to history, which leave aside knowledge of these moments in the first place, but rather they strive to ‘complete’ history and solidify its ‘authority’ with the forms they deploy.

I examine a third tendency in chapter five and identify it as a new historical film form by analysing *Bulutları Beklerken/Waiting for the Clouds* (Yeşim Ustaoğlu, 2004) and *Babamın Sesi/Voice of My Father* (Zeynel Doğan and Orhan Eskiköy, 2012). Like the second tendency, the new historical film form centres on the stories of traumatized individuals and communities who struggle to make sense of their traumatic pasts, or, conversely, abstain from a confrontation. Unlike the second tendency, however, these films are reluctant to assimilate traumatizing events into an easily comprehensible narrative. And rather than a

will to history and a desire to ‘directly’ represent these traumatic events, they interrogate the means by which we create narratives and histories from inaccessible pasts. In doing so, they refrain from relying on means of cinematic representation that operate to solidify claims of a realist and ‘objective’ representation and hence they seek out ways that can disrupt the presumption that the past can be ‘unproblematically’ and ‘unmediatedly’ represented in any medium, including film. And this leads them to set out crucial questions about the ways we communicate the past. With their reflexive formal structures, new historical films reflect on the complexity of how much we can know about the past and how much there is that cannot be fully known. They assert that all histories, all narratives of the past, are constructs that carry with them an ideology, an interpretation of the past that never produces ‘exact’ and ‘easily accessible’ knowledge of it. This idea reverberates in their aesthetics via their reflexive and fragmented structures and the utilization of sound in relation to on-screen and off-screen space. As a result, they inquire about the tools, including the ones they utilize to narrate their stories, with which we ‘extract’ knowledge of the past and give meaning to it.

By analysing the forms deployed in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father*, I also argue that the new historical film form pushes the limits of pre-existing definitions of the historical film and extends its boundaries. In this way, I maintain that it corresponds with a need for a new form to represent the past that resonates in discussions in the fields of memory studies, trauma theory and history, and also builds on conceptualisations of ‘postmodern’ ‘experimental’ historical films, as well as ‘history as experiment’ (Rosenstone 1995c) and ‘metahistorical’ films (Burgoyne 2008), while also drawing on theories of ‘third cinema’ (Gabriel 1988; Gabriel 1989; Cham 2000) and ‘intercultural cinema’ (Marks 2000). In this sense, the new historical film form drives us to re-think and re-examine the limitations of theories on cinematic representations of the past and studies that characterise historical film as a genre that solely represents events and experiences that take place in a past time. The new historical film form, with its seminal and unconventional formal structure, sets its stories in the present-day and diminishes the temporal distance between the past, the present and the future. By rendering the past as a temporality that is not ‘over’ or ‘completed’ but rather ever-present in various other temporalities, it opens up new possibilities for

rethinking what we mean by the past, history and historical film both in the national context and larger contexts as well.

Here, it should be noted that in film scholarship historical film has been identified as a form that portrays and re-enacts events and experiences that took place in the past. That is to say, the issue of historical setting is seen as being intrinsic to historical films. However, not all films that are set in the past are considered to be constituents of the historical film form. As I will elaborate later in this chapter, there is a tendency in film scholarship to distinguish historical films from other films that are set in the past, such as ‘costume-dramas’, ‘period films’ and ‘heritage films’ (Grindon 1994; Harper 1997; Chapman 2005: 2; Guynn 2006; Stubbs 2013: 16-19). The basis for making such distinctions between films, as can be observed in the works of scholars such as Grindon (1994), Harper (1997) and Guynn (2006), is films’ engagement with ‘historical reality’. And from this standpoint the term ‘historical film’ is identified as a ‘more serious’ film form in relation to its ‘firm connection to historical facts’, whereas ‘costume drama’ and ‘period films’ are perceived to connote ‘the fanciful narratives of romantic fiction’ (Stubbs 2013: 17).

However, for Natalie Zamon Davis (1988), the term historical film encompasses a broader body of films, and as she suggests, ‘history films’ are ‘those having as their central plot documentable events, such as a person’s life or a war or revolution, and those with a fictional plot but with a historical setting intrinsic to the action’ (1988: 270). By taking a similar approach, David Eldridge also extends the boundaries of historical film and argues that ‘all films which utilize ideas about the past contain and reflect ideas about history, whether or not they are explicitly conceived of as “historical”’ (2006:5). And drawing upon this hypothesis, Eldridge investigates diverse genres as being constituents of the historical film form, because for him those films interrogate history, even though they tell fictional stories.

By building on Davis’s and Eldridge’s definitions of historical films, this thesis aims to generate further discussions on what constitutes the historical film form. Taking up this goal, this thesis also takes into consideration films that are not set in the past and do not re-enact or represent the past but still engage with questions about the past, history, historiography and historical representation. From this perspective, this thesis contends that a film that is set in the present day, or in an

uncertain temporality, can raise significant questions regarding past events and experiences, the ‘completed’ and ‘pastness’ of the past, as well as the processes by which narratives and histories are constructed, without representing the past and by experimenting with the means of cinematic representation. In so doing, such a film can seek to dismantle the traditional methods and tools of doing history that are deployed to establish an authority to speak about the past, scrutinize what the past, history, and historical representation mean, and generate new ways of thinking about the past and its representations. In this respect, rather than representing the past and providing an ‘open window’ or ‘full access’ onto past events and experiences, the act of desisting from representing the past in itself can be viewed as a critical tool for interrogating historical representation. It can also be regarded as a tool for stimulating a critical engagement with the ways we establish a relationship with historical narratives, including historical films, and placing the very notions of ‘historical fact’, historical ‘accuracy’ and ‘historical reality’ under intensive scrutiny. Thus, by suggesting that such films should be considered as constitutes of historical film form, this thesis defines historical film as a form that does not necessarily represent the past, but engages with questions regarding the past, memory, history, and historical representation.

In the remainder of this chapter, I initially look at the historical and political context in Turkey and suggest that Turkey offers multiple grounds for conducting an investigation of cinematic representations of the past. Then, drawing on my argument that the emergence of cinematic representations of the past should be analysed in a broader context by building on the debates in the fields of history, memory studies and trauma theory, I move on to review central theories in these fields and argue that, in all these fields, the theoretical crux that surrounds the question of how to represent the past manifests an entailment of a new *form* that struggles against the codes of conventional history. These concerns have been particularly voiced by historians, trauma scholars and films scholars alike, and in the field of film studies, the formal structures of films are seen as an effective tool for a critical engagement with the past and stimulating a re-thinking about what it means in the present day. Through a review of discussions in the field of film studies on the forms of historical film, this chapter concludes by proposing formal analyses as a useful method for delving into filmic representations of the past and presents an outline of the chapters of the thesis.

The Context

As with other national contexts, the nation-building process in Turkey was based on a denial of particular versions of the past, particular views of religion, diverse cultures, communities and ethnicities. On this issue, Feroz Ahmad notes that Turkey did not rise phoenix-like out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire as is often suggested. 'It was "made" in the image of the Kemalist elite which won the national struggle against foreign invaders and the old regime' (1993 preface). Traditional accounts of history, however, describe the foundation of the Republic of Turkey as a rupture, an unequivocal break to be exact, with the Ottoman past. In these accounts, the narrative of Turkey commences with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and its failure to keep up with Europe, despite the empire's policies of reform, leading European states to occupy Ottoman territories. Thus, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the national resistance movement was mobilized against the occupiers and the old regime's will to surrender to European powers by agreeing to let them decide the future of the empire. Traditional accounts tell us that this resulted in a successful war of independence that concluded with the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 by a group of Ottoman soldiers, with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as its president. Lasting from 1923 to the end of the 1940s, Atatürk's Republican People's Party (CHP) remained in power, and this is referred to as the 'single-party period'. And in the first three decades of the republic, a series of rapid modernization projects were put into practice in order to 'exalt' Turkey to 'the level of contemporary civilizations' and also to sever ties with the Ottoman past. As Ahmad points out, as the leader of the national resistance movement and then the first president of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stressed that 'the regime they were creating had nothing in common with the former Ottoman state, and was a complete break with the corrupt past' (1993: 3).³

³ Erick Jan Zürcher, however, argues against established historiography and offers up a critique of the generally accepted periodization of the Turkish Republic which depicts the national resistance movement as a total break with the past. By dismantling versions of history that sever the Ottoman era from the Republic of Turkey, Zürcher claims that a state of continuity existed between the two periods by emphasising that the resistance movement was organised by members of the Committee of Union and Progress who were also key figures in late Ottoman era politics. For Zürcher, most of the implementations of policies in the republic period were radical versions of earlier reforms in the Ottoman Empire. He also claims that Turkey carried over from the empire much of its political culture and administrative structure (Zürcher 2005; Zürcher 2010)

In order to achieve the ideal of a secular and modern state, and at the same time to underscore the ‘break’ with the Ottoman legacy, the founders of the Republic embarked upon a programme of political, economic and cultural reforms. These reforms encompassed, to name a few, the abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate and office of the Caliphate, changes in headgear and dress to coincide with western fashions, and the closure of religious convents and dervish lodges. Religious titles and tribal and clan names were proscribed and citizens were required to take up surnames instead. The Islamic Calendar, Arabic alphabet and traditional measurement systems were also abolished, and the Western Calendar, Latin alphabet and metric system were adopted. These were followed by a language reform that aimed to purify the language of ‘foreign’ words and facilitate the implementation of a unified system of education. New penal and civil laws were introduced based on the European model and women were granted full political rights (Özyürek 2007: 3-6).

Amongst these reforms, the language reform and adoption of the Latin script are quite significant in terms of making a break with the Ottoman past. With the adoption of the Latin script, younger generations were unable to read anything that was written before 1928, the year when the Latin script was officially adopted. The ‘purging’ of the Ottoman language aimed at severing ties with the Ottoman past further, and even though texts written in the Arabic script were converted to Latin script, one would still need Ottoman language lessons to be able to understand them. Also, a ‘Citizen Speak Turkish!’ campaign was launched in the late 1920s and speaking languages other than Turkish was banned. Özyürek refers to all these reforms as ‘administrated forgetting’ carried out by the founders of the republic that aimed to secure the erasure of the memory of the Ottoman past (Özyürek 2007: 36) and replace it with others.

These reforms were carried out via a process known as ‘Turkification’ which refers to taking up ‘Turkishness’ as the basis of the new country and then gradually imposing this identity on the population through the suppression of others, and ‘historiography and linguistics played a key role’ in this transformation (Zürcher 2010: 211). This ‘Turkification’ of the population involved major changes in history, language, education, state administrators, financial capital, and place names, as well as the settlement of ‘Turks’ in specific areas that were inhabited by non-Muslims, i.e. non-Turks (Aktar 2006: 101).

Anatolia was already ‘Turkified’ in the final years of the Ottoman Empire to a large extent by the loss of territories in various wars, the Armenian genocide in 1915-1917, the forced migration of Pontic Greeks following the First World War and the population exchange carried out between Greece and Turkey. Such brutal attempts at the ‘Turkification’ of the population after the founding of the Turkish Republic were carried out through the annihilation and displacement of diverse ethnic groups who were not Turkish. The 1934 pogrom of Thrace which targeted the Jewish population, the massacre of Alevis and Kurds in Dersim in 1938, the ‘wealth tax’ levied on non-Muslims in 1942, the Pogrom of 6-7 September in 1955 that was organized against non-Muslims, the massacre of Alevis in Maraş in 1978 and in Çorum in 1980, and the war in Kurdistan, which broke out in the 1980s, are a few examples of the ruthless acts carried out through policies of ‘Turkification’.

In addition to language reforms, historicizing also played a crucial role in creating a discourse of the ‘supremacy’ of Turkish identity. History was also ‘Turkified’ by the scholars of the Society for the Study of Turkish History (TTTC) who were commissioned by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1930 to disseminate Turkish national history. The TTTC issued a ‘Turkish Historical Treatise’ which asserted that Turks were a great and ancient race whose roots went back to central Asia where they created a flourishing civilization (Cagaptay 2004: 88). This treatise further claimed that Turks spread out from central Asia and spread civilization to the rest of the world. Cagaptay states that the narrative of the ‘Turkish Historical Treatise’ can be construed primarily as a justification of the state’s claims to Anatolia with Turks as its ‘rightful’ sovereigns and also as a consolidation of the ‘supremacy’ of Turkishness which could then be used in the subjugation of other identities.⁴ The TTTC undertook a number of other tasks, such as forming a committee (Society for the Study of the Turkish Language) to conduct research on the Turkish language and demonstrate how Turkish was the

⁴ Aslı Gür (2007) notes that in the early years of the republic, archaeological findings were used as ‘scientific evidence’ to prove the existence of Turks in Anatolia so that the state’s claims to that territory could be justified. And on the website of the Turkish Historical Society, the section ‘Excavations’ under the Brief History of the Turkish Historical Society reads: ‘As directed by Atatürk, the Society assists specialists so they can carry out excavations about civilizations in Anatolia throughout the ages and reveal the history of Turkey since prehistoric times.’ See <http://www.ttk.org.tr> [Accessed: 10th October 2011].

most influential language in the development of all of the world's languages (Cagaptay 2004). The notion of a 'common history and common language', which was thought to unite the diverse 'elements' of the nation together under the 'glory of Turkish identity', was echoed in both language theory and notions of history; most significantly, however, the work carried out by both organizations made its way into the curriculum of schools in the form of textbooks used for history lessons.

In this regard, critical historians see the Kemalist nation-building project and its projects as a form of 'authoritarian, top down modernization' and 'social engineering' of the masses by the educated elite (Öktem: 2011; Zürcher 2005; Zürcher 2010). Also, they ascribe the origins of the deep-seated problems Turkey has been facing to this day, in terms of issues related to the oppression of diverse identities, political Islam and contested versions of the past, to the nation-building process because the reforms implemented by the Kemalist elite aimed at creating a new 'Turk' and a new Turkey which resulted in the suppression of all other identities. And in the process, the subsequent years of the republic are seen as being laden with violent efforts to erase every single case of resistance to this refashioning of the nation. Thus, in times when these 'rejected' aspects of the nation become visible in the cultural and political scene, the 'values of the republic' were seen as being in 'danger' by the 'guardians of the state' and through a discourse of 'restoring order' they committed appalling acts to 'sustain' the national identity that was formulated by the founders of the republic (Öktem 2011).

As noted by Öktem, this notion of the 'guardians of the state' who see themselves as the 'rightful owners' of the state emerged with a resilient authoritarian parallel state at its core which would 'regularly intervene in order to keep governments in line and to get rid of them if need be and manipulate society to sustain its power' (2011: 40). This was the case in Turkey in the military interventions of 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997 and the electronic memorandum of 2007 (Öktem 2011). In a clandestine alliance with the military, the judiciary and the bureaucracy, as the 'guardian state', they manipulated politics on several levels and used mass violence to destabilize the government when it saw fit (Öktem 2011: 44).

Öktem argues that the ‘guardian state’ and its ‘behind the scenes politics’ became visible in the 1950s during the rule of the Democratic Party (DP), which won the first multi-party elections in Turkey in 1950 and remained in office until 1960. During this period, the DP diminished the CHP’s policy of suppression of religion, i.e. Islam, through various means (Öktem 2011: 40-45). For instance, the National Assembly’s ban on the Arabic-language call to prayer was repealed, religious education was expanded, the number of the mosques being built increased and sales of religious literature was allowed again (Zürcher 2005: 233). This move was seen as a ‘threat’, as it presupposed that Islam was not necessarily incompatible with development (Zürcher 2005: 234). The Kemalist elite, including ‘the guardians of the state’, regarded this state of affairs as a peril to their cultural hegemony and a betrayal of the ‘principles of the republic’.⁵ Consequently, the Democratic Party was removed from office through the military coup of 1960 and its leaders were arrested. While many parliamentarians of the party were sentenced with imprisonment for life, three of the ministers, including the prime minister, were executed the following year on the charge of violation of the constitution. In the years following the coup of 1960, a new constitution was introduced and it granted the military the role of advising the government on internal and external security. This led the military to amplify its influence over politics in subsequent years and it came to perceive itself as ‘the guardian of the state’ in coalition with clandestine and overt agencies.⁶

Öktem (2011) notes that the period lasting from 1960 to the military coup of 1980 was defined by the augmented power of the ‘guardians’ and the manipulation of politics and weak coalition governments. Also in this period, violence resulting from radical political polarization mounted and based on claims of political turmoil, in 1971 the military issued a memorandum which forced the

⁵ Although the DP government increased the visibility of religious groups in the political, cultural and social sphere, it also issued a law about ‘Protecting Atatürk’ in 1951 which penalized any insult against Atatürk, including defamation of pictures, statues and busts of him (Zürcher 2005; Öktem 2011).

⁶ Two other claims to continuity have been posited by Öktem (2011) and Ahmad (1993) in relation to the military’s power to intervene in the political sphere in Turkey. Öktem discusses a continuity between the ‘guardians of the state’ and their organizations, which carried out the ‘dirty business’ of political manipulation, and organizations that existed in the Ottoman Republic such as the Special Organization of the Committee of Union and Progress. Ahmad (1993), on the other hand, underscores the affinity between the Turkish Armed Forces and Janissaries.

government to resign and held it responsible for the ‘anarchy, fratricidal strife, and social and economic unrest’ in the country. Generals demanded ‘the formation, within the context of democratic principles, of a strong and credible government, which will neutralise the current anarchical situation and which, inspired by Atatürk's views, will implement the reformist laws envisaged by the constitution’ (Ahmad 1993: 148-149). And in the aftermath of the memorandum, in order to ‘restore order’ leftist parties were put on trial, members of leftist organizations were arrested, left-wing newspapers were closed down and martial law and curfews were declared in various provinces. The leaders of leftist student movements were hung by the approval of the parliament and many other leftists were killed during incursions by soldiers and the police or they were simply shot to death on the streets. Many of these murders and massacres, including the massacres of Alevis in Maraş and in Çorum, remain ‘unsolved’.

Turkey was confronted with yet another military coup on the 12th of September in 1980, and this coup has been seen by many as a watershed event carried out by the ‘guardian state’. At dawn, General Kenan Evren appeared on the state television channel TRT and stated that the Turkish army was forced to take over the state administration with the aim of ‘protecting the unity of the country’ and the nation, ‘restoring’ state order, reinstating the vitiated principles of Atatürk and replacing an ‘uncontrolled democracy’ with a democracy based on firm grounds. Afterwards, a state of emergency was declared, the government was deposed, the constitution was suspended, all political parties and trade unions were shut down, and the leaders of political parties and unions were arrested. In doing so, all power was concentrated in the hands of the National Security Council (MGK, *Milli Güvenlik Kurulu*), in other words, the military. Discussions of politics were banned and, as Zürcher emphasizes, the MGK also made sure that there was no place for former politicians in Turkey by forbidding them from publicly discussing the past, the present and the future (2005: 279). A radical break with the past, as Zürcher points out, was also ensured by confiscating – and probably destroying – the archives of all political parties (2005: 279).

In all respects, the coup of 1980 is considered to be a milestone that changed the fate of the nation and irreversibly harmed society through the strict suppression of any voices not following the state line. Hundreds of thousands of people were arrested, tens were executed, and many died in prisons under dubious

circumstances, while more than tens of thousands fled to Europe, whereupon they were stripped of their Turkish citizenship. The coup also accentuated the suppression of diverse communities, especially the Kurds, through its horrifying acts carried out in predominantly Kurdish provinces and in Diyarbakır Prison. In 1982, the MGK introduced a new constitution which strictly limited the freedom of the press, unions and rights of individuals, and also included articles which provided judicial immunity for the leaders, officials, and military and civil bureaucrats serving under the military regime of the coup. This article was then removed by the Justice and Development Party government (AKP) in the 2000s and opened the way for judicial action against the leaders and bureaucrats of the junta regime. Although it has been amended and modified many times since its ratification, the constitution of 1982 still remains in force.

General Evren held his post as president of Turkey until 1989. In this period, neo-liberal policies and economic liberalization were carried out, and supported by the ruling party, radical changes in the governing ideology of the republic also occurred through the military's intent to Islamicize Kemalism (Öktem 2011: 61). Öktem also notes that a reorientation of state ideology occurred, also known as a 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis', which shaped 'the next generations of students in the public school system and prepare a shift towards a more prominent role for Islam in the public space' (Öktem 2011: 61-62). In this period, thousands of mosques were built with the aim of creating a more economically neoliberal and socially conservative Muslim Turkey, classes on religion became mandatory, and hundreds of religious schools were set up to train preachers (Öktem 2011: 62). Also, this period is marked by the war in Kurdistan between the Turkish army and the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), the rise of political Islam, the increasing demands of the European Union, and the opening up of Turkey's economy to the world market (Özyürek 2006: 2; Öktem 2011: 56-83). And during the war in Kurdistan, the state, along with regular army and police forces, brought clandestine 'counter-terrorism units' into its fight with the PKK, which further terrorized the Kurdish population of Turkey. The Gendarmerie Intelligence and Counterterrorism Centre (JITEM) and a 'Special Team' acted as the extensions of the military and carried out appalling acts in Kurdish provinces and assassinations of Kurdish intellectuals and political activists. In the 2000s, many of the mass graves and the remains of political

activists were discovered through excavations and, after being denied by the state for years, the existence of JITEM was finally divulged in 2011 via the testimony of a retired colonel during an investigation held under the auspices of the Ergenekon Trial, which sought to divulge the workings of the ‘guardians’.⁷

Various scholars see the 1980s as a turning point for Turkey in which republican ideals, including its imaginings of a homogenous and unified nation and promises of modernization, were shattered (Gürbilek 1992; Gürbilek 2001; Ulusay 2004; Suner 2010; Özyürek 2007; Arslan 2011; Öktem 2011). For Gürbilek, these years were marked by a desire to expose everything that Kemalism had been repressing for years (1992: 15) and this resulted in a political and cultural scene in Turkey that could be permeated by expositions of denied pasts, memories, events, stories and identities. Accordingly, after the mid-1990s these denied pasts have become the main issues of contestation and started to infiltrate films, art exhibitions, academia and the statements of politicians. And in the subsequent decades, this desire to expose and dissect the pasts and identities that were denied and disavowed by dominant ideologies have developed further as the ideals of the republic have been challenged further through various means, such as the return of political Islam through the governing party, the AKP. Also, there has been an explosion of discourses that have triggered a revival and a re-avowal of the Ottoman Past with an emphasis on Islam, multiculturalism and the imperial legacy, and this has been referred to as ‘neo-Ottomanism’ (Taşpınar 2008). In addition, there have been controversial court cases which divulged the horrendous acts of the state to ‘form’ and ‘sustain’ the unity of the nation, and the European Integration process talks and a series of reforms that were launched accordingly in the 2000s known as the Democratic Initiative have had an impact as well.

Although these events and initiatives have been perceived as significant developments, critics point out that they should not be seen as representing a

⁷ The Ergenekon investigation was launched in 2007 and in the ongoing trials, hundreds of military personnel, including generals and the Chief of General Staff, Kemalist intellectuals, and journalists were arrested on charges of being members of a clandestine secularist and ultra nationalist organization known as Ergenekon. The Ergenekon Network was held responsible for the organization of various brutal incidents, including the assassinations of intellectuals, as well as bombings which aimed to create chaos to facilitate a coup against the AKP. See *Milliyet* (2011).

profound confrontation with the national past. As stated on the AKP's webpage, the Democratic Initiative, for instance, aimed at improving the standards of democracy, personal rights and freedom in Turkey.⁸ And as a part of this process, state television channels and radio stations that broadcast in Kurdish and Arabic were founded and state television channels and radio stations started to broadcast a few hours a day in Armenian, as well as in other languages. Legislation was passed that permitted the teaching of the Kurdish language in private language courses and also departments of Kurdish Language and Literature were opened at a few universities in Turkey. While these reforms caused unrest among nationalist groups based on concerns about a 'possible dissolution of the unity of the nation', they were seen by others as being significant steps because throughout the history of the Turkish Republic identities other than Turkish have been completely denied. However, as Öktem underlines, these languages are only allowed on state-run and monitored television channels and radio stations, and language courses have to fulfil technical specifications and are off-limits to school children (Öktem 2011: 135-136). At the same time, in the 2000s, a few Armenian churches were restored by the Ministry of Culture and peace talks between the PKK and the Turkish government were launched, though by 2014 there have been hitches in the process. These years have also been marked by a greater exposure to the horrifying practices of the state and its clandestine organizations as the mass graves of people who went missing under detention have been found. The government of the AKP also acknowledged some of the gruesome actions of the state and their clandestine organizations, such as the massacre of Alevis and Kurds in Dersim in 1938. It still, however, strictly denies many others, such as the murder of Alevi intellectuals and artists in Sivas 1993. Concurrently, in Turkey the Armenian Genocide has been commemorated each year at Taksim Square, conferences have been held at universities in Istanbul about 'Turkified' communities, such as Armenians, Kurds and Greeks who seek to rediscover their roots. In addition, some of the Kurdish and Armenian villages were reassigned their original names in Kurdish and Armenian, and protests have been held each

⁸ The statement about the goals of Democratic Initiative can be found on the AKP's website. See www.akparti.org.tr/upload/.../acilim220110.pdf (Accessed on 20th June 2014)

year on the anniversary of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink's assassination in 2007.

Although it is not possible to speak about a confrontation with the gruesome practices of the state and its 'guardians', it can be said that this political, social and cultural sphere constantly brings back memories of events that have been denied and other well-known occurrences. Along with the emergence of contested pasts starting in the late 1980s, Kurds, Alevis, Assyrians, Armenians, Greeks and various other communities have become increasingly vocal about the persecution and destruction they have been subjected to in the past and also in the present day. These same contestations have prompted some Kemalists to voice their concerns and 'remind' the nation of the significance of republican 'ideals'. In addition, political prisoners have spoken up about the brutal treatment and torture they were subjected to in prisons, and individuals, families and collectives have spoken up in a call for recognition to tell their stories that have been overlooked and excluded from the national narrative. In short, today in Turkey many people feel a need to remember and talk about their pasts and point out the silences and gaps in mainstream narratives and histories. That is why today whenever we turn on the television, hear a politician giving a public speech, check the weekly schedule of screenings at theatres or enter a museum to see an exhibition, we are often confronted with different stories about the past.

The narrative I have attempted to put together based on the work of scholars, filmmakers and the vestiges of the stories I've heard, as well as my memories of growing up in Turkey, highlights how, as Fairuz Ahmad has noted, the national past of Turkey was 'made'. In other words, it was re-shaped as a history based on the 'needs' of dominant ideologies and their discourses. This also illustrates how such a dominant history is largely based on the privileging of some pasts and discourses, while others are denied and subject to erasure. The current contestations and discussions in Turkey about these differing versions of the past and attempts to use these to re-define the nation, national identity and history, as well as the utilization of films as a site for all these negotiations, have brought cinema in Turkey forward as a significant means of examining how different pasts are constructed as narratives, histories and films. It also poses cinematic representations of the past in Turkey as a site to engage critically with the

question of how narratives of the past are moulded by discourses, ideologies needs, desires and aspirations.

I must point out, however, that this study does not intend to explore these different takes on the past in cinematic representations as a ‘completion’ of the ‘gaps’ and ‘missing pieces’ of the national narrative with ‘truer’ and ‘corrective’ histories. Rather, this study aims to conceptualise them as mobilizing acts that expose how cinematic representations of pasts are moulded, told and retold based on certain desires, fears and discourses. In this way, this thesis argues that the mobility in contesting, re-examining and constituting different versions of the national past in cinema of Turkey cannot be regarded as an exceptional case but as an act that also corresponds to central debates in the field of history, memory studies and trauma theory that are pertinent to the question of the possibility of representation.

Central Debates in the Field of History

The idea that the past is re-shaped and re-appropriated as narratives and histories to serve as a vehicle for particular discourses and imaginings reverberates in debates in the field of history, particularly in postmodern approaches which conceptualise of history as a narrative, a representation and a *construct* as opposed to conventional takes that define history as a field which studies past events to reveal what ‘really’ happened in the past. In this regard, these debates can be conceived of as a dispute between two conflicting positions regarding questions on the epistemology of history. On the one hand, many historians and philosophers frequently point out the need for a ‘philosophy of history’ which scrutinizes the practice of history to provide an understanding of history as a *construct*. On the other hand, others tend to defend history and dismiss questions concerning the possibility of an ‘objective’ representation. Philosophers of history have deconstructed existing hierarchies and challenge the idea of history as a reflection of ‘what really happened in the past’ while ‘empiricist’ - or traditional - historians tend to rely on evidence as a tool which can uncover the ‘truth’ of the past. Oliver J. Daddow attributes the basis of today’s disagreements to the 1960s through the well-publicized disputes between E.H. Carr and G. Elton, and he claims that while some historians defended Elton’s position, historians like Keith Jenkins and Frank Ankersmit have assumed Carr’s

stance and extended the emphasis on historians' role in interpreting the past by weaving it together with the intellectual movement called 'post-modernism' in the 1990s' (2004: 143). The expansion of Daddow's articulation crops up today in the field of history around the questions of 'objectivity', the 'truth' in historical texts, and the role of fiction, methodology, and historical evidence, as well as their use. The examination of these components has become the bone of contention in these debates as they put forward an ideological stance:

Something of an impasse therefore has been reached. Philosophers are adamant that historical texts are inherently positioned and delight in telling them so. For their part, historians either do not have the time or the inclination to focus on the gaps and prejudices in their accounts of the past. Judged in professional terms, they gain more rewards and kudos by narrating what they think happened in times gone by than by dwelling on the closures in their texts, the gaps in the documentary record and the ways in which they may have interpreted things differently. They tend therefore either to jump to the defence of history or to dismiss reflection on the construction of historical texts as a passing distraction from the real task of uncovering what actually happened in times gone by using the evidence left to us in the present (Daddow 2004: 144).

As Daddow sets forth, today it is still possible to argue that there are historians who insist on defining historians' task as an uncovering the 'truth' of the past rather than thinking about the meanings of history. This understanding is rooted, as Alun Munslow states, in the perspective that the 'Western tradition of history-writing is built on the correspondence theory of empiricism firmly rooted in the belief that truthful meaning can be directly inferred from the primary sources' (2006: 22). This empiricist view also seeks to verify that while collecting evidence and constructing comprehensible narratives out of complicated knowledge about the past, historians' works remain unaffected by their world views. Robert Eaglestone calls this understanding of history 'a traditional empiricist view' (2001: 22). He argues that this view stems from the discipline's desire to be a 'science of the past' which means explaining the past by representing how it *actually* happened. For Eaglestone, the traditional empiricist view has three features. First is the desire to be a 'science of the past'. Second, it demands that historians must be 'objective', and hence his/her own location, gender, sex, race, class, region and culture should not interfere in any given historical accounts.

Third, 'it demands that the historian follows empirical methods and, passive in the face of the facts, simply marshals the evidence' (Eaglestone 2001: 23). This way of doing history is believed to be the only 'impartial' and 'objective' way of relating events that took place in the past by simply putting the 'evidence' in order.

It is precisely this formulation that postmodernism questions. In historical theory, postmodern approaches to historiography have provided the impetus for questioning the epistemology of history. For postmodernists, an impartial and objective history is impossible. Likewise, historical writing cannot become free of its ideological complexity with hegemonic history except by adopting alternative 'unconventional' forms of representation (Pihlainen 2011). These considerations have also led to a questioning of who has control over history, what history is for, who writes history and in which form and for what purpose. Thus, theorists of postmodern history have developed what is referred to as a sceptical approach towards objectivist texts which claim that by deploying a traditional methodology, the truth of the past can be unproblematically accessed and revealed.

Many scholars agree that the basis of postmodern scepticism towards historical narrative stems from a disillusionment with the ideals and promises of modernity. Alun Munslow states that this disillusionment was brought about by the traumatic events of the twentieth century which have caused a loss of confidence in our ability to relate the past. Consequently, he maintains, the narrative of 'scientific objectivity' 'and the unfolding of progress through our grasp of the past' have come under critique (2006: 17).

The rise of fascism, two world wars, de-colonisation, seismic technological change, environmental and ecological disaster, the information explosion, the growth of exploitative and non-accountable global capitalism, with its commodification of labour in the "developed" West and the worsening dispossession of the toiling masses across the undeveloped globe, have all but destroyed the meta-narratives that legitimised both science and history as foundations of what has been regarded as an inexorable trend towards individual freedom and the self-conscious improvement of the human condition (Munslow 2006: 17).

Thus, the presumption that history can 'fully' explain what happened in the past and why it happened has been shattered. More significantly, the questions posed by postmodern accounts of history have challenged traditional history's authority

in claiming to be the 'scientific study of the past'. As a consequence, the relationship we establish with the past has shifted through promulgations of 'alternative', 'unconventional', 'personal' and 'non-traditional' histories. At this point it would be useful to address just what it is that provides traditional history with its 'authority' to speak about the past and how postmodern accounts of history have been engaging with these formulations.

Robert Eaglestone refers to empiricist history as a specific genre which has to adhere to rules and appropriate generic conventions (2001: 40-50). He explains that these rules are defined by professional historians and are taught implicitly through professional training. For empiricist historians, a history can be 'good' history only once a historian knows the rules and applies them to his/her study. The central convention in traditional history is the support of arguments with evidence, particularly because this is what differentiates it from fiction. This connection to evidence is important, because with this approach, historical texts need to be consistent in following the conventions of the genre and should not use fictional sources. Subsequently, when transferring his/her findings to paper, the historian should write in the third person, as this is seen as being a realist form of narrative. Adopting a realist style renders the writer 'invisible' and underscores claims of 'impartiality' and 'objectivity' in terms of excluding beliefs, ideologies, and personal politics. These rules and generic conventions designate how 'traditional history' claims to have authority. For traditional empiricist history, authority resides in the presumption that history is the 'empirical' study of the past and that it delivers 'true' and 'objective' narratives of the past to the audience in the way that they 'actually' occurred. In this manner, historical writing renders the accounts of traditional empiricist historians 'truer' than other accounts. And the 'truth', because it is provided through the implementation of a 'scientific' method, provides authority for a particular view of 'reality'. However, a problem arises here because the process of reaching 'the truth', the construction of the narrative, and the ideology of the narrator in transmitting the events of the past, remains unquestioned in this formulation of generic rules. Munslow discusses these unquestioned issues and formulations and the application of generic codes in the following terms:

The modernist empiricist historical method handed down from the nineteenth century requires and assumes historical

explanation will emerge in a naturalistic fashion from the archival raw data, its meaning offered as interpretation in the form of a story related explicitly, impersonally, transparently, and without resort to any of the devices used by writers of literary narratives, viz., imagery or figurative language. Style is deliberately expunged as an issue, or relegated to a minor problem of presentation. This vision of the history as a practice fails to acknowledge the difficulties in reading the pre-existing narrative constituted as evidence, or the problems of writing up the past (2006: 12).

In this regard, it can be stated that with traditional methods of doing history, there is a strict distinction between the 'subject' and 'object', and inevitably between 'history' and 'story'. This is to suggest that the historian is capable of making a substantial separation between personal beliefs and the subject – i.e., the past. E.H. Carr refers to this separation as the common-sense view of history based on the empirical theory of knowledge, and according to this view, history is merely based on 'historical facts' and the 'facts' speak for themselves (2001). In this view, the historian collects evidence from the archives, studies the 'facts', makes connections between various materials by filling in the gaps and writes down events as 'they really happened' with the aim of providing the audience with unequivocal answers to questions regarding the past. In the perspective of the conventional method of doing history, ideally a historian should be capable of making this separation by completely distancing himself/herself from his/her subject. In other words, he/she should be definitively invisible in the narratives she/he constructs. However, in 'The Discourse of History', Barthes states that when the historian absents himself/herself from his/her discourse, history seems to tell itself (1986: 132). However, in this way the meaning is buried in the 'absence' of the historian in the narrative. While struggling to find ways to understand what history might mean, as much as concentrating on what is present, we should be attentive to the possible meanings of absence as well.

It is the role of the historian in historical writing that mainly preoccupies philosophers of history and theorists of postmodern history. In *Metahistory* (1975), Hayden White focuses on the role of the historian in constructing 'narratives' out of the available traces of the past. White states that any historical text is subjected to processes of selection, arrangement, organization, and 'emplotment'. After all, it is the historian who collects evidence, and then selects

and organizes it according to a 'hierarchy', and subsequently interprets it in order to construct a meaningful narrative out of complicated traces of the past. Carr's work helps to further this argument, as he introduces the idea that the process of selection not only plays a part in the operations of historians and also notes that the historical records themselves are pre-selected and pre-determined via the particular viewpoint of those who produced them and through the 'facts' which supported that view as being worth preserving (2001: 8). This means that the producers of records select, arrange, and organize knowledge in accordance with what they credit as 'significant' and historians only study previously interpreted records and add them to their own interpretations. Building on these arguments, Ankersmit's comparison of the modernist and postmodernist approach toward evidence demonstrates the difference between the two approaches in interpreting evidence.

For the modernist, within the scientific world-picture, within the view of history we all initially accept, evidence is in essence the evidence that something happened in the past. The modernist historian follows a line of reasoning from his sources and evidence to an historical reality hidden behind the sources. On the other hand, in the postmodernist view, evidence does not point towards the *past* but to other *interpretations* of the past; for that is what we in fact use evidence for. (1989: 141)

In light of these discussions, it can be claimed that no matter what the 'scientific' methods may be, as White puts it, the findings have to be 'worked up' for presentation in a discourse (Domanska 2008: 9). And during the 'working up' process, the interpreter's, in other words the historian's, ideology, beliefs, and views cannot be separated from his or her work. For these reasons, Jenkins claims that the aim of historical study, which is to gain (true) knowledge about the past, 'is strictly speaking, unachievable' (2010: 34). Therefore, if we consider historical narratives to be 'as much invented as found' - following up on White's proposal - then historical narratives should be treated as texts to be examined (Munslow 2006: 19). And in our examination of historical narratives, instead of searching for ways to discern between what is 'invented' and what is 'found' – or, to put it differently, instead of looking for the 'truth' about the past and detecting 'lies' - we should be preoccupied with questions about why particular historical

narratives crop up in certain times and how they are re-shaped by the discourses that surround their production. In this regard, Ankersmit notes:

History here is no longer the reconstruction of what has happened to us in the various phases of our lives, but a continuous playing with the memory of this. The memory has priority over what is remembered. Something similar is true for historiography. The wild, greedy, and uncontrolled digging into the past, inspired by the desire to discover a past reality and reconstruct it scientifically, is no longer the historian's unquestioned task. We would do better to examine the result of a hundred and fifty years' digging more attentively and ask ourselves more often what all this adds up to. The time has come that we should think about the past, rather than investigate it. (1989: 152)

Even though in recent years many historians have acknowledged the problems with traditional historiography that have been raised by postmodern accounts, particularly as regards discourses on 'objectivity' and the claim that historical texts can act as an open window onto the past, others have continued to criticize postmodern approaches. On this point, Pihlainen points out that similar to traditional historiography, postmodern methods of doing history have also become the norm rather than the exception and postmodern ways of writing history present the most obvious and justified ways of studying the past (2011: 478).

While institutional acceptance has in many ways been a victory for these once-oppositional histories, it can also be viewed with suspicion, as part of postmodernism's strategy of depoliticization: with the universalization of difference and the consequent emphasis of the private and the non-political, alternative positionings have become acceptable but have also been disempowered in terms of their capacity for questioning the institution. (2011: 478-479)

It can be inferred that, in Pihlainen's view, the postmodern focus on relativism, and postmodern accounts' acceptance of different viewpoints about the past and different takes on it, result in equally valid results regarding the loss of political effectiveness. While he suggests that postmodern methods have led to an apparent depoliticization with its emphasis on personal, alternative and 'non-political' histories and the space it opened up for a questioning of historical texts as narratives, many historians argue otherwise and underline that the motives for the emergence of postmodern histories are immensely political.

Eaglestone, in this regard, stresses that some traditional historians accuse postmodern takes on history for creating a 'climate' in which the notion of ultimate 'historical reality' is undermined, any historical 'fact', any 'truth', can be recast, any 'historical reality' can be distorted and thus the 'truth' of gruesome events, such as the Holocaust, can be completely denied. However, for Eaglestone, these accusations are misplaced because in its foundations 'postmodernism is a response to Holocaust questioning to its very core the culture that made it possible' (2001: 7). He writes that the questions postmodernism asks of history and historians are powerful weapons for combating Holocaust denial and they are ways that can strip the masks of 'impartiality' and 'historical objectivity' in historical narratives that claim to act as a transparent window onto the past while denying the occurrence of the Holocaust (2001: 7-8). For historical texts that deny the existence of horrendous events for particular groups, regimes may also seek to find ways to strengthen their authority to speak to the 'truth' about the past by employing tools of traditional historiography rather than seeking to refute their claims with 'truer' versions of the events and producing evidence; for this reason, postmodern thinkers and historians find it absolutely necessary to question the methods that made it possible for any given historical narrative to make such claims. In other words, it is not the 'accuracy' of the information that needs to be questioned, but for a critical engagement with the nature of history one should reflect on the discourses that are attached to historical narratives. Eaglestone, in this sense, argues that making the claim that history is not the recreation of the past does not necessarily mean that any particular account is not true (2001: 26) but postmodern accounts of history argue that doing 'pure', 'neutral' and 'objective' history is impossible (Eaglestone 2001: 34). As Ankersmit notes,

Post-modernism does not reject scientific historiography, but only draws our attention to the modernists' vicious circle which would have us believe that nothing exists outside it. However, outside it is the whole domain of historical purpose and meaning. (1989: 153)

In relation to these debates, Morris-Suzuki contends that what these forms of postmodern histories have done is to 'make us more sensitive than before to the complexities of representing the past' (2005: 234). At the same time, they remind

us that ‘the same events can generate many different narratives each within their own integral “regimes of truth”’ (2005: 234). In this regard, Morris-Suzuki argues that it might be reasonable to insist that all history is narrative and no single story of the past can tell exactly what happened; but stopping here, she maintains, would ‘misconstrue the nature of historical knowledge’ (2005: 235).

At this point various questions can be raised: What shall be done then? How is it possible to formalize an approach which will critically engage the reader/the audience with the text? One of the key methodologies that is suggested in relation to deconstructions of conventional history is *reflexivity* in which you are given ‘an explicit analysis of why the history you are getting is the one you are getting and how you are getting it in the way you are not in other way’ (Jenkins 2010: 82). This reflexive approach, for Jenkins, can render the narrator and his/her methodology visible and provide the reader/viewer with information about the process of turning the past into history. Thus, it also can engage the viewer/reader critically with the text and stimulate critical thinking. However, we should keep in mind White’s point regarding the presumption of traditional historians that they can go beyond ideology and that this will make them scientific because ‘revealing one’s ideological biases does not necessarily allow one to transcend them’ (Domanska 2008: 21). To put it another way, adopting reflexive structures will not pave the way for producing ‘truer’ versions of the past or lead one to transcend the questioning to which historiography has been subjected. In short, it will only make the reader know about the process of the production of history out of the past in which knowledge undergoes phases of selection, arrangement, organization, invention and narration. And in this way, reflexive histories may indicate that the history their reader is getting is a version of the past that excludes others, not ‘exact’ knowledge about it. Thus reflexivity can be deployed as a structure and as a *form* to reflect on the *accessibility* of the past through its representations in narratives and histories.

Memory, Trauma and History

Perhaps one of the most prominent practices that have emerged with the deconstruction of the authority of traditional history is the possibility of telling stories which have not been appropriated as parts of predominant narratives and also have not been seen as constituents of the realm of traditional historiography.

When the authority of conventional history to speak about 'what really happened in the past' is undermined, there is an increased interest in delving into stories that have not been recorded and preserved in historical texts, in other words that have been kept 'out of the frame' of history, but exist in the memories of individuals and collectives. Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (2006) maintain that this interest has resulted in an appeal to memory with the aim of documenting experiences of individuals and collectives that were previously excluded from formal historical discourses. And, for them, this appeal to memory foregrounds a belief that the memories of individuals and collectives are more reliable than traditional sorts of knowledge in determining the 'truth' of the past because it is presumed that since the person who remembers an event was there at the time to experience it, he/she is able know and tell the 'truth' about the past (2006: 2). Based on this assumption, experience is seen as a guarantee of 'truth' and thus a modality has been constituted in this assumption that there is a direct and unproblematic correspondence between the experience and how it is remembered (2006: 2). In other words, the articulation of memory is thus regarded as a seamless means of 'direct' access to the 'truth' of a past event. Based on this model, Hodgkin and Radstone explain that memory is privileged as a tool of 'truth' that can speak about the past (2006: 2-3) and tell us precisely 'what really happened' exactly the way 'it happened'.

Notably, Hodgkin and Radstone point out that the poststructuralist undermining of the authority of history has also led historians to appeal to memory and pursue the documentation of the experiences of previously silenced communities to 'bring to light' stories they were kept 'out of the frame' of history. For Hodgkin and Radstone, historians have done so primarily because the 'concept of memory seems to offer a more cautious and qualified relation to the past than the absolute assertion that for some is associated with history' and working with the concept of memory 'suggests a way out of the impasse into which historiography might have been driven by the poststructuralist assaults on the truth' (2006: 2). However, apart from a few exceptions, they argue that rather than approaching memory as a process and grappling with the question about how it engages with the past, historiographical studies have tended to identify memory as a sub-category of oral history or ignore it all together (2006: 3). That is to say, instead of reflecting on the processes of remembering, recollecting and retelling

that are involved in memory and being preoccupied with theorizing memory as a particular mode of engaging with the past, historians, in their involvement with oral history, have laid claims to finding an ‘authentic truth’ that is out there but not yet been recorded and preserved. And with this orientation, they unproblematically seek to solicit the voices of those who have been silenced or ignored (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 4) so that ‘accurate’ knowledge about the past can be produced. Here it is possible to infer that, with an emphasis on claims of ‘truth’, oral historians seek to designate and expose ‘more accurate’ and ‘corrective’ accounts and ‘missing pieces’ of history with the presumption that what they may find is more reliable than accounts and narratives of traditional historiography.

However, Marita Sturken writes that, like the authority of traditional history, the authority that historians’ accord to memory by positioning it as a means that can give us direct access to the ‘authentic’ experience of the past events should be questioned (1997b: 688). For her, the original experiences of memory are irretrievable and ‘we cannot ever “know” them except through memory remains’ (1997b: 688). Sturken grounds her argument on the processes of memory and contends that more than fixed and definitively ‘true’ accounts of the past, ‘[m]emories are narratives that are that are told and retold, reenacted and reimagined. Memory is ontologically fluid and memories are constantly subject to reinscribing and fantasy’ (Sturken 1997b: 688). And although Pierre Nora sets up an opposition between memory and history, he also problematizes the notion that there is a direct correspondence between an experience and how it is remembered and the presumption that an experience can be unproblematically and ‘completely’ recovered by evoking the memory of the event. Nora, in this regard, describes memory as nothing more than a ‘sifted and sorted historical trace’ and states:

Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. (1989: 8)

In this sense, both Nora and Sturken propound that the memory of a lived experience is not fixed but active, and it is articulated in a tandem of forgetting

and remembering; in other words, it is changeable as it is re-shaped and re-told according to certain desires and needs, and for all these reasons memory and experience cannot be a precise guarantee of 'truth'. This does not mean that, however, the issues of authenticity and accuracy in memory cannot be addressed (Sturken 1997b: 688) and discussions of memory can become bogged down in questions of reliability (Sturken 1997a: 2). This is because memory is a narrative rather than a replica of an experience that can be unproblematically and seamlessly relived and retrieved, and Sturken asserts that what one remembers is highly selective and how one retrieves memories says as much about desire and denial as it does about remembering (1997a: 7).

In this respect, the idea that memories indicate desires, needs, denials and self-definitions rather than a definitive 'truth' means that discussions about the memories of individuals and collectives should not be preoccupied with whether the memory is 'true' or not. But scholars who work with the concept and processes of memory must foreground memory's relationship to desire and its political nature: 'Indeed, what memories tell us, more than anything, is about the stakes held by individuals and institutions in what the past means' (Sturken 1997b: 688-689).

Likewise, Hodgkin and Radstone contend that 'it is precisely in revealing the ways in which memory, even when it seems most real and definitive, is not a certain guarantee of the truth, that oral history developed into such a fruitful area for thinking about memory' (2006: 4). And similar to Sturken's contention, they note that the notion that memory cannot provide us with 'direct' and 'full' access to the 'truth' of past events does not necessarily entail a return to dismissive approaches regarding accounts of the past that were previously overlooked and ignored (2006: 4). They also argue that this also does not mean that the memories of previously silenced communities are invalid, distorted or fallible. Instead of undertaking the task of discerning 'true' and 'accurate' and 'mistaken' and 'distorted' versions of the past, this idea foregrounds the notion that different questions need to be asked about memory and how we can better understand its processes, meanings and motivations. In this regard, Hodgkin and Radstone point out that how people recollect events in which they were involved and what can be learned from their narratives are questions that should be posed in studies on memory, particularly in the field of oral history (2006: 4-5). They argue that

posing these questions about memory and its relations with the 'truth' indicate that there are divergences and inconsistencies, different versions at different times, and this in itself reveals both the culture in which memories have been constructed and developed as well as the workings of memory itself (2006: 5).

In this way, for Hodgkin and Radstone the idea of memory as a tool which can be utilized to contest 'official' and dominant histories can also shift from constituting an opposition between 'subordinate truth' in memory and 'dominant lies' in the field of traditional history to a concern 'with the ways in which particular versions of an event may be at different times and for various reasons prompted, reformulated and silenced' (2006: 5). However, they add that, 'this is not to deny that dominant versions of the past are inextricably entangled with relations of power in society, but rather to refocus the question around the many ways in which conflict and contest can emerge' (2006: 5).

In their examination of memory and its relationship with history, Sturken and Hodgkin and Radstone demonstrate that the relationship between memory and history is intimate and complex. And in their exploration of this relationship, they suggest that history and memory cannot be easily constituted as oppositional and antithetical concepts and modes of engaging with the past. This is because, as Sturken discusses, rather than standing in opposition, memory and history are entangled as they do not exist within neatly defined boundaries and memories can move from one realm to another (1997a: 5). Thus, she contends,

[I]n many cases it may be futile to maintain a distinction between them. Yet there are times when those distinctions are important in understanding political intent, when memories are asserted specifically outside of or in response to historical narratives. (1997b: 5)

The close and complex relationship between memory and history is also articulated in studies on traumatizing events, particularly in the field of trauma theory. Hodgkin and Radstone state that, similar to oral history, the notion of memory has also been a focus for examinations of the past in the field of holocaust studies (2006: 6-7). However, more than an aspiration to find the 'truth' about horrendous events like the Holocaust, the central debates in trauma theory, as in postmodern historical theory and memory studies, devote special attention to the process of memory being subjected to a traumatizing event. And it

problematizes the presumption that the event can be facilely accessed and the experience can be easily retrieved simply by evoking memories of the survivors.

This is because the predominant view in trauma theory is that a disruption occurs in memory processing when faced with an overwhelming and unendurable event, and in such cases, memory enters a crises and refuses to register the knowledge about what has happened (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 6). To put it another way, this view suggests that a catastrophic event is not fully experienced at the time of occurrence because memory resists recording it, and hence understanding collapses as well. The theoretical crux, Hodgkin and Radstone state, 'is the idea that something that cannot be thought, that is inaccessibly closed to memory, because the psychic wound inflicted by the event was intolerable' (2006: 6). Since memory resists recording what is happening in the case of a traumatizing event, notions such as the collapse of understanding, the impossibility of knowing, the unassimilated nature of traumatic experience in associative chains of meaning, the inaccessibility of the past, and thus the impossibility of a history are perceived to be intrinsic to traumatic memory (Caruth 1995: 5-12). These contentions are crystallized in Dori Laub's suggestion in relation to Holocaust, in which he states that in traumatizing events, history takes place with no witness (1995: 66).

[I]t was also the very circumstance of being inside the event that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference in which the event was taking place, and provide an independent frame of reference through which the event could be observed. One might say that there was, thus, historically no witness to the Holocaust, either from outside or from inside the event. (Laub 1995: 66)

For Hodgkin and Radstone, stating that traumatizing events are not fully experienced at the time and thus there can be no witness to them complicates referentiality because it interposes a disruption between an event and how it is remembered and represented (2006: 6). Correspondingly, the idea of 'unrepresentability' dominates the deliberations on traumatic memory. E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang explain that the idea of 'unrepresentability' originates from the implication that trauma destroys a culture's meaning-making mechanism and representational modes, and in line with this view it is positioned beyond the

reach of representation (2004: 8). After all, when we are exposed to a traumatizing event, memory refuses to record knowledge of what happened, and as a result of this, the experience cannot be given any meaning and assimilated into a comprehensible narrative, and if this is indeed the case, then how can traumatic events ever be communicated, known and represented?

In this respect, van der Kolk and van der Hart write that although all memories are malleable by constant reworking, some memories are fixed in the mind and are not altered by the passage of time or intervention by a subsequent experience (1995: 158-174). Here they are referring to a repetitive and intrusive return of traumatic memory that haunts survivors later on in nightmares and flashbacks. Yet, although traumatic memories then can return repetitively and insistently, they point out that survivors often cannot make sense of the source of their terror or ascribe any meaning to their past experiences (1995: 163-164). Similarly, Caruth states that as a response to an overwhelming event or set of events, trauma then returns insistently to haunt survivors against their will in the form of repetitive and intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts and behaviours (1995). By explaining that these recurrences are mostly defined as symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), she suggests that the pathology consists solely in the structure of its experience or reception: 'the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its possession of the one who experiences it' (1995: 4). For this reason, Caruth suggests that 'to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event' (1995: 4-5). However, for her these traumatic symptoms cannot be understood in terms of a distortion of the event, or as a wish or unconscious meaning, but rather they should be regarded as 'purely and inexplicably, the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits' (1995: 5). Therefore, she defines the delay and incompleteness of knowing and insistent return of the overwhelming occurrence as absolutely true to the event, and from this perspective she describes the symptoms of trauma not as a pathology of falsehood or displacement of meaning, but of history itself (1995: 5).

If PTSD must be understood as a pathological symptom, then it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is symptom of history. The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history with them, or themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess. (Caruth 1995: 5)

While Caruth posits that the images of traumatic re-enactments, or symptoms of history as she regards them, remain absolutely accurate, immediate and precise in dreams, nightmares, hallucinations and flashbacks, similar to van der Kolk and van der Hart, she contends that they are largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control (1995: 151). These images of trauma, Caruth maintains, also cannot be assimilated into associative chains of meaning and often produce a deep uncertainty regarding their truth because survivors who are haunted by these insistent recurrences against their will cannot ascribe any meaning to them or know where they come from (1995: 6). In this respect, her suggestion that trauma ‘does not simply serve as a record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned’ (1995: 151) epitomises the main basis of deliberations on traumatizing events and how they are experienced. And her stress on the idea that traumatic experiences can never be fully known poses questions about the truth of traumatizing events.

For survivors of trauma, then, the truth of the event may reside not only in its brutal facts, but also in the way that their occurrence defies simple comprehension. The flashback or traumatic reenactment conveys, that is, *both the truth of an event and the truth of its incomprehensibility*. (1995: 153)

Caruth’s arguments on trauma, about how it is experienced and how it precludes a ‘full’ access to past events, returns us to the question of representation: how traumatic memories can be accessed and articulated and how they can be narrated. Here, in reference to history, Caruth proposes that, ‘[f]or history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it some different way, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence’ (1996: 18).

As can be seen in the theorizations that I discussed in this section, memory studies, trauma theory and postmodern accounts of history, grapple with the same issues: questions about the accessibility of the past, how the past can be communicated through narratives and histories, and how historical narratives are moulded by desires, fears, ideologies, fantasies, and aspirations. And as Hodgkin and Radstone also emphasize, although questions pertaining to the relationship between memory and history have been addressed in detail in the field of memory studies and trauma theory, the field of history, including postmodern

historiography, with certain exceptions seems to be uninterested in memory, apart from oral history through which they tend to appeal to memory as a means of 'the truth' (2006: 2-3).

This points to one main conceptualization: the past, whether traumatic or not, can never be straightforwardly represented and be 'fully' known. In addition to the processing of memory, as regards the nature of historical records and the methods historians deploy, such a conceptualization stems from the understanding that narratives of the past are never 'pure', 'objective' and 'impartial' but are moulded by political intent and specific discourses, as well as desires, denials, and fears. This is not to suggest that, however, that the past for all these reasons is 'unrepresentable' and cannot be communicated. In the case of horrendous events from the past, Kaplan and Wang propound that a fixation on profound doubts about the viability of historical writing and its vehicles, narratives and images, and an emphasis on the 'unrepresentable' character of trauma, 'may push trauma into the mystified circle of occult, something untouchable and unreachable' (2004: 8). This argument can be seen as viable for any other kind of representation of the past and, as scholars also seem to agree, the question is not about whether or not we can represent the past but how to represent it - in other words, in what *form*.

Representing the Past in Film and the Crucial Role of the Form

Similar debates have permeated the field of film studies as well. In his book *The Film in History: Restaging the Past*, Pierre Sorlin defines historical film in the following terms: 'The historical film is a dissertation about history which does not question its subject—here it differs from the work of historian—but which establishes relationships between facts and offers a more or less superficial view of them' (1980: 21). Sorlin elaborates on this definition further and states that historical films are not representations of 'reality' but are all fictional: '...even if they are based on records, they have to reconstruct in a purely imaginary way the greater part of what they show' (1980: 21). In this way, Sorlin points out that looking for 'mistakes' in historical films and criticizing them based on their 'unfaithfulness' to 'historical reality' is meaningless (1980: 32). Accordingly, he suggests that historical films should not be compared with written history but rather should be analysed by asking questions regarding the 'facts' that the film selects and how it develops and shows connections between them (1980:

32). Even though Sorlin argues that a conventional comparison of historical films with written historical scholarship is a futile route for studying historical films, it can be clearly seen that Sorlin's definition is, indeed, essentially based on a presumed 'difference' between written history and historical film in relation to their varying degrees of engaging with 'historical reality'.

Sorlin's approach, in many ways, reflects a broader conventional tendency in studies of historical representation in cinema which takes shape as a demand for 'truth', 'accuracy', 'authenticity' and 'verifiability', and at the heart of these demands is the embedded notion that only by adhering to methods of traditional historiography can 'legitimate' histories be created in cinema. Rosenstone puts forward that in theoretical discussions of historical films historians tend to take up standard history or written history as a reference point and either praise or criticize historical films based on their 'faithfulness' to traditional texts or reject filmic representations of history altogether as a 'legitimate' way of doing history (1995c: 30-37). In response to critical studies which suggest that historical films can be a 'proper' source of history, David Herlihy states that he is unconvinced about theories which propose that historical films can cultivate critical approaches because even though films can effectively present visual aspects of history, they cannot show the whole history and the methods used to create accounts of history (1988: 1192). Furthermore, he expresses his concerns about the ability of films to cultivate critical thinking and simultaneously invite a suspension of disbelief (1988: 1192).

In *Reel History: In Defence of Hollywood*, Robert Brent Toplin approaches historical films from a different perspective and contends that historical films can stir curiosity and prompt viewers to consider significant questions (2002: 1). However, Toplin also valorises books for being superior to films because, as he argues, books can give detailed information and abstract analyses about the past whereas films mostly mould plots that comply with the conventions of cinematic narration (2002: 1-2). From this standpoint, Toplin comes up with a few characteristics of what he defines as 'cinematic history' and itemizes them in the following terms: Historical films simplify history and exclude many details; they appear in three acts featuring exposition, complication and resolution; they offer partisan views of the past by identifying heroes and villains; they portray morally uplifting stories; they simplify plots by featuring a

few representative characters; they communicate a feeling of the past through attention to the details of an earlier era; and, they speak to the present (2002: 17-47). For Toplin, these 'shortcomings' of cinematic history should not be judged by taking methods of traditional history as a reference point because rather than adhering to written history, films adhere to conventional codes of cinematic representation; otherwise, excessive detail and the portrayal of complicated stories could confuse viewers, causing the film to fail at the box-office (2002: 16-17).

However, this hierarchy which has been established for historical texts and historical films has been problematized in many other scholarly works that regard historical narration through film as a valuable source of history (Walkowitz 1985; White 1988; O'Connor 1988; Ferro 1988; Sobchack 1990; Rosenstone 1990; Rosenstone 1995b; Rosenstone 1995c; Rosenstone 1996; Sturken 1997a; Davis 2000; Fay 2002; Morris-Suzuki 2005; Guynn 2006; Eldridge 2006; Hughes-Warrington 2007; Hughes-Warrington 2009). In their conceptualizations of cinematic representations of the past, these scholars raise a few key points. First of all, they point out that common dissatisfaction with historical films and dismissive approaches toward them are based on the presumption that only writing provides the kind of distance and discipline that a 'scientific' approach requires (Guynn 2006: 1). Guynn propounds that historians and critics tend to be distrustful of historical films because the film involves stages, such as editing, that 'distort' documentary 'evidence' and exploit documentary footage (2006: 1-2). Guynn contends that there is a basic shortcoming in such an approach to historical discourses because by proposing their field as a point of reference historians fail to raise questions about their own discursive practices (2006: 18). White also challenges this hierarchy by arguing that the historical monograph is no less shaped or constructed than the historical film or historical novel: 'It may be shaped by different principles, but there is no reason why a filmed representation of historical events should not be as analytical and realistic as any written account' (1988: 1195-1196). Similarly, Munslow argues against the presumption that written texts provide us with 'truer' and 'more serious' versions of the past as opposed to historical films and propounds that 'Just like written history, film history is a fictive, genre-based, heavily authored, factually selective, ideologically driven, condensed, emplotted, targeted and theorised representation' (2000: 111).

Secondly, based on the content of historical films, it has been argued that historical representations in cinema can be divided into two categories: films that engage with the past ‘shallowly’ and those that take the past ‘seriously’. In these conceptions, it has been proposed that what leads historians to dismiss historical films as being ‘worthy’ of exploration as a historical source is the notion that films ‘distort’ ‘historical reality’ for the sake of drama and the creation of exhilarating emotions. Or, as Chapman explains, a distinction is often made between films that are set in the past but are not necessarily ‘historical’, those that are categorized as ‘period films’ and ‘costume dramas’, and films that focus on historical events and personages and are thus categorized as ‘historical’ (2005: 2). Taking up this standpoint, Guynn maintains that standard historical films – mainly Hollywood productions, but from other countries as well – engender scepticism amongst historians and critics since such films have little pretence to ‘authenticity’, and he goes on to assert that such films ‘disguise the trends and preoccupations of the day through historical *mise-en-scène*, and they reproduce melodramatic plot structures in the guise of historical necessity’ (2006: 2). For Guynn, the bare frame of historical events and characters in such films also quickly dissolve into the drama of a fictional protagonist and general anachronism, and they emphasise ‘spectacular’ rather than ‘analytical’ (2006: 2). Therefore, by underlining that these films are generally described as ‘costume drama’ rather than ‘historical films’ because of their ‘shallow’ and ‘opportunist’ treatments of historical past, and also by referring to them as ‘admittedly unworthy objects’, Guynn states that there are other historical films which have more serious intentions (2006: 2). Yet, for Guynn, a problem arises in the way that staunch sceptics fail to make a clear distinction between them and treating all historical films as fiction (2006: 2).

However, the categorization of historical films based on their content and defining them as ‘historical’ or otherwise has also been problematized by various scholars (Davis 1988; Eldridge 2006; Stubbs 2013: 17- 18). As regards epic films and the big-budget historical productions of Hollywood, Sobchack observes that the emphasis on the commercial hype that surrounds their production, self-promotional aesthetic aura and emotional content subordinate questions regarding such films’ treatment of history and this leads scholars to dismiss them as regards their status as ‘serious’ historical representations in terms of their cultural,

political and historical nexus (1990: 24-26). For Sobchack, however, rather than dismiss these films as ‘unserious’ representations, it is crucial to engage with them to engender an understanding of the discourses they create and the types of meanings they put forward in relation to history (1990). And as scholars such as Landy (1996 and 2000), Burgoyne (2008 and 2010), Dessler and Studlar (2009), and Young (2009) have argued in their analyses of individual films, big-budget productions and ‘spectacular’ films also set forth certain discourses about history, historical representation and nation that should be comprehensively explored in detail. Ferro contends that a distinction should not be made between films in which history provides the setting and those whose subject is history and accordingly he proposes that in studies of historical films what needs to be taken into account is a distinction between films inscribed in the flow of dominant or oppositional currents of thought and those that propose an independent or innovative view of societies (1988: 161).

In this regard, the questions that scholars such as White, Munslow, Landy, Ferro, Burgoyne, Young, Sobchack, Dessler and Studlar are preoccupied with bring us to the third, and in my view the most insightful, approach that diminishes the established hierarchy between written history and historical films and also traditional methods of ‘defining’ what is historical and what is not. The third approach proposes that cinematic representation of history is a distinct *form* and thus studying historical films requires a new methodology. For O’Connor, what brings about a failure to critically engage with historical films is indeed the absence of an accepted, coherent and comprehensive methodology (1988: 1201). And Ferro suggests that one of the ways that critical analyses of historical film can be done is the examination of the use of cinematic means in films (1988: 162). Here, it can be argued that only by studying the utilization of cinematic devices can critical analyses of historical films be carried out and examinations must be made of their varying degrees of engagement with dominant and oppositional ideological currents and the new ways thinking about the past and history they offer. In relation to these conceptions, Rosenstone also emphasises that cinema deploys unique devices such as editing, sound, mise-en-scene, camerawork and lighting, and in order to comprehend what sorts of meanings historical films engender in relation to history and historical representation, these means should

be examined not by accepting written history as the ‘standard’ of historical representation but through the films’ use of cinematic devices (1995c).

In recent decades, the use of cinematic devices has become a major topic in seminal scholarly works on historical representation in cinema. Particularly in theoretical discussions about the intimate and intricate relationship between history, memory, trauma and film, as well as their relationship with national narratives and the ‘official’ and traditional histories that are produced by colonizers, oppressive regimes and nation-states, these critical works have explored the discourses that surround historical representations, including their own status as historical films. Within this context, these texts did not praise historical films on the grounds that they remain ‘faithful’ to ‘historical records’ and produce ‘authentic’ narratives, nor did they limit their theoretical discussions to whether or not historical films deliver ‘authentic’ representations of the past or ferret out ways to make a distinction between what should be categorized as ‘historical’ films and what should not. But by challenging all the theories that establish a hierarchy between traditional histories and films and also ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ representations, these theories have offered new ways of engaging with filmic representations of the past. At the same time, by close *formal* examinations of historical films, they have delineated what sorts of discourses pertinent to traditional historical narratives that films put forward. One of the primary aspects of those theories has been an undermining of the conventional discourses that surround historical representation, including films, which establish an ‘authority’ to speak about the past – such as claims of ‘distance’, ‘objectivity’, and ‘authenticity’. And by raising questions about the ‘accessibility’ of the past via representations, they have problematized understandings of historical narrative as a ‘direct’ and ‘open’ window onto the past. In their engagement with historical representations and the discourses that are attached to them, these works have devoted particular attention to the *form* of films.

Through a survey of films dating from the 1970s that deal with previously ignored moments of the past in traditional history, Keith Tribe (1977), for instance, observes two disparate tendencies. Tribe states that in their aspiration to give history back to the people in terms of the history of oppression and resistance to oppression, some films and television series such as *Days of Hope* (Ken Loach,

1975) foreground an approach in which ‘the truth’ of such moments can be restored and integrated into the realm of history (1977). For Tribe, they do so to give their political demands historical ‘validity’ and such a motive led some films to draw on the ‘facticity’ of the past they address through which the ‘veracity’ of the statements they are making can be assured (1977: 13). This, Tribe explains, results in a reliance on the conventions of realism and an obsession with ‘veracity’ and getting the ‘right look’ of the period in which a film is set (1977: 16). Discourses on the ‘veracity’ of the image, then, serve as a vehicle for the ‘veracity’ of the history that the films construct, and this history in itself is conceived of as being the ‘truth’ of the past, simply because the images ‘look right’ (1977: 16). For Tribe, it is these discourses on realism and the ‘veracity’ of the image that underwrite the narrative of the film. The problem with such an act, Tribe notes, is that these films too easily presuppose that the ‘historicity of events rests on the faithful representation of the agents of this history’ (1977: 22). Any question that can be raised about the constructedness of the narrative can then be suppressed by the ‘veracity’ of the images and discourses on realism. Tribe briefly explores some other films to exemplify a contrasting approach, such as *The Sorrow and the Pity* (Marcel Ophüls, 1969), and writes that such films make it possible for a series of reconstructions to be contrasted and shown as contradicting each other through the use of different sources. And in doing so, while narrating stories of the past, these films question the ‘evidence’ they offer (1977: 14). In this manner, as opposed to films that put forward claims of ‘truth’, Tribe suggests that films like *The Sorrow and the Pity* take one step forward in their production of narratives of the past because they do not attempt to re-write history but demonstrate the ways it is subjected to reconstruction (1977: 14).

Historian Robert Rosenstone has also written on this subject extensively and conceptualized historical films based on their formal structures. In *Visions of the Past*, by exploring film forms and the discourses they bring about, Rosenstone introduces two disparate cinematic tendencies by referring to them as ‘standard’ or ‘mainstream films’ and ‘experimental films’ (1995c). He contends that the form of standard historical films resembles standard written history, which in its conventions of realism delivers the past in a highly developed and polished form that serves to suppress rather than raise questions about the past and history (1995c: 11). Whether they are fiction films or documentaries, Rosenstone grounds

his conceptions on the realist formal structures of standard films by which they want to make us think that what we see on the screen is reality (1995c: 54). Standard films do so, according to Rosenstone, by their reliance on realism and conventional codes of cinematic representation which work to give the viewer a sense that nothing is being manipulated to create a historical world on screen and thereby underlie the notion that spectators can somehow look through the window of the screen 'directly' at a 'real' world (1995c: 54- 55). These features of standard historical film, Rosenstone argues, parallel a major convention of written history 'which insists on the "reality" of the world it creates and analyses' (1995c: 55). In contrast, 'experimental films' or 'postmodern films' are based on a rejection of the notion that the screen can be an unmediated window onto the past and they foreground themselves as constructions (1995c: 12). Unlike standard and realist films, such works do not attempt to recreate the past 'realistically' but 'point to it and play with it, raising questions about the very evidence on which our knowledge of the past depends, creatively interacting with its traces' (Rosenstone 1995c: 12). In this manner, Rosenstone suggests that rather than opening a window onto the past, the experimental or postmodern film, or experimental history, opens a window onto a different way of thinking about the past (1995c: 63). By desisting from realism, and also by bypassing the demands of 'veracity' that are a normal component of written history, Rosenstone propounds that they 'go on to explore new and original ways of thinking about the past' (1995c: 64).

Robert Burgoyne adopts a similar approach in his discussion of metahistorical films and claims that such films 'offer embedded or explicit critiques of the way history is conventionally represented'. He also notes that such films highlight cinema's potential for a critical, historiographic questioning of the past and its strengths as a form of thought experiment (2008: 46). Like Rosenstone, Burgoyne found that the strength of metahistorical films to push us to re-think representations of the past lay in the formal strategies they deploy which defy conventional codes of cinematic representations and reject realism (2008: 126). Through an analysis of *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991), he argues that metahistorical films can be considered to be a mode of thought experiment and a new form of historical thinking in terms of the ways the film foregrounds its own construction, narrates the past self-reflexively from multiple viewpoints, and

refuses to insist on a unified narrative trajectory or a coherent, single meaning of events (2008: 126). In this sense, Burgoyne maintains that the fragmentary, postmodernist style of metahistorical films challenges realist traditions that dominate traditional historical films and reveals the potential of cinema to approach the past in a new and critical way.

Similar questions have been raised in relation to the representation of traumatizing events in films, and in their discussions scholars also seem to agree that as regards both individual and collective experiences, trauma requires the abandonment of realist, conventional and traditional forms of representation and the deployment of unconventional and non-traditional narrative forms (Williams 1993; Caruth 1996; White 1992; White 1996; Walker 2001; Walker 2004; Walker 2009; Hirsch 2004; Kaplan and Wang 2004; Hodgkin and Radstone: 2006). To this end, film, with its ability to push the limits of conventional narrative forms and with its portrayal of temporally heterogeneous and fragmented structures as well as flashbacks and juxtapositions, is considered to be a useful means of reflecting on the process of memory, particularly in relation to traumatic events and experiences. In this regard, the theoretical discussions on representations of trauma predominantly call into question realist forms of representation and discourses on realism in cinema, and they problematize the presumption that cinema can represent the 'realities' of the world 'unmediatedly' as 'they are' and act as an open window onto the past. Such discourses on realism in cinema have resulted in the claim that through filmic representations it is possible for us to have 'full' and 'direct' access to past events for us to 'witness' them. And films that adopt realist forms are often seen as being profoundly problematic because realism's discourses on omnipotent representation and the seamless narration of traumatizing pasts are thought to work against the nature of trauma, complex ways of knowing and not knowing, and the problem of accessing and recollecting traumatic memories. Also, it has been argued that the positioning of spectators as 'witnesses' to traumatizing events via realist films is a dismissal of the major contentions pertaining to traumatic memory as regards the idea that since traumatic events are not fully experienced and assimilated at the time of their occurrence, there can be no witnesses to a given event. From this standpoint, non-realist, modernist and reflexive strategies of cinematic representation are considered to be a useful means for representing, or rather rethinking, the nature

of the traumatic experiences of individuals and collectives because these narrational strategies are seen as being consistent with the model and the processes of traumatic memory, including its fragmented structure, as well as the collapse of a linear chronology and the impossibility of creating a straightforward and coherent narrative. Thus, non-realist forms that push against conventional strategies of narration and call attention to their own existence as constructs by adopting reflexive and self-conscious forms are privileged in these scholarly debates as critical formal strategies that can be used to communicate past events and memories.

The complex relationship between history, memory, trauma and historical representation, in addition to traditional historical narratives and national myths, has been examined in relation to national cinemas in *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at History* (2010) by Robert Burgoyne and *From Heimat to Hitler: The Return of History as Film* (1989), written by Anton Kaes. By examining the formal structures of individual films and the discourses that revolve around them, Burgoyne and Kaes illustrate how meanings of the nation and national memories, traumas and histories are contested, negotiated and re-shaped via representations of the past in films. Both scholars also foreground how the deployment of disparate formal structures in cinema introduces disparate ways of engaging with national narratives and traditional discourses on historical representation. In this respect, Burgoyne and Kaes suggest that while some films rely on conventional codes of cinematic representation, others interrogate the processes by which historical knowledge is produced and disseminated by deploying reflexive formal structures and thus pave the way for a critical engagement with the nation and the national past.

Questions about trauma, memory, history and cinematic representation have also been examined exhaustively in theories on 'third cinema' and 'intercultural cinema'. Filmic representations of history in these theoretical discussions have been regarded as a tool for interrogating traditional historiography and 'official' histories that have been created by colonizers and oppressors, as well as nation-states, and also have been seen as profound means for undermining conventional discourses on representation (Gabriel 1988; Gabriel 1989; Rosenstone 1995b; Rosenstone 1995c; Xavier 1999; Cham 2000; Marks 2000; Shohat 2003). Third cinema and intercultural cinema have dug into denied

pasts and they have also interrogated the process of the production of histories from the vestiges of the past in which some ethnicities, cultures and regimes are privileged while knowledge about the experiences of others is excluded from traditional historical narratives. Such theories have also raised questions about alternative aesthetics and in particular underlined the significance of reflexivity as a critical tool for investigating historical representation. In this argument, instead of creating histories in line with the tools of 'official' histories and traditional historical approaches to representation with which an 'authority' to speak about the past is established, through such discourses as 'authenticity' and 'objectivity' these historical films have sought out new ways to set the terms for what counts as historical knowledge.

As Marks (2000), Rosenstone (1995b and 1995c) Cham (2000) and Gabriel (1988 and 1989) suggest, in the production of new histories that dismantle the 'official' ones and traditional methods of historiography, these films have turned to fiction rather than 'historical reality'. And accordingly they have problematized the presumption that historical narratives, including historical films, can represent reality (Rosenstone 1995b; Rosenstone 1995c; Marks 2000). The main thrust of such films, as Marks propounds, is not to 'extract' the 'truth' about the past and deliver it 'authentically'; in contrast, they emphasize that any truth about historical events is lost in the discursive field of representation (Marks 2000: 29). Thus, rather than searching for a form through which the past can be represented 'authentically', these films have scrutinized the discursive fields in which some stories are produced, fixed and preserved while others remain 'out of the frame' of history.

Within this framework, it becomes clear that for conducting a critical inspection of representations of the past in films, be they traumatic or otherwise, it is crucial to devote special attention to cinematic devices they deploy to turn the past into narratives and histories. This is because, as scholars have expressed explicitly, close formal analyses bring to the fore the discourses that films put forward in their engagement with the past - be they personal, collective or national - and also indicate their political intent and the meanings they ascribe to the past in the present day. Thus, by taking on these contentions on the significance of form as the vantage point of my examination of historical films and rather than solely engaging with their themes, subject matter and stories, I will devote

particular focus to the *form* of the films. And based on an analysis of their formal structures, this thesis will offer up an exploration of the ways that cinematic representations contest what national history *is*, or what it should be, as crystalized in the films' formal strategies.

Outline of Chapters

By examining cinematic representations of the past in relation to the national context in Turkey and also the larger debates in the fields of history, memory studies, trauma theory and film studies, this thesis aims to demonstrate the defining features of three divergent tendencies in Turkey in communicating the past via filmic representations. With this goal in mind, in this thesis I offer up a review of the scholarly debates in Turkey on cinematic representations of the past and emphasize that these films have been discussed predominantly within the strictly circumscribed boundaries of conventional discourses and traditional conceptions of history, memory and trauma, as well as historical film. Such debates delimit, as well as impede, the stimulation of critical theories about the challenges these filmic tendencies bring to entrenched discourses on what national history *is* in Turkey and also how they seek to secure and subvert traditional discourses on memory, trauma and history.

This study also points out that since their inception cinematic representations of the national past in Turkey have been primarily theorized and conceptualised as genres, tendencies, and movements based on the features of their narratives, subject-matter, themes and production traits. And in this process, the formal structures of the films have gone largely ignored in theoretical deliberations. This neglect, I propose, has resulted in a failure to position the medium of film and its distinctive means of representation, in other words its *form*, as a major means to critique dominant discourses on historical representation within any given national and cultural context. It has also led scholars in Turkey to gloss over the central debates in fields of memory studies, trauma theory, history and film studies, all of which raise pivotal questions about whether or not, and to what extent, the past can be represented in narratives, histories and in films. The sole focus on subject matter and themes that has predominated in scholarly works on historical representations in Turkey hinders critical thinking about the films that this thesis examines.

The second chapter of this thesis surveys cinematic representations of the past from their inception in Turkey, which can be traced to the first decades of filmmaking practices in the 1900s, to the 1990s. Apart from a few instances, cinema in Turkey until the 1980s, particularly cinematic representations of the past, strove to project an 'ideal image of the nation' that coheres with dominant discourses on the national past that were formulated in the course of the nation-building process and spanned the subsequent years of the republic. By reviewing the common themes and forms of such films, and also the existing body of scholarly works on the subject, I contend that historical films until the 1980s laid great emphasis, repeatedly and unremittingly, on the 'gloriousness' of the national past with portrayals of the 'sacredness' of the nation-building process, independence movement, triumphs and victories with a focus on heroic stories that sanctify those who sacrificed their lives for the nation. I discuss the causes of such a dedicated coherence in terms of strict government control and censorship of films on the one hand and the voluntary contributions of filmmakers to these imaginings on the other. Scholars tend to argue that since cinema was excluded from the cultural programme of the founding of the republic, which involved the direct intervention and support of the state in the art scene to promote the reforms of the republic, Turkish cinema had to develop on its own and relied on audience expectations. Accordingly, a lack of state support along with strict censorship policies hindered the emergence of non-popular and unconventional film forms. Thus, cinematic representations of the past are mostly treated in the existing scholarship as being 'unrealistic' and 'poor in quality' because they relied to a great extent on melodramatic modality and did not adopt realist forms. This led historical films in Turkey to become the subjects of vehement criticism and be decried for lacking 'verisimilitude' and 'unfaithfulness' to 'historical truth', as well as for being 'failed' imitations of Hollywood historical films. In light of this, historical films have largely been dismissed as being unworthy of theoretical exploration, as is reflected in the rather limited number of works on the subject, and in cases when they were analysed, scholars either privileged historical films that adopted realist forms or historical films were examined within the category of 'fantasy films'.

Apart from a scant few books and articles, the hegemony of particular ideologies over the emergence of such historical images and their formal

characteristics have not been researched. These problematic approaches to historical films also emerge in criticisms of what many scholars refer to as ‘12th September Films’ which were produced in the 1980s after the military coup and dealt with the trauma of those times. In the literature, they are also disregarded as ‘unfaithful’ representations of the past because it is argued that they lack ‘historical perspective’. I contend that such disregard stems from the form these films deploy, an issue which has gone largely ignored down to the present day. I suggest that 12th September films adopt fragmentary structures and complicated flashbacks, and additionally their stories are set in the aftermath of the trauma, not during the time of the original event; as a consequence, they do not offer a straightforward and comprehensive narrative. Scholars pinpoint this ‘failure’ as the ‘failure’ of cinema in Turkey to produce ‘good’ historical films; however, I argue otherwise and suggest that the lack of a straightforward narrative is not indicative of a ‘failure’ to produce ‘good’ historical films, but rather is a strength. In many ways, 12th September films convey via their form the symptoms of trauma and for this reason, in Caruth’s words, they explore the possibility of a faithful history (1996: 27). I conclude this chapter by stating that 12th September films were the precursors of the emergence a new historical film form in Turkey that crystalized starting in the mid-1990s.

In the third chapter I examine the first tendency in engaging with the national past in Turkey which is epitomized in cinematic representations that concentrate on ‘glorious’ moments and narrate traditional stories. By reviewing how these films have been received in Turkey and analysing their formal structures, I propose that even though these films narrate traditional stories and celebrated moments of the national past, they differ from the films that I discuss in the second chapter and also from the entrenched versions of the national past in historical narratives. While an emphasis on ‘glory’ persists in the films with portrayals of triumphs, conquests and victories, these films, I argue, are indicative of how the narration of traditional stories has changed shape and entered a period of crisis as a result of the current undermining of the ‘gloriousness’ of national history. In order to draw together my argument that, above and beyond subject matter and themes, it is the form that brings out how films engage with the past via various tendencies, I selected two films, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*, for analysis. This is because these films have been perceived in Turkey as being

representative of two opposing ideologies and different takes on the national past. *Conquest 1453* has been considered to be a celebration of the Ottoman legacy which dovetails with ‘neo-Ottomanist’ discourses and seeks to reinvigorate the Ottoman past. In contrast, *Farewell* has been interpreted as an attempt to reinstate the position of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the ‘father’ of the nation and re-consecrate the ideals of the secular Republic which have been put into question in recent decades. These films have also been referred to by some scholars as replicas of the films that I discuss in the second chapter, whereas for others they represent a new pinnacle of national cinema because of their large budgets and ‘spectacular’ imagery, and for them, these historical images are ‘finally’ in line with the standards of Hollywood and European productions. I propose that the setting up of such straightforward oppositions is problematic and argue they come about as a result of not devoting sufficient attention to the forms these films deploy.

In this regard, close formal analyses of *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* bring to the fore that, rather than being in opposition in terms of the ways they engage with the past, these two films mirror each other and illustrate the transformation that dominant narratives have undergone. They also imply that today it is almost impossible to reiterate entrenched discourses of the national past because ‘glorious’ narratives are also haunted by traumas. In this respect, by analysing their formal structures, I examine three characteristics of *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* that indicate this impossibility and how current contestations have pushed the narration of ‘glorious’ stories into a period of crisis. I begin by exploring their temporal organization and determine that *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* set forth discrete temporal structures that cohere with the current negotiations in Turkey over the past. *Farewell*, by narrating the ‘glory’ of the nation-building process in flashbacks, confines discourses on ‘gloriousness’ to the past, whereas *Conquest 1453* unfolds chronologically and with a constant emphasis on the future in relation to its celebration of diversity. A similar discrepancy is reflected in the position of narrators in both films, as in *Farewell* the narrator is a character in the film through whose recollections we ‘witness’ the past, but *Conquest 1453* tells its story through a non-diegetic narrator and this disembodied voice is thereby endowed with the ‘authority’ to speak about the past. Despite this difference, both films exhibit an ‘omnipotent’ narration and allow spectators to ‘witness’ the past

‘the way it happened’. From there, I move on to examine how, by relying on melodramatic modality, these films attempt to deal with the dissolution of the ‘gloriousness’ of national history and seek out ways to dispel the ‘burden’ of the guilt of history and come to terms with traumatizing events. In order to come to terms with the past, both films portray oppressed identities and communities as intrinsic and pivotal constituents of the nation, and they position ‘omnipotent’ emperors and leaders as victims. As a result, this chapter seeks to illustrate that although *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* bear traces of the shattering of entrenched discourses on history, they attempt to re-write another history by re-shaping these pasts in line with the ‘needs’ of the present day. And thus, they treat history as a completely unproblematic field and produce re-edited versions of conventional stories by ‘domesticizing’ traumas.

By analysing *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath*, which focus on two traumatic moments of the national past, the Pogrom of 6-7 September and the war in Kurdistan, the fourth chapter explores a second tendency in representing the past in the cinema of Turkey. This chapter suggests that *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* focus on previously unaccounted stories and challenge ‘official’ takes on the national past, yet with the formal structures they deploy and discourses they bring about, these films produce equally conventional histories. With a will to history and by relying on conventional discourses on memory, history and trauma and the presumption that cinema can represent ‘realities’ as ‘they are’, both films seek to assimilate trauma into a straightforward and coherent narrative so that it can be fixed, given meaning and then can be incorporated into the realm of history.

I suggest that both *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* treat traumatic experiences as ‘missing pieces’ of history to be found and narrated. In other words, they are based on the assumption that once memories are evoked and then narrativized, the ‘missing pieces’ can be re-inserted into history and thus the narration of history can be completed. I selected *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* for analysis to set out the characteristics of this tendency for two reasons. First, corresponding to the privileging of reflexivity as a critical means of engaging with the past that resonates in the theoretical deliberations I reviewed earlier in this chapter, these films show that reflexive structures can also be deployed as a tool to ‘authenticate’ and make truth claims about the past. Both films, in this sense,

adopt reflexive formal structures that call attention to themselves as representations, not to expose themselves as *constructs* and undermine the presumption that cinema can represent ‘reality’ but to adopt them to solidify their claims about being ‘objective’ and ‘authentic’ representations of these traumatizing events. Second, even though both films converge in the way they rely on traditional discourses on trauma, memory, and history and deploy formal structures that operate to give spectators ‘omnipotent’ and ‘unmediated’ access to traumatic pasts, they diverge to a certain extent in being able to assimilate these traumas into easily comprehensible narratives.

At this point, I argue that by relying on discourses on realism, and also employing reflexive formal strategies, *Pains of Autumn* aspires to assimilate the trauma of the pogrom in a straightforward narrative through which it ‘can’ provide us with ‘full’ access to an inaccessible past. *The Breath*, as well, with a will to represent the ‘reality’ of the war in Kurdistan, employs realist and reflexive formal structures and through them it seeks to position spectators as ‘omnipotent’ and exterior observers to the events that take place in the film. However, unlike *Pains of Autumn*, *The Breath* unintentionally reflects on the nature of traumatic memory and its processes, as its form oscillates between representing the past in an ‘omnipotent’ view and undermining the possibility of an ‘omnipotent’ narration. This becomes most visible in the fragmented structure, the interweaving of various temporalities and its use of on- and off-screen space.

The fifth chapter explores a third tendency, a new historical film form in Turkey that emerged in the mid-1990s and developed further in the 2000s. This form puts forward a pivotal challenge to entrenched versions of the past in dominant narratives and at the same time stimulates an unconventional way of thinking about the past. I argue that this new historical film form corresponds to and builds upon conceptualizations of ‘postmodern’, ‘experimental’ and ‘metahistorical’ films, and ‘history as an experiment’, and also benefits from theories of ‘intercultural cinema’ and ‘third cinema’. Taking up this theoretical framework, in the final chapter of this thesis I analyse *Waiting for the Clouds*, which focuses on the forced exile of the Pontic Greeks, and *Voice of My Father*, which concentrates on the war in Kurdistan and the massacre of Alevis in Maraş in 1978. I propose that rather than a desire to represent these traumatic moments of the national past ‘directly’ by deploying realist and reflexive formal structures

that work to create an impression that we are ‘witnessing’ the past ‘the way it happened’, these films desist from the presumption that the medium of film can represent ‘reality’ and engage with trauma ‘indirectly’ through stories they are set in the present-day.

By reflecting on the processes of producing knowledge, the main focus of such films is an interrogation of the ways we construct narratives and histories out of the past. Their main thrust, in this sense, is not to retrieve a ‘truth’ about the past that is excluded from the national narrative and rely upon the memories of individuals and collectives but to probe the discursive fields in which some pasts are fixed, narrated and become predominant while others remain overlooked, ignored and unaccounted for. To put it in another way, these films do not treat previously unaccounted stories as ‘missing pieces’ whose ‘truth’ can be found and facilely narrativized so that they can be integrated in the realm of history. But for them, all narratives and all histories are *constructs* moulded by discourses, ideologies and political intent as well as by desires, fears and aspirations.

Thus, with their reflexive structures, new historical films also lay bare their own existence as *constructs* that narrate particular stories while masking other ones. Taking up these contentions through close formal analyses of *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father*, I argue that the challenges these films bring about in terms of conceptualizations of the past in Turkey cannot be posed by solely paying attention to the stories they tell. In order to engage with the ways they deliberately seek to dismantle ‘official’ accounts, a special focus should be placed on their *form*. In this sense, I define three particular formal characteristics that have been predominant in new historical films in Turkey and assert that all of them push the limits of traditional conceptualizations of history, memory, trauma and historical film. I begin by suggesting that in new historical films a hybrid form emerges in which the boundaries between ‘fact’ and ‘fabulation’, ‘fiction’ and ‘non-fiction’ fall away. This is not, however, simply to suggest that these films bring together distinct sources and intercut between them. In the hybrid form that emerges in new historical films, none of the sources are easily discernable but rather are inextricably intertwined. All sources of the past that new historical films portray bear with them vestiges of fantasies, desires, traces of experiences, and fears.

From here, I then move on to a discussion of the notions of absence and presence in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* in relation to the use of on-screen and off-screen space, and also the ways that sound works in both films to fragment and unify images and sounds. I then suggest that new historical films are equally engaged with what remains in and out of the frame, and in and out of the narratives and histories. Thus, with their reflexive and fragmented formal structures and juxtapositions, they constantly call attention to the off-screen space and imply that the stories they tell hide other ones. This final chapter concludes with an analysis of the unconventional portrayal of historical time in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* and I assert that unlike conventional films that draw a definitive line between the past, present and future by the forms they deploy, new historical films portray various temporalities as co-existing within the same frame. In so doing, they propound a further temporal heterogeneity of each frame in these films that defies an understanding of the past as a temporality that has slipped by and is over, and indicates how the past is not complete but is ubiquitous in other temporalities. It should be noted here that I selected *Waiting for the Clouds* for analysis as an earlier film and *Voice of My Father* as a recent film to elaborate on my contentions about the *form* new historical films deploy, because these films serve as a model that represents how the new historical film form has developed and become crystalized in Turkey as more and more such films are being produced each year.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL IMAGES AND IMAGININGS OF THE NATION: An Overview of the Cinematic Images of History in Turkey

From the first years of filmmaking practices in the early 1900s to the present, the cinematic representation of the past in Turkey has always been a controversial matter. In Turkey, visual representations of the past, whether they be via films, documentaries or soap operas, have been harshly criticized by historians, critics and politicians on the grounds that they often underestimate the critical importance of ‘truly’ depicting ‘magnificent’ national historical figures and the ‘monumental’ heritage of the nation. The question of ‘how to – and how not to – represent the national past’ has always been one of the main contentions in the political scene and they came to the surface again particularly in relation to the emerging forms of new cinematic practices in the mid-1990s and the sharp increase in historical productions both on television and in film in the 2000s.

In November 2012, along with many other ministers, the prime minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan vented his outrage about the way that the extremely popular soap opera *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Magnificent Century) portrayed the life of the longest reigning Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Suleiman I. The soap opera, which has more than three hundred million viewers across Europe and Asia, centres on the harem and the life of Sultan Suleiman as seen through the intrigues and competition among his wives and sons, as well as his *viziers*. The prime minister stated that because *Magnificent Century* portrays the ‘private life’ of the sultan instead of his numerous victories and ‘the 30 years he spent on horseback serving his nation’, it distorts ‘historical facts’. By saying so, Erdoğan suggested that the series denigrates the historical ancestors of the nation and insults ‘national values’. By referring to the soap opera as a ‘documentary’ and reminding listeners about the previous legal warnings issued regarding *Magnificent Century*, Erdoğan stated Turkey should clearly understand that ‘it does not have such a history’. In his speech, he encouraged the judiciary to take legal action against the soap opera for its ‘misrepresentation’ of the national past and its derogatory view of Turkish history (*Today’s Zaman* 2012a). In addition to Erdoğan’s fiery rhetoric, *Magnificent Century* has been subjected to public

critiques by other politicians from the day it was first aired and all around the country some groups have protested the show with banners stating ‘our magnificent history shall not be denigrated’ (Fowler 2011). Even the grandchildren of the last Ottoman Sultans appeared on television and slammed the soap opera, warning the producers to stop portraying their grandfathers as womanizers and their grandmothers as schemers; otherwise, they declared, they would take legal action (*Artı* 2011; *Perspektif* 2012; *Kanal 7* 2012).

Detailed discussions in the local and international press about these remarks concerning *Magnificent Century* continued for weeks and talk shows on television focused on the topic by consulting historians and academics about the ‘faithfulness’ of the soap opera as regards ‘historical facts’. Through these discussions, more than ‘glories’ and ‘monumental events’, issues such as slavery, the *devşirme* system (through which non-Muslim children were converted to Islam and conscripted into the Ottoman military and bureaucracy, either by force or sent by their parents), and also the executions of sons, fathers and grandchildren who were expected to ascend to the throne, were the topics that surrounded these debates about the Ottoman past. And these topics stirred even more rage about the soap opera. Some columnists argued that what lies beneath these discussions about *Magnificent Century* is the Islamic conservatism of the AKP, while others linked it to Turkey’s ascending power status within the region, which has triggered the revival – and at the same time avowal – of an Ottoman heritage that had been downplayed by the preceding secularist governments (Zalevski 2012; Christie-Miller 2013). Either way, rigorous criticism about the soap opera was considered to be a unique reflection of the current political climate in the country.

It is plausible to argue that, the widespread anger against *Magnificent Century* in Turkey has been associated with the political shifts that the country has been going through, especially since the 2000s. However, in my view, the prime minister and others who critique the show and ‘guide’ the producers about what national history *is* have been following a long tradition of intervening in the process of the production of historical texts and ‘guiding’ what national history should include and what it should not. In this respect, Erdoğan’s prescription that the people of Turkey should understand that their history is not the one that is depicted in *Magnificent Century* but rather is the victories that Suleiman I secured

for the empire, only reflects an entrenched intolerance for the voicing of different pasts in opposition to those that have been disseminated in dominant historical texts and discourses, regardless of the changes in governments, politics and times.

Although the discussions on *Magnificent Century* were quite visible due to the immense popularity of the soap opera both in Turkey and abroad,¹ it is not the only case in which the government has attempted to restrict the availability of ‘particular’ versions of historical representation. Many of the films produced after the mid-1990s that deal with the past, with their focus ranging from Ottoman history to Republican history, have been subjected to intense discussions not only in the political sphere, television discussion shows and newspaper columns, but also at the judiciary level. Deemed to be ‘inappropriate’ by the authorities, there were attempts to prevent the circulation of some films by lawsuits, the cancellation of their screening certificates, and their removal from the festival programmes. These included *Hiçbir yerde/Innowhereland* (Tayfun Pirselimoglu, 2001), which focuses on people who have gone missing under detention, *Gitmek/My Marlon and Brando* (Hüseyin Karabey, 2008) which is based on the journey of a Turkish woman from Turkey to Kurdistan in search for her Kurdish partner, and *Waiting for the Clouds* which tells the story of a Pontic Greek woman who kept silent and pretended to be a Turkish/Muslim to avoid death and being forced to leave her country (Kaçar 2005; Cömert 2008). Notably, in 2008 the biographical documentary titled *Mustafa* (Can Dündar, 2008), which was about the first president of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was also reproached by the majority of the population, including the leaders of political parties and the daughter of Atatürk, on the grounds that the documentary insulted the legacy of Atatürk by depicting him as an alcoholic and a lonesome, unhappy man (*Internet Haber* 2008; *Medya Radar* 2008). While many critics discouraged people from watching the film, the constitutional court of Turkey launched a judicial inquiry based upon the numerous complaints regarding the film’s ‘derogatory’ portrayal of Atatürk (*Hürriyet* 2012). On the other hand, as I will elaborate in the next chapter, other historical films, such as *Conquest 1453* which portrays the conquest of Istanbul by Sultan Mehmed II, were supported by the government and

¹ The show has more than 300 million viewers in the Balkans, the Middle East and Turkic Republics. See *Today’s Zaman* (2012b).

politicians, and some schools even organized trips to theatres to ‘teach’ the nation’s ‘glorious’ national history to students.

All these discussions and interventions in historical representations bring to the fore key issues revolving around the debate of national identity and history that has troubled Turkey since the late Ottoman era. Hence, as much as the intolerance regarding *Magnificent Century* and various other visual representations of the national past is related to the present-day political climate of Turkey, it also reflects the sanctified role of national history in ‘imagining’ an idealized nation and identity for the nation. As I argued in the previous chapter, historicizing has played a crucial role in the building of a ‘homogenous’ identity for the nation-state. That is why, starting with the establishment of the republic, the government has always intervened in the process of historiography and used history as a ‘unifying’ agency. Accordingly, historical texts that are replete with the supremacy of ‘Turkishness’ were created, and majority of historical productions, voluntarily or by the intervention of the state authorities, went hand in hand with the projections of the national image idealized by the state. In this process, historical productions, including films that deviate from the ‘official’ line, have been either rigorously attacked or simply banned from circulation on the grounds of their ‘disrespect’ to ‘national values’.

By considering these debates and frequent expressions of dissatisfaction regarding visual historical representations, this chapter surveys how traditional historical films, with some exceptions, have constructed an ‘ideal image of the nation’ that was contemplated in the last years of the Ottoman Empire by the founders of the Turkish Republic and embodied with the founding of the nation-state. I will argue, however, that by the 1980s these traditions started to dissolve. This dissolution, on the one hand, can be linked to the political, social and cultural shifts in Turkey and, on the other hand, it can be associated with the collapse of Yeşilçam² cinema through which new cinematic practices emerged. I will further contend that these shifts in the political sphere of Turkey in the 1980s and the

² Yeşilçam (Green Pine) refers to the film industry in Turkey during its peak years from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s. Although film scholars have wide-ranging views about the exact date that Yeşilçam came into existence and ended, they situate it somewhere between the mid-1950s and the end of the 1980s. Named after the street in the centre of Istanbul where the production houses were located, between the 1950s and 1980s Yeşilçam produced more than 4,000 films (Scognamiglio 2009: 15-16; Arslan 2011: 103-108).

collapse of Yeşilçam cinema also signalled the beginnings of a new historical film form which would become crystallized in the mid-1990s and particularly in the 2000s.

In order to elaborate on these contentions, I will initially dwell on historical film production in the Ottoman Empire from early 1900s to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, and state how historical film from its start has been seen as a crucial means for stimulating national sentiments. Then I will move on to discuss historical productions in Turkey from the early years of the republic to the 1980s and argue that due to strict government control and censorship on the one hand, and by the voluntary contributions of the filmmakers on the other, historical film in Turkey until the 1980s served as a constant reminder to the nation of its ‘glorious’ history and its ‘invincible nature’. As a result, until the 1980s, different takes on national history departing from the ‘official’ discourses, such as the traumas of annihilation and the oppression of diverse communities, almost never found expression in cinematic representations. After a discussion of that, I will then turn to the shifts in cinematic representation that followed the military coup in the 1980s through which, due to the economic crises in cinema of Turkey, new film forms emerged. I will propose that amongst these films, particularly in what has been referred to as 12th September Films or ‘political cinema’, it is possible to observe the emergence of a new film form which developed in the 1990s and constituted a new historical film form. This chapter will conclude with an introduction to contemporary cinema in Turkey as it began to change in the mid-1990s and came to be widely considered to be the ‘new cinema of Turkey’.

Film Production in the late Ottoman Era

Historical film emerged as one of the earliest cinematic forms by the advent of filmmaking practices in the late Ottoman era. From its outset, it has been seen as a vehicle through which national fervours and glory could be projected. During one of their visits to Germany in the early 1910s, Ottoman army officers saw some films of the battlefronts shot by the German military and became aware of the film medium’s potential for exhorting national sentiment (Özön 2010 [1962]: 51). Thus, following the German example, Ottoman army officers initiated a Photo and Film Centre in 1915 and produced various

propaganda films and newsreel *actualités* during the First World War (Arslan 2011: 33) which were then screened at the Military Museum in Istanbul (Özön 2010 [1962]: 519). According to Scognamillo (1998) and Özön (2010 [1962]), however, the army's interest in film as a tool for nationalistic propaganda developed prior to the foundation of the Photo and Film Centre during the demolition of the Russian Monument in Hagia Stefanos in Istanbul which had been built to commemorate the Russian victory over the Ottoman Empire in the Russian-Ottoman War in 1878. When the army decided to dynamite the foundations of the Russian monument in 1914, it was stated that to film this 'historical moment' was considered an opportunity to evoke national sentiment; for that reason, a Turkish army officer, Fuat Uzkinay, was commissioned to record the event on film (Arslan 2011: 33). Although the copies of the film are now lost and there is no witness to affirm the shooting of such a film, to this day, *Aya Stefanos'taki Rus Abidesinin Yıkılışı/The Demolition of the Russian Monument in Hagia Stefanos* (Fuat Uzkinay, 1914) is controversially recognized by the majority of film historians in Turkey as being the first Turkish film (Arslan 2011: 32-36).

The incident with *The Demolition of the Russian Monument in Hagia Stefanos* in itself tells us a lot about historical representations in Turkey and how the concept of history is perceived. In this respect, Özön (2010 [1962]) and Scognamillo (1998) explain that when the Ottoman army decided to demolish the Russian Monument in 1914, they saw this 'historical moment' as an opportunity for nationalistic propaganda and thus hired an Austro-Hungarian company to film the event (Özön: 2010 [1962]: 51). Yet due to the upsurge of national sensibilities with the outbreak of the First World War, the army agreed upon the exigency of a Turkish filmmaker to record such an important 'historical moment' for the nation and hence commissioned Fuat Uzkinay to shoot the film instead. Regardless of this widely accepted story, Evren states that the shooting of *The Demolition of the Russian Monument in Hagia Stefanos* may be a complete myth since, as I mentioned earlier, there are no copies of the film and no witnesses can affirm that such a film ever existed (Evren 2006). Evren suggests that, for this reason, instead of Uzkinay's film, the Manaki Brothers' *V. Sultan Mehmet Reşat'ın Manastır ve Selanik Ziyareti/Welcoming of Sultan Mehmed V Reshad in Salonica and Bitola* (1911) should be considered the first 'indirect' Turkish Film (Evren 2006). He

grounds his suggestion on the Manaki Brother's citizenship, because they were Ottoman citizens at the time of the shooting of this film. However, as Savas Arslan points out, Mehmed's visit was not the first film that the Manaki Brothers shot (2011: 33). Years before this film, in 1905 they made *The Weavers*, which includes their grandmother at work as they were weaving. For those who consider the Manaki Brothers to be the first 'Turkish' filmmakers, however, this film is completely ignored. Arslan argues that these discussions about the 'first film' themselves indicate the complexity of national identity and its representation in the cinema of Turkey. In this respect, I believe that recognition of *The Demolishment of the Russian Monument in Hagia Stefanos* and *Welcoming of Sultan Mehmed V Reshad in Salonica and Bitola* as the first films also hints at the tradition of historiography in Turkey. What else can serve as a better start for the film history of Turkey than a depiction of 'victorious' moments?

After the production of Uzkinay's film, Özön points out that, in subsequent years, various propaganda films and newsreels about the battlefronts were produced by the Photo and Film Centre of the Ottoman Army as feature films. Aiming to support the armed forces, semi-military organizations such as the National Defence Organization and War Veteran's Organization also embarked upon film production in the late 1910s (Özön 2010 [1962]: 54-61). These three institutions remained the only film producers until the founding of the first production companies in 1920s. Amongst them, the National Defence Organization shot what is generally accepted to be the first historical feature film, *Alemdar Vakası/Alemdar Mustafa Pasha*, in 1918. The film centred on the reign of Sultan Selim III and his acclaimed grand vizier Alemdar Pasha, but the editing of the film, Arslan notes, was not completed due to the occupation of Istanbul by the Allied Forces (2011: 40).

Although *Alemdar Mustafa Pasha* was never completed and thus never screened, the discussions engendered by the film regarding a susceptibility towards historical representation represents an outstanding example that demonstrates how the present-day intolerance for particular views of history indeed dates back to the first historical representations during the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. As soon as the production of *Alemdar Mustafa Pasha* was announced, the producers and directors of the film were warned in newspapers and journals about the 'stringent duty' of portraying 'esteemed ancestors' while

filming an ‘eminently glorious’ episode of national history (cited in Scognamillo 1998: 26). Similarly, a few years later, when Muhsin Ertuğrul was shooting an adaptation of a historical novel, *Boğaziçi Esrarı/The Bosphorus Mystery* (1922), which was about a corrupt Bektashi Sheik, intolerance mounted and the set of the film at Eyüp Mosque was raided by followers of the Bektashi *tariqa*. The followers assaulted the cast and crew members of the film on the grounds that they were belittling the Bektashi legacy by portraying the Sheik as a womanizer (Özgüç 2005: 28). Despite such assaults, *Boğaziçi Esrarı* was completed and shown in theatres; however, this instance also hints at how intolerance regarding particular versions of the past have been shaped since the early forms of the cinematic representation of the past and representations of historical figures in Turkey.

In this respect, if we delve into the agendas behind the production of the first films that aimed to depict events of historical importance and examine the instructions given to their producers and the debates that surrounded these productions, we could argue that historical film, from its very inception, has been ascribed the role of representing a laudable past in order to instigate a sense of national pride by projecting privileged versions of the past and dominant discourses on history. This pre-eminent characteristic of the cinematic representation of the past endured throughout the years of the republic, while films which did not fulfil this task have been regularly castigated by the masses and subjected to rigid censorship policies by the state, as will be elaborated below.

Cinema and the Republic of Turkey

For nationalists themselves, the role of the past is clear and unproblematic. The nation was always there, indeed it is part of the natural order, even when it was submerged in the hearts of its members. The task of the nationalist is simply to remind his or her compatriots of their glorious past, so that they can recreate and relive those glories. (Smith 1999: 180)

1920s - 1980s

Pursuant to the modernization reforms initiated with the objective of cutting the bonds with the multi-cultural Ottoman and Islamic past and projecting the idealized national identity of the new modern state, the founders of the

republic carried out a cultural programme that involved the direct intervention of the state in the art scene. To achieve the ideal of a new national identity for the newly established state, republican elites initially ‘invented traditions’, to use Hobsbaw’n’s concept, by turning the ‘heritage’ of Anatolia into a purified and idealized ‘folk’ culture (Robins and Aksoy 2000: 208). Then, as a part of their modernization project, they articulated a need for a national culture which would involve a synthesis of a westernized and modernized version of traditional folk culture by disregarding the Ottoman and Islamic traditions (Arslan 2011: 8). Placing music at the centre of this initiative,³ the project of inventing a modernized national culture was built upon myriad enterprises and strict state control particularly as regards the performing arts. In this respect, state theatre, opera and ballet houses, and symphony orchestras were formed and restructured to ‘elevate the cultural and artistic level of people’, and art schools were founded to educate Turkish artists in various fields of art.⁴ In addition to these practices, heavy governmental control and censorship was carried out; especially as seen in the case of music. Turkish music was banned from radio broadcast between 1933 and 1934 while western classical music, operas, tangos, and waltzes, along with modernized versions of folk music, were broadcast (Arslan 2011: 8). Following

³ Meral Özbek notes that the official cultural politics of the Turkish Republic gave priority to western classical music and a modernized and westernized version of Turkish folk music. Behind such moves, she points out, was the nationalist thought of Ziya Gökalp who thought that Ottoman classical music belonged to the realm of old civilizations, that it was of Byzantine origin with Arab inflections, so it could hardly represent the new Turkish national identity (1997: 225).

⁴ On the web page of the Presidential Symphony Orchestra for instance, it is stated that the orchestra was formed as a band during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II under the name of the Royal Band and was reorganized to elevate the cultural and artistic level of the people after its establishment by the order of ‘Great Atatürk’. Regarded as the first institute of the republic, the institution is described in the history section of the web site as being ‘honoured by taking the great title of Atatürk’s position and has applied the polyphonic music created by his directives to an honourable level. With this understanding and considering the importance of culture in development of nations, a Music Teachers School was founded in 1924 which was united with our orchestra.’ See <http://www.cso.gov.tr/en/icerik/3/tarihce> [Accessed: 12th May 2013]. Similarly, the history section describing the state theatre, opera and ballet houses also pay their respects to ‘great Atatürk’ and ‘republican ideals’ and itemize their objectives as ‘improving Turkish language and creating a unified dialect to raise the level of education, culture and language and reflect the cultural level of the new modern Turkish state to aggregate the rich culture of Anatolia with western culture’ and so on. See <http://www.devtyatro.gov.tr/hakkimizda-kurulus-amaci-ve-teskilat-semasi.html> for the objectives of the state theatre house [Accessed: 12th May 2013] .

this ban, in 1936 the state took control of private radio stations and began broadcasting the products of cultural projects developed by bureaucrats and scholars in their efforts to build and impose a preferred national culture (Özbek 1997: 226).

Savas Arslan argues that, along with music, theatre and ballet, film production may have been a great incentive to disseminate the cultural reforms of the republic and impose the idealized national image; however, since the republican elite did not focus on film production, cinema in Turkey, for the most part, did not become an instrument of the government (Arslan 2011: 41). However, Arslan notes, republican elites half-heartedly supported film screenings through People's Houses, which were centres of education and the dissemination of the republican reforms in Turkey (2011: 41). At People's Houses, documentaries about the historical process of the foundation of the republic were screened and these documentaries were mainly aimed at informing people about the national struggle, the war of independence, and the economic, political, social and cultural reform policies of the republic.⁵ Apart from screenings of such films that praised the reforms undertaken and realized by the republic, the state did not open film schools, invest in film equipment, form a funding scheme or systematically support film production. Thus, many film historians argue that the cinema industry, unlike the other arts, remained bereft of funds and state support and had to develop on its own (Arslan 2011).

This lack of state support, Arslan argues, led cinema to develop in a way that it reflected the culture of the masses, as opposed to the 'elite' culture inflicted by the state in the other arts (2011). However, at the same time, from its start to the 1980s, apart from a few instances, cinema in Turkey had an ambivalent relationship with republican ideology and its modernization policies. On the one hand, cinema benefited from a lack of extreme state control and reflected 'popular culture' instead of being a representative of the 'national culture' projected by the republican elite. On the other, it voluntarily contributed to the imaginings of a

⁵ The screening programme at People's Houses included documentaries such as *Ankara the Heart of Turkey* which was shot by Soviet filmmakers invited to Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to make a film for the 10th year celebrations of the Republic, and *The Leaps of Progress in the Turkish Reforms 1934-1937* (Arslan 2011: 42).

homogenous national identity through its adherence to republican mores and, particularly, its portrayal of history.

In this respect, for instance, Arslan notes, up until the beginning of the Second World War, sound was recorded live on film sets. Starting from 1943, films were shot without sound and then were dubbed in the studio by actors who belonged to a tradition of the City Theatre in Istanbul. These actors disseminated the speech based on the Istanbul accent and with such practices, the majority of the characters, regardless of their roots, spoke 'proper' Istanbul Turkish (Arslan 2011: 118). In other words, cinema ignored regional accents just as it ignored the various other languages of the country. A few exceptions to these practices were the portrayals of Greek, Armenian, Kurdish and Jewish characters in a few films who had supporting roles or films in which the accent of these characters were used to 'imply' their origins.

In addition to these, through portrayals of the various ethnic communities as 'internal enemies' that collaborate with foreign forces which seek to destroy the 'Turkish' state, the representation of ethnicities other than Turkish remained on the side-lines of the dominant ideology and its imaginings of the national identity and its other. Yaşartürk (2012) observes, for instance, that before the mid-1980s, it was almost impossible to see a leading non-Muslim character in films. She writes that non-Muslim characters mainly appeared in supporting roles, as prostitutes, tavern owners and femme fatales, and apart from a few positive portrayals, they are generally associated with corruption (2012). Similarly, Balcı (2013) contends that in the early years of the republic one can speak about a relatively less negative image of non-Muslim characters; however, portrayals of them started to be transformed in the late 1950s in relation to increasing tensions over the status of Cyprus and the Pogrom of 6-7 September. She writes, especially in the case of the representation of Greek characters following the late 1950s, Turkish cinema depicted non-Muslims as 'evil' enemies. While Greek women were portrayed as prostitutes and femme fatales who sought to seduce and destroy Turkish men, Balcı notes that Greek men were portrayed as 'internal enemies' who rape women, kill children and collaborate with the English and tyrannize the Turks. For Balcı (2013), Armenians, especially Armenian women, appear in small roles in films as greedy hotel owners and Armenian men, due to the ban on non-Muslims becoming government officers, appear as owners of small businesses,

and Jewish characters are depicted as stingy, mean, malicious and shrewd. However, starting in the 1990s, Balcı points out that films emerged which deviated from Yeşilçam's stereotypical representations of non-Muslims and criticized the state's policies regarding its non-Muslim citizens (2013: 236). In *Türk Sinemasında Kürtler (Kurds in Turkish Cinema)* Müslüm Yücel also observes that before the films of the 1990s and 2000s in which Kurds identify themselves as Kurds and speak Kurdish, they appeared in Turkish films but their identity was always concealed and these characters never spoke Kurdish but Turkish with a heavy accent which served as an indicator of where those characters come from and their Kurdishness (2008).

In addition to censorship policies and strict government control, one of the main reasons that such traditions in cinema in Turkey were considered to be an odd turn in the film industry was that, especially from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s, films were created on the basis of audience expectations.⁶ As a result, financial dependency on audience satisfaction and a lack of funding schemes, scholars contend, prevented the emergence of 'unpopular' forms of cinematic practices and this led film historians such as Özön (2010 [1962]: 220) to argue that cinema in Turkey remained 'backwards' compared to its Western counterparts and other arts.

The absence of extensive intervention by the state concerning cinema, however, does not mean that the government disregarded the power of cinema as

⁶ From the 1950s to the end of the 70s, when the film industry in Turkey became one of the biggest industries in the world, the system of production, distribution and exhibition became intricate (Arslan 2011: 104) and regional distributors dominated the era. The role of regional distributors was to gather information from regional theatre owners and let production companies know about the demand of audiences regarding films, including the genre and actors. Based on the information they gathered from regional distributors, the production houses would determine the films they would make in the next season (Tunç 2012: 92-93). This led to the production of films that often resembled one another, mainly melodramas, historical action-adventure films and comedies. Also, with the tremendous rise in demand, a 'bond system' became standard practice by which regional distributors gave bonds and other forms of loans to production companies as advance payment for the production of the films they prescribed (Tunç 2012: 93). Film production companies paid the actors and film crew with these bonds, eventually leading actors and industry workers to get them cashed by illegal bankers and loan sharks at a discounted rate (Arslan 2011: 104). This system soon led to a false economy in which nobody worked for cash, only for promises of future payment (Arslan 2011:104). Also, this system of production, distribution and exhibition is considered to be the main reason why filmmakers had no chance to experiment with unpopular forms of filmmaking.

a vehicle for propaganda. In the early years of the republic, as Öztürk's research demonstrates (2005), republican rulers referred to cinema as the 'primary tool for propaganda'. Yet, considering the conditions of the day, the council of ministers stated in an official letter in 1923 that Turkey could not have possibly produced films to take advantage of the medium of film in propagating the ideology of the state (Öztürk 2005: 29). What the state could do, the same letter indicates, was to prevent the circulation of propaganda films of other nations or cut the propaganda scenes from such films and screen these re-edited versions (Öztürk 2005: 29). The implementation of strict control over cinematic images, which would become one of the major problems of the film industry, was initiated in the early years of the republic, and in later years with the aim of ensuring the proliferation of republican reforms, state officials interfered in various aspects of the film industry. One of the first exercises of state control included intervention in the subtitles/ intertitles of films. After the language and alphabet reforms, Öztürk informs us, theatre owners asked if they could continue film screenings with the old script for a while until new script was fully adopted by citizens (Öztürk 2005: 32-33). Their request was denied by the Ministry of Education and a ban on the use of the old alphabet was encouraged through an official letter sent to the prime minister's office (Öztürk 2005: 32-33).

These first practices of government control over cinematic images became much more intensive in later years and it can be argued that the strict censorship policies eventually compelled cinema in Turkey to serve as a mediator of the state ideology. The censorship law, which was issued in 1939 and remained in effect until 1986 (Esen 2000: 174), rendered the state directly involved with film production from the script writing stage to the exhibition of films. The censorship board was comprised of government officials from the police, the army, the Ministry of the Press and Tourism and Ministry of Education, and cinema professionals were deliberately disregarded (Özön 2010 [1962]: 242). The board was granted all rights to censor films and review the filmmaking process from pre-production to exhibition.

Permission for the production and exhibition of a film could be granted only if it was not making propaganda for other nations, not exploiting religion, was coherent with 'national sentiments and values', did not degrade the military or include pejorative scenes of the police, and did not depict elements or scenes

deemed to be detrimental to the security of the country (Özön 2010 [1962]: 242). In this manner, films were subjected to strict censorship on grounds ranging from obscenity to the denigration of values and to ‘deficient’ portrayals of the country – as was the case with Metin Erksan’s *Aşık Veysel’in Hayatı/The Life of Folk Singer Veysel* (1952), which was censored because of its depictions of poor-quality crops in Anatolia, and Erksan was forced to replace those scenes with depictions of abundant fields worked by modern agricultural machines (Arslan 2011: 211). At the same time, according to the law, films could not be taken out of the country or exhibited abroad without the permission of the government (Özön 2010 [1962]: 241). Consequently, even though the government did not produce a wide range of films with the aim of projecting state ideologies, the majority of cinematic images that were in circulation until 1986 corresponded to the ‘national imaginings’ of the state.

The only cases in which there was direct state support for the production of films was in a few historical films, which also reproduced ‘official’ discourses on history. Immediately after the establishment of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk stated that there was a need for historical films that would demonstrate to the younger generations the ideals of the new state and the national struggle that ended with victory. To realize these films, he worked on various projects, took part in films as an actor, and even worked on a script, *Ben Bir İnkılap Çocuğum/I am a Child of Reforms*. The script of *I am a Child of Reforms* could not be finalized and was never made into a film, due to Mustafa Kemal’s health problems (Özön 2010 [1962]: 210). For the founder of Republic of Turkey, producing films on the achievements of the republic was a ‘national mission’, and he articulated this necessity during the shooting of *The Victory of İzmir* by commenting on his uncompleted scenes in the film: ‘...I am still alive and I have hold of my sword, my boots and my papers pertaining to the national struggle [...]. If asked, I would willingly agree to perform in front of the camera as an actor and revive my memories. To meet such a request is a national mission’ (cited in Özgüç 2005: 83).

Prior to this statement about his interest in contributing to *The Victory of İzmir* as an actor, Özgüç notes that Mustafa Kemal consulted the director Muhsin Ertuğrul about a film adaptation of the novel *Ateşten Gömlek/Shirt of Flame*, which was about the War of Independence, and he encouraged the director to cast

Turkish female actors for the first time (2005: 83). The film *Shirt of Flame* (Muhsin Ertuğrul 1922) became known as the first historical film that depicted the War of Independence, and that was the first time that female Turkish actors were on the screen. Mustafa Kemal also played the role of himself in Muhsin Ertuğrul's version of *Bir Millet Uyaniyor/A Nation is Awakening* in 1932 (Maktav 2009: 84), which portrayed heroic Turkish soldiers during the War of Independence fighting foreign invaders and internal 'enemies' who were opponents of the republic's reform programmes. To disseminate the change the country was going through via the implementation of new state-led modernization reforms headed by Mustafa Kemal, Soviet filmmakers were invited to Turkey and deliberations concluded with the production of *Ankara Heart of Turkey*, one of the films that were screened at People's Houses. In this context, we can argue that in line with the republic's emphasis on constructing a national history that was to be used as an instrument for the formulation of national identity, the founders of the republic also sought to utilize the medium of film to elicit the domination of new versions of national history. In parallel with Mustafa Kemal's ideas, the 'imperative' need for an ideal film about the national struggle for independence and the search for an actor who could play Mustafa Kemal would frequently be addressed by the Turkish state throughout the history of the republic⁷ (Maktav 2009: 84) with the aim of attesting to the 'greatness of Atatürk' and hence the 'greatness of the Turkish nation' (Özgüç 2005: 91).

Furthering Mustafa Kemal's and the state's enthusiasm to fully finance a historical film which would bring forward the 'grand epic of the Turkish nation' (Özgüç 2005: 83), the Turkish military supported the production of historical films, especially those that required a great number of extras for depictions of well-known battles. The films that were supported by the military included

⁷ Maktav points out that a spate of symposiums and conferences were organized about the matter, and finally a Belgium company was entrusted with the production of the film (2009: 84). In 1988, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture organised a panel on 'Atatürk Film' and acclaimed Turkish filmmakers launched a discussion about what aspects of Atatürk's life should be included and excluded in a film about him (Maktav 2009: 85). Later, by publishing a book on the panel discussion, director Metin Erksan suggested that the American film industry could accomplish this significant task and he proposed that the job should be given to directors like Scorsese, Spielberg and Lucas (Erksan 1989). Erksan also prescribed that the film Atatürk should not focus on *rakı*, love, lust, songs, laughter and whimpers but should demonstrate Atatürk's reformist nature (1989). The subject was revived in the 2000s, and this time Kevin Costner was rumoured to have been invited to play Atatürk in the projected Atatürk Film (Terzi 2007).

productions that focused on the war for independence, such as *İstiklal Madalyası/The Medal of Independence* (Ferdi Tayfur, 1948) *Çanakkale Aslanları/Lions of Çanakkale* (Turgut Demirağ, 1964), *Vatan ve Namık Kemal/Namık Kemal and the Motherland* (Talat Artemel and Sami Ayanoglu, 1951), and the victories of the Ottoman Empire, such as *İstanbul'un Fethi /The Conquest of Istanbul* (Aydın Arakon, 1951).⁸ Military support consisted of providing free props and costumes, employing soldiers to play extras on the battlefields and the direction of generals in staging the battle scenes and military clashes. Also, since the film industry lacked the resources to construct large sets, a great majority of the films were shot at historic sites, such as Hagia Sophia, Topkapı Palace and the fortresses of Istanbul.

In addition to the contributions of the military in the production of a few historical films, the state-run channel TRT, taking inspiration from the BBC's historical productions, embarked upon the production of historical dramas for television in the mid-1970s and organized a meeting with film directors and asked them to bring 'national classics' to the screen.⁹ And as a result of these meetings, *Aşk-ı Memnu* (Halit Refiğ, 1975) was produced as an adaptation of an acclaimed novel by Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, and starting with this, the state became one of the prominent producers and disseminators of historical images in the country via TRT. In the following years, TRT also produced big-budget historical films such as *Cumhuriyet/The Republic* (Ziya Öztan, 1998) and *Abdülhamid Düşerken/The Fall of Sultan Abdulhamid* (Ziya Öztan, 2003).

In this context, the relative lack of state support and the neglect of the state regarding cinema, the involvement of the government in the production and exhibition phases of films, and strict censorship and control policies all contributed to the shaping of the distinctive characteristics of traditional historical films in Turkey. Traditional historical films, which had small budgets, depicted national history by constantly praising Turkishness and focusing on victories,

⁸ In the documentary *Tarihin Işığında Türk Sineması/Turkish Cinema in the Light of History* made by the state channel TRT, the cinematographer of *Lions of Çanakkale*, Gani Turanlı, stated that during the shooting of the battle scenes, the director divided soldiers into two groups to play Turkish and Anzac soldiers. Some Turkish soldiers, however, refused to 'portray Anzacs' and insisted on portraying Turkish soldiers. After negotiating on the topic for a while, the directors had to ask one of the generals to show up on the film set and command the soldiers to do as the directors said.

⁹ See *Turkish Cinema in the Light of History*.

‘great wars’, triumphs and the ‘invincible nature of the Turks’ without directing any criticism at the dark moments of the nation-building process. Consequently, filmmakers were unable to experiment with non-populist forms and, to a great extent, historical films relied on a melodramatic modality that did not and could not employ the ‘right look’ of the period since they did not have the budget to build colossal sets, produce ‘faithful’ costumes and hire thousands of extras to stage battle scenes. In this way, they did not focus on adhering to ‘historical facts’ or telling ‘objective’ stories about the past. Instead, the film sets appeared ‘inauthentic’, they used obviously apparent dummies for brutal clashes and explosions, and the stories of the films did away with causality.

This led historical films in Turkey to become the subject of harsh criticism, and the topics of these critiques included the melodramatic aspects of the films, the placing of history in the background in the telling of love stories, a lack of ‘verisimilitude’ and ‘unfaithfulness’ to ‘historical reality’, ‘the poor quality of sets’ and costumes, and attempts to imitate Hollywood historical films (Özgüç 2005; Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005: 137-174; Arslan 2011: 175-180). Such accounts reached the point that, aside from the critique of films’ ‘failure to remain faithful to historical facts’, historical films were placed in the category of fantasy films (Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005). However, aside from Arslan (2011) and Maktav (2006), there hasn’t been any research conducted on the influence of the political climate, i.e. the ‘official’ discourses on what national history *is*, and the predominance of particular pasts over others in the emergence of these particular characteristics of historical films in Turkey. Also, no single work in film scholarship in Turkey has dealt with the form of these films or analysed their formal characteristics.

From this standpoint, if we look at the films that were produced during the single party (CHP) period, of more than 100 films (Scognamillo 2009: 15-16) some of them focused on the national past. In line with the republican programme of ensuring a break with the Ottoman past and ‘inventing’ a new set of meanings for the newly established nation, historical films until the beginning of the 1950s tended to portray Ottoman sultans and the empire in its last years as being corrupt. In contrast, the founders of the republic were depicted as idealized soldiers devoted to their nation and as holding an unconditional belief in modernization and its promises, while at the same time combating both foreign invaders and the

pro-Sultan, pro-Islam ‘traitors’. Also, the diverse communities within the nation-state were given scant room in these films, and when they did, they were mainly portrayed as ‘internal enemies’ in collaboration with the ‘external enemies’ seeking to lead the Turkish nation to its demise. From this perspective, the historical films of the early republican era such as the first versions of *A Nation is Awakening* and *Shirt of Flame*,¹⁰ *The Bosphorus Mystery*, *Ankara Postası/The Ankara Post* (Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1928), *Medal of Independence*, the first version of *Vurun Kahpeye/Strike the Whore*¹¹ (Ömer Lütfü Akad, 1949), and *Ayranoz Kadısı* (Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1938), *Kıvırcık Paşa* (Faruk Kenç, 1941) and *Bir Kavuk Devrildi* (Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1939), fashioned the main characteristics of historical representation in Turkey through portrayals of the endless battles of the Turks with their enemies – be they Greek, British, or Islamist – while relying on melodramatic modality.

By the end of the Single Party Period and during the initial years of the DP rule, historical film swiftly became one of the prominent genres as the film industry in Turkey, and between the mid-1950s and end of the 1970s, Yeşilçam grew to be one of the largest film industries in the world.¹² In the 1950s, concurrent with the DP rule, films that praised the legacy of the Ottoman Empire began to crop up starting with *Barbaros Hayrettin Pasha* (Baha Gelenbevi) and *The Conquest of Istanbul* (Aydın Arakon) which were produced in 1951, and these were succeeded by countless films in the next two decades that focused on Ottoman sultans, viziers and acclaimed pashas. It could be argued that such an increase in the positive portrayals of Ottoman personages might be associated with the DP’s conservatism, which ran counter to the CHP. However, this positive

¹⁰ Both films focused on the national resistance movement and depicted Turkish people fighting the Greek Occupiers. *A Shirt of Flame* was remade in 1950 by Vedat Örfi Mengü and *A Nation is Awakening* in 1966 by Ertem Eğilmez.

¹¹ *Strike the Whore*, which was about a teacher from Istanbul going to a village in Anatolia during the Independence War to teach the younger generations about the promises of the new formation of the state under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, was remade in 1964 by Orhan Aksoy and again in 1974 by Halit Refiğ.

¹² Between the 1950s and 1980s Yeşilçam produced more than 4,000 films (Scognamiglio 2009: 15-16; Arslan 2011: 103-108). In these years, domestic films performed better than foreign films and an average of 7.5 tickets was bought per person for domestic films annually (Arslan 2011: 101). One of the reasons that such a major increase in film production occurred in the beginning of the 1950s, as Özön points out, was that a tax break was granted to the film industry in 1948 (Özön 2010 [1962]: 221).

perspective only focused on the rise and growth of the empire; in other words, these films only dealt with the ‘glorious’ moments of Ottoman history. None of the films that were set in the last decades of the Empire before its dissolution praised Ottoman sultans, pashas or their supporters. Instead, they replaced ‘glorious’ sultans and pashas with weak and corrupt ones, and the Ottoman legacy was disavowed while revolutionaries and the founders of the republic were exalted.¹³ It should also be added that the representation of the ‘grand victories’ of the Ottoman past was also revived by contemporary concerns related to ‘the republican dream of being equal to the Western world’ (Arslan 2011: 177) because such productions reminded the nation that the West was once ruled by Turks.

Arslan notes, for instance, that in the opening scenes of *Kara Murat Fatih’in Fedaisi/Kara Murat Fatih’s Defender* (Natuk Baytan, 1972), a voice-over narration accompanies the map of the Ottoman Empire in 1453 which states: “The entire world bowed its head before the Turkish sword. The Turks, turning the map of Europe upside down, were rewriting history in golden letters’ (2011: 177). Such reminders were also present in films about the War of Independence and the Second World War. The voice-over narration accompanying archival footage in the opening scenes of films was used to inform the viewer about the period in which the film was set, and in these introductory moments, the voice-over narrator often referred to the British, French and Greek occupiers as ‘the past servants of the Turkish nation’. It was also common for films to portray characters uttering similar comments, particularly in scenes where a discussion between the Turks and their ‘enemies’ occurred. For example, in *Ankara Ekspresi* (1971), which is set in World War II, the introductory narration and archival footage at the

¹³ One of the most acclaimed historical films of the 1950s, *Düşman Yolları Kesti/The Enemy Has Blocked the Roads* (Osman F. Seden, 1959), for instance, depicted the supporters of the Ottoman state as traitors who were concerned about their own interests rather than the Turkish nation while supporters of the national resistance were sanctioned as they were willingly risking their lives for the well-being of the Turkish nation. This theme was repeated in many films in the 1950s such as *Çakırcalı Mehmet Efe/Mehmet Efe of Çakırca* (Faruk Kenç, 1950), *Bu Vatanın Çocukları/Children of this Country* (Atıf Yılmaz, 1959), *Kalpakkıllar/Those Wearing Calpac* (Nejat Saydam, 1959) and later in the 1960s and 1970s many other films such as two versions of *Strike the Whore, Haremde Dört Kadın/Four Women in the Harem* (Halit Refiğ, 1965), *A Nation is Awakening* (1966), *Lions of Çanakkale, On Korkusuz Kadın/ Ten Women with no Fear* (1965), and *Çakırcalı Mehmet Efe* (Yılmaz Atadeniz, 1969).

beginning of the film informs us that Hitler, with the intention of occupying Turkey, had begun an operation. To this end, a German spy, Hilda, is commissioned to gather information about the Turkish army. When Hilda is given a briefing about her task, she tells the German commanders that such a move would be a mistake because ‘all Turks’ are soldiers who would not hesitate to sacrifice themselves for their country, and as ‘history has proven’, they are invincible.

In this period, in this respect, a great number of films were produced and like their predecessors, films about battles and the national struggle relied on a melodramatic modality and iterative representations of the accomplishments of the Turks in their battles with a focus on the ‘superiority’ of the Turks as a nation. In addition to these films, Turkey’s involvement in the Korean War generated another corpus of historical films in the 1950s which have been referred to as ‘Korea Films’ (Arslan 2011). In 1950, shortly after Turkey sent troops to Korea under the command of the United Nations, films such as *Kore’de Türk Kahramanları/Turkish Heroes in Korea* (Seyfi Havaeri, 1951), *Kore Gazileri/Veterans of Korea* (Seyfi Havaeri, 1951), *Kore’de Türk Süngüsü/Turkish Bayonets in Korea* (Vedat Örfi Bengü, 1951) and *Kore’den Geliyorum/I come from Korea* (Nurullah Tilgen, 1951) were produced. By following the traditions of historical representation in films, ‘Korea Films’ narrated the heroic stories of Turks and their indomitable strength as soldiers and fighters; in other words they focused on the ‘invincible’ nature of Turkish soldiers rather than engaging with the Korean War itself.

In subsequent years, historical film maintained their status as one of the prominent genres in cinema in Turkey by introducing new categories of films, such as a small number of films that focused on the Second World War by portraying the conflicts between Turkish spies/soldiers and German spies/soldiers as a backdrop for love stories between a male Turkish spy/soldier and a German female spy. Films about the Second World War, such as the versions of *Ankara Ekspresi/Ankara Express* produced in 1952 (Aydın Arakon) and the one released in 1971 (Muzaffer Arslan), along with *Düşman/Enemy* (Muzaffer Arslan, 1974), also depicted the ‘Turkish nation’ as privileged with ‘heroic powers’ which once ruled, and can still rule, the world. Later, two waves of ‘Cyprus Films’ in the 1960s and 1970s centred on Turkish soldiers as the saviours of Cypriot Turks

from Greek and British ‘enemies’ and once again showed the world how ‘invincible’ Turks are. To these categories we should add the films about the adventures of Central Asian Turks, which were adapted from Turkish comic books, as they fought the Vikings, Chinese and others. The most renowned characters from this category were Tarkan, a Hunnic Warrior, and Karaoğlan, a Uyghur Warrior, and they appeared as exceptionally powerful Turkish heroes in a great number of films, depicted as almost having supernatural powers. In line with the state’s official doctrine which stated that Turks originated in central Asia, as discussed in the previous chapter, rather than being Uyghur and Hunnic, these characters were considered to be the Turks who predated the Turkish nation. Together with Central Asian Turkish heroes, the adventures of the Anatolian Turkish heroes Koroğlu, Battal Gazi, Malkoçoğlu and Kara Murat dominated the scene in the 1960s and 1970s in a myriad of serial films. Anatolian heroes were also bestowed with extreme powers: they could kill tens of Byzantine soldiers with a flick of the sword and leap to the top of fortresses in a single bound. Reviewing these adventure films, Scognamillo and Demirhan note that, more than being seen as historical heroes, these characters should be categorized as Turkish versions of superheroes and hence examined under the rubric of ‘fantasy films’ (2005: 152). However, not just these films about heroic adventures but also the majority of historical films produced prior to the 1990s can be viewed as projections of the national fantasy of the Turkish state, of its fantasy of ‘being equal to, and superior’ to, the west as a ‘homogenous’ and ‘unified’ nation with a history that is ‘glorious’.

In this respect, we can conclude that cinematic representations of the past in Turkey up until the end of the 1980s persistently focused on the depiction the ‘supremacy of Turkishness’ by adopting assorted time-periods and geographies inhabited by the Turks as the backdrop for telling stories of ‘legendary’ Turkish heroes. Through the agency of these successive repetitions of similar stories of accomplishment, Hilmi Maktav argues that historical film in Turkey became synonymous with ‘the fight of the Turks against their enemies’ in which the Turks always triumph over them in battles that actually never took place (2006: 71). Hence, the narrative of the films revolve around virtuous, intelligent Muslim Turks and their devious, weak, desperate and primarily Christian enemies who feel absolute hostility towards Turks for no particular reason (Scognamillo and

Demirhan 2005: 140). In this manner, depictions of a range of enemies are transformed into a single template of ‘evil’ to be overcome and defeated by the ‘virtue’ of Turkish heroes, soldiers and dedicated citizens. And in this process, the historical periods in these battles become ‘a target, a decor and a platform for the legendary heroes to fight for their cause’ (Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005: 140-141). Hence, as Maktav propounds, the foremost characteristic of historical film in Turkey is the narration of the same story, i.e. how ‘glorious’ Turkish history is, with different time-periods serving as the background (2006: 71).

Here, it should be noted that, in line with conventional discourses on historical representation, the majority of studies cited in this chapter approach Yeşilçam historical films with concerns about ‘verisimilitude’ and ‘faithfulness’ to ‘historical reality’ and declare that these films are ‘backward’, ‘unserious’ ‘unrealistic’ and ‘absurd’ takes on the past; such an argument, however, is based on the presumption that a ‘good’ historical film should deploy realist structures. Accordingly, such scholars tend to take up ‘realist’ historical films for analysis and privilege them because those films depict a relatively ‘objective’ representation of historical events and remain ‘true’ to historical ‘reality’ (Scognamillo 1998; Özgüç 2005; Arslan 2011: 176; Duruel-Erkılıç 2012: 97-103). As Arslan points out, the privileging of realist films is common in film scholarship in Turkey; when lists are drawn up about the best five or ten films of cinema in Turkey, scholars and filmmakers often cite social realist films because it is thought that realist films represent a break from Yeşilçam’s ‘failures’ (2011: 17).

However, instead of taking cinematic realism as a reference point and engaging with historical films through a preoccupation with the extent to which they remain ‘faithful’ to ‘historical reality’ or depart from them, I find that a close examination of cinematic representations of the past in Turkey up through the mid-1990s, particularly popular Yeşilçam historical dramas, to be extremely important. This is because in many ways these films illustrate how the nation-building process, including its fantasies, desires and its takes on national identity and what national history *is*, have permeated historical representations in cinema to a great extent. It is also these desires, fantasies, concerns and dominant discourses about the national past and identity that have shaped the *forms* these films deploy, which, to a notable degree, did not and could not result in realist

films and unintentionally become self-reflexive to a certain extent. In this respect, a close examination of the form of individual historical films produced up through the mid-1990s has the potential to raise to the surface how these films have constituted a tradition of historical representation in cinema in Turkey and served as a means to solidify ‘official’ discourses on national history and identity. An extensive analysis of Yeşilçam historical films with a focus on their formal structures, however, has not been carried out in film scholarship in Turkey.

1980s-1990s

Scholars have pointed out that the 1980s marked the collapse of the Yeşilçam film industry through the dissolution of production and exhibitions networks (Scognamillo 1998; Suner 2004; Köstegen 2009; Suner 2010; Arslan 2010). Although film companies continued to produce films, albeit fewer in comparison to the peak years, they released these films as videos rather than in theatres particularly for Turkish migrants across Europe (Suner 2010: 8; Arslan 2011: 201-203). Scholars have linked the collapse of the popular film industry in Turkey to a number of reasons, including the political turmoil in the country in the late 1970s and 1980s, the military coup in 1980, an increase in the number of television sets, and the delicate system of production and distribution in the film industry, as well as the fact that people, due to the political violence that raged in the streets, preferred to stay home and watch films on television and video cassette instead of going to theatres (Tunç 2012; Suner 2010; Arslan 2010). As a result, many production houses shut down, the number of movie theatres decreased drastically, and the average of seven tickets bought per person annually in the 1970s fell to less than one in 1985 (Arslan 2011: 101). More importantly, Arslan notes that in the 1960s and 1970s, domestic films did much better at the box office compared to foreign films, but that trend reversed in the 1980s (2011: 101). Accordingly, scholars have noted that the number of historical film productions also decreased drastically in the 1980s (Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005).

Referred to as the ‘crisis years’ of the domestic film industry (Scognamillo 1998), the 1980s were also marked by the introduction of new genres and also non-popular film forms such as women’s films and political films and these cinematic practices dominated the era along with popular melodramas (Kuyucak-

Esen 2010: 181). Concurrently, self-reflexivity became prevalent particularly in non-popular films, and filmmakers started to reflect on filmmaking practices in Turkey as well as film genres. In this respect, the majority of the films that were produced in the 1980s, particularly those that are referred to as ‘women’s films’ and ‘political cinema’, started to adopt fragmented structures and also raised questions about the concept of representation itself through the self-conscious and reflexive forms they deployed. Arslan states that this expansion of the use of self-reflexivity was related to the political climate of the 1980s and argues that there was a loss of the ideological optimism prevalent in earlier decades, and so rather than producing future-oriented films, filmmakers stopped and reflected on themselves and the act of filmmaking itself (2011: 204).

Amongst these non-popular film forms that emerged in the 1980s, a number of films examined the impact of the military interventions of 1971 and 1980 on society. Grouped by scholars within the category of political films, and also under the rubric of ‘12th September Films’¹⁴ (Özgüç 2005: 157-159; Doğruöz 2009; Esen 2000: 195-212; Belge 1990; Maktav 2000b) and ‘12th March Films’ (Maktav 2000a), these films addressed the traumatic moments of republican history for the first time on screen. And these films’ portrayals of the state’s relentless acts carried out in the name of ‘national unity and security’ challenged the dominant modes of historical representation that had been held to in Turkey. Notably, however, these films were not, and still are not, considered to be representatives of historical film. Instead, scholars maintain that they should be categorized as ‘political films’.

One of the reasons for this approach might be explained via the form these films deploy, as their narratives are often based on the present day of their production. Made mostly by leftist filmmakers (Belge 1990; Maktav 2000a; Maktav 2000b), the recurrent themes of these films revolved around the aftermath of the coup and centred on the sufferings of political prisoners after being subjected to brutal torture by state forces. The main characters of the films were

¹⁴ In their discussion of ‘12 September Films’ Esen, Belge, Doğruöz and Özgüç generate subcategories for the films in relation to the different ways these films represent the 12th of September. The categories are films which ‘directly’ represent the 12th of September, films which ‘indirectly’ represent the 12th September, and films which represent the ‘mood’ of the 12th September. According to the ‘level’ of representation, the number of films to be added to the category of 12th September films increases or decreases.

political prisoners, and the devastation of the imprisonment they faced was portrayed by the use of symptoms of trauma: nightmares, flashbacks, and voices and screams that come out of nowhere. On the one hand, these characters were depicted as haunted by vague flashbacks, voices and images pushing them to remember what they went through, and on the other hand they were striving to forget everything they could not fully remember. All these disturbances, in addition to the changes that occurred in the country during the years they were in jail, drove these characters towards an inability to adapt to the new 'depoliticized' stance of people around them. Thus, in the majority of these films the protagonists were represented as being silent and unresponsive to their surroundings, reluctant to speak about their traumatic experiences in prison.

Due to these reflections of leftist revolutionaries in films, Maktav (2000b), Kaya (2011) and Belge (1990) have criticized '12th September Films' for being concerned with individual melancholy and melodrama rather than featuring 'the political and historical realities of the period' (Kaya 2011: 207). While Maktav acknowledges the role censorship played in preventing these films from arguing their point explicitly, he points out that these 'political films' did not stand up against the oppressive agendas of the state (2000b: 88). Thus, they were often considered to be vague individualistic films that made use of the 12th September and 12th March as a backdrop while relying on the sentiments of melodrama (Maktav 2000b: 87; Kaya 2011: 208). Similarly, Belge detects a vagueness that dominates the form of the films and states that the majority of the films did not provide any information about the characters' pasts, and all of the questions pertinent to the world of the film remained unanswered; as a result, Belge argues that the films had an ambiguous structure (1990: 6).

All these 'deficiencies' that have been identified by scholars regarding films that deal with the military interventions in Turkey pave the way for them to criticize the films for lacking a 'historical perspective' and being 'melodramas' instead of dealing with the 1980 coup in a 'serious' manner. Also, some scholars have suggested that these films rarely took up the 'historical process' as their main subject matter, meaning that they did not 'directly' represent the past but centred on telling the stories of individuals while never explicitly revealing what they had been through. Hence, some scholars have proposed that it is also misleading to refer to these films as 'political films' because they focus on the personal not the

political, and as a result the status of these films as ‘true’ ‘political films’ is also called into question (Belge 1990; Maktav 2000b; Esen 2000).

Within this framework, it becomes clear that one of the main elements that dominate criticism of historical films in Turkey is an ‘inability’ to stage historical periods through an adherence to the ‘historical truth’ and ‘historical reality’ of the period, in other words by deploying a realist form. However, the contentions of scholars about the ‘deficient’ status of these films, in my opinion, indicates a strength, as these films depict a model of traumatic memory by moving away from an obsession with ‘directly’ representing traumatizing events and instead exploring the traumas by employing fragmented structures, complicated flashbacks, and by focusing on present-day stories. In this manner, 12th September and 12th March films do not assimilate trauma into an easily comprehensible narrative, let alone the construction of a history, the characters were depicted in these films as being unable to engage with their own pasts and make sense of their experiences. The inability to represent the past and articulate a history about past experiences, and also focus on the present day instead of representing the past, brings 12th September Films and 12th March films forward as a powerful film form that challenges all of the historical representations in Turkish cinema that preceded them. This is because, instead of an obsession with representing trauma by giving it a historical background, a linear chronology, and constructing it as a comprehensible narrative, these films block our ‘access’ to the trauma of 12th September and 12th March and tell us that we can never fully know what happened.

All the ‘deficiencies’ and ‘drawbacks’ of these films that have been ‘identified’ by film scholars in Turkey are indeed what make these films traumatic texts, and in this respect, in Cathy Caruth’s words, they remain faithful to how the event was not experienced fully at the time of their occurrence (1996: 27) because they indicate how trauma cannot be ascribed any meaning or incorporated into a narrative. This is the reason why I propose that 12th September and 12th March films should be considered to be historical films rather than political films or otherwise. And based on this argument, I contend that these historical films heralded the emergence of a new historical film form in Turkey, an issue that I will conceptualize further in the fifth chapter of thesis. By experimenting with the film form, this stimulated a re-consideration of what the past and history mean as

well as pushed against and broadened the limits of the historical film genre with its unconventional forms.

From the 1990s onwards

When Yavuz Turgul's *Eşkiya/The Bandit* was watched by over two and a half million people in 1996, it became clear that the cinema industry in Turkey was picking up again (Köstepen 2009; Suner 2004; Suner 2010). There have been significant factors that provided momentum for the rejuvenation of cinema of Turkey such as the deregulation of the state monopoly on the television industry and the emergence of private channels which provided financial backing for the production of films and the growth of the advertising industry, the increase in the number of film festivals and funding schemes, and crowd-funding campaigns that have been launched on the internet to secure funding for the production, distribution and exhibition of films. In addition to sponsorship, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture's Committee for the Support of Cinema started its allocations in 2004 and there have been international funding schemes as well as an increase in the use of digital film technologies (Tunç 2012: 168-188, Suner 2004: 305-306; Köstepen 2009; Zaim 2008a; Zaim 2008b). Predominantly referred to as 'the new cinema of Turkey' or 'new Turkish Cinema', one of the key features of this era in the cinema of Turkey that began in the mid-1990s, scholars argue, is a sharp divide between 'art-house' and 'popular films' (Köstepen 2009; Suner 2004; Suner 2009; Suner 2010). In this regard, films like *The Bandit* have been seen as being new versions of Yeşilçam melodramas and it has been pointed out that many filmmakers and producers of popular films have generated their financial resources mainly from the television industry, as they are involved in the creation of television shows and commercials, and establish business contacts within that sector (Suner 2010: 13-14). Also, due to the changes in the political, cultural and social sphere of Turkey that started in the 1980s, new popular films have also been seen as departing from traditional Yeşilçam melodramas through an increase in concerns with issues of national identity, memory, homeland and belonging (Suner 2010: 25-50; Arslan 2011: 253-257). And 'art house' films have been described as being dependent on filmmaker's and producer's social networks and their ability to access funds, enlist crews and arrange for discounted or free equipment, and they are also reliant upon online

crowd-funding campaigns, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture's support, international funding institutions, film festival awards and so on (Köstepen 2009). In these art-house films, scholars have noted the recurrence of several themes, such as the representation of traumas, collective loss, the representation of diverse identities, and questions about the nation, identity, homeland and sense of belonging.

In this respect, starting in the mid-1990s, the film industry in Turkey has grown drastically. Domestic film productions have performed better than foreign films at the box office, the number of film festivals, film productions and production houses have increased, and the television industry has grown substantially. Filmmakers and production houses have established international networks, films from Turkey circulate globally, and Turkish film festivals in London, New York and Boston have been established. Films from Turkey have been granted numerous awards at prestigious film festivals around the world, including the Golden Bear won by Semih Kaplanoğlu in 2010 for his film *Bal/Honey*, the Golden Palm won by Nuri Bilge Ceylan for his film *Kış Uykusu/Winter Sleep* in Cannes Film Festival 2014, and many other awards received by Turkish filmmakers at Cannes and the Venice Film Festival.

This revival and mobility in the film industry in Turkey and the drastic increase in the production of films has also resulted in a large increase in historical films. However, in line with the political, social and cultural shifts in the country in the 1980s that I explored in the previous chapter, historical films produced since the mid-1990s have also departed from the traditional historical films of Yeşilçam. To varying degrees, cinematic representations of the past in Turkey have begun to challenge traditional discourses on history and historical representation, and instead of placing constant emphasis on the 'supremacy of Turkishness' and on a 'unified' and 'homogenous' national identity, they have sought out ways to come to terms with the national past. And in this undertaking, they have all followed disparate routes.

Taking up this perspective, in the following chapter I will analyse the disparate ways that historical films from the mid-1990s onwards have attempted to come to terms with the past and challenge traditional historiography, and I will identify the emergence of three divergent tendencies. This will involve an analysis of the first tendency and how the narration of triumphs, conquests and victories

have departed from ‘official’ discourses on history and traditional historical films in Turkey. To do so, I will closely examine two recent films, the first of which is *Farewell*, which centres on the nation-building process in the last years of the 1800s and early decades of 1900s, and *Conquest 1453*, which narrates the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottomans.

CHAPTER 3

‘GLORIOUS’ HISTORY IN CRISES: *Farewell and Conquest 1453*

In his book *Film Nation*, Robert Burgoyne notes that as regards questions concerning the emergence of national, racial and cultural identity as a central debate in the United States, the ‘American past has become a contested domain in which narratives of people excluded from the traditional accounts have begun to be articulated in a complex dialogue with the dominant tradition’ (2010: 1). Burgoyne states that one of the most visible manifestations of this changing narrative of the nation can be found in the resurgence of films that take the American past as their subject by illustrating how the national narrative is currently being reshaped by stories that explore the meaning of the nation ‘from below’ (2010: 1). For Burgoyne, these films bring into relief a growing tendency in contemporary American culture which he defines as a desire to remake and re-write the ‘dominant fiction’ within which members of a society are asked to identify themselves¹ (2010: 1). In this respect, Burgoyne contends that this impetus has led cultural works to emphasise the importance of representing the experiences of racial and ethnic groups within the nation in relation to topics such as slavery and industrial exploitation as central aspects of the American past. And particularly, in the case of filmic representations, Burgoyne observes that there has been a cinematic re-writing of history in which the reserve of images and stories that constitute the dominant fiction is being interrogated and a counter narrative of American history is being created (2010: 1-2).

Burgoyne elaborates on these contentions by analysing films such as *Glory* (Edward Zwick, 1989), *Born on the Fourth of July* (Oliver Stone, 1989), *Malcom X* (Spike Lee, 1992), *Forrest Gump* and *JKF* (Oliver Stone, 1991) and he argues that these films contest and challenge understandings of the past in traditional narratives because, rather than a story of a social progress, the national past in these films appears to be a story with a distinctly tragic overtone (2010: 6). In this

¹ Referring to Jacques Rancière, Burgoyne describes ‘dominant fiction’ as the ‘image of social consensus’ within which members of a society are asked to identify themselves (2010: 1).

respect, Burgoyne maintains that these films reshape collective imagery in relation to history and nation, and he argues that they challenge traditional myths of the nation-state by reenacting ‘the narrative of the nation in terms of its tributaries, in terms of stories of ethnic, racial and gender struggles to reshape the national narrative and to make the experiences of marginal groups a “formative and necessary part of the story”’ (2010: 6). While some of the basic tropes of traditional narratives are maintained in those films, such as the importance of warfare in moulding a sense of national community, for Burgoyne it is the challenges and contestations these films bring about that highlights their significance because these films do not offer up national history as a triumphal story of progress but as a story that is marked by collective loss (2010: 6-7).

Burgoyne’s discussion in relation to the changes in the traditional narrative of the nation and filmic representations of history provides a crucial entry point for exploring the transformations that have occurred in dominant historical texts in Turkey starting in the mid-1990s. As discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis, the dominant republican ideology, with its discourses on national history as a set of ‘glorious’ moments and the nation and national identity defined as a ‘unified’ and ‘homogenous’ entity, has begun to dissolve as the result of political, cultural and economic shifts. This has led to the emergence of acrimonious debates about what national history *is* in relation to a need to redefine the nation, national identity and history in light of the demands of silenced communities to acknowledge their experiences. This need has been mainly articulated via recently emerging cinematic representations that centre on suppressed and unaccounted stories of the past and that contest the entrenched historical representations in dominant narratives and ‘official’ history. These films have sought out ways to dismantle ‘official’ narratives and pave the way for coming to terms with the dark moments of the national past. As the number of such films have increased drastically in the last two decades, ‘the grand narrative of the Turks’ and its discourses on the ‘gloriousness’ of Turkish history have been shattered.

These filmic representations that examine experiences which were excluded in the pre-existing constructions of the national narrative have also made it impossible for traditional narratives to reinstate entrenched discourses on the national past. In this way, traditional representations of national history, including historical films, have also started to depart from ‘official’ accounts and change

shape. Their stories have been re-moulded and attempts have been made to appropriate traumatizing events in their narratives so that the demands of oppressed communities and the divulging of the appalling acts committed by the state can be negotiated. In other words, the need for coming to terms with the dark moments of history has brought about the emergence of dominant narratives which depict the ‘unwanted components’ of the nation as intrinsic constituents that played a significant part in the processes of building the empire and nation, and in this narrative, ‘unwanted components’ are depicted as dedicated citizens that fought with the ‘enemy’ hand in hand with the Turks. Also, in these films Turkish leaders and soldiers, which had previously been depicted as ‘omnipotent’ heroes with an emphasis on their ‘invincible nature’, are presented as ‘victim-heroes’ and vulnerable individuals who have suffered equally devastating traumas.

However, this departure from dominant historical narratives cannot be seen as an attempt to open up a space in which the dark moments of the national past can be confronted and the wrong-doings of the state can be acknowledged by posing questions about traditions of historical representation in Turkey and the discourses they have brought about. In contrast, in their pursuit to come to terms with the national past, the majority of these narratives sought out ways to ‘domesticate’ traumatizing events and re-appropriate them as ‘shared’ experiences. Accordingly, instead of scrutinizing the process by which ‘official’ histories are produced and disseminated by the nation-state in which some pasts, regimes, ethnicities and communities are privileged while others are erased, denied and oppressed, this undertaking can be understood as an attempt to ‘re-write’ national history in line with the ‘needs’ of the present-day through which the burden of the guilt of history can be dispelled and the wrongdoings of the state can be vindicated.

The most visible demonstration of this shift in traditional narratives emerges in historical films that represent the moments of the past that have been defined as ‘glorious’ and as constitutive moments of the nation. These moments include the War of Independence, the establishment of the republic and policies of reform, and the rise and expansion of the Ottoman Empire, all of which have been repeatedly represented in cinema of Turkey since its inception in the early 1900s. As I discussed in the previous chapter, as regards discourses concerning the

republic and its imagining of the nation, national history and identity, earlier historical films regularly placed emphasis on the ‘supremacy’ of Turkishness, the ‘homogenous’ and ‘unified’ status of the nation and national identity, and the ‘gloriousness’ of national history. As a result, diverse identities, dark moments, tumultuous events and traumatic episodes were ignored in earlier historical representations. However, in recent years, through a promulgation of contested representations, historical films that focus on triumphs, victories and conquests have also started to depart from these earlier historical films in the ways they illustrate that this ‘glorious’ history is haunted by traumas, and as a result, a crisis has emerged.

To elaborate on these contentions this chapter will analyse two contemporary films, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*. *Farewell* focuses on the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. *Conquest 1453* takes the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 as its subject and centres on the events that surround the siege of Constantinople by the Ottoman state. While both films seek to ‘glorify’ national history by underlining the arduous struggles undertaken by heroes, soldiers and citizens in defending their nation to build a nation-state or conquer new lands to build an empire, I propose that they concurrently expose how the established discourses of traditional narratives and myths concerning the nation are being dismantled by the compelling challenges they have been facing. *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* do not portray Mehmed II and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as well as various other heroes, as ‘omnipotent’ historical personages who are endowed with ‘invincibility’ but rather those characters are depicted as being vulnerable, desperate and suffering individuals as the result of various traumas. Also, they both depict oppressed communities as being integral parts of the nation and seek out ways to incorporate their experiences into the national narrative. In this regard, both films demonstrate the impossibility of narrating the national past solely as a set of ‘glorious’ moments and national identity as a ‘homogenous’ entity in present-day Turkey. And it is from this standpoint that *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* can be seen as being part of on-going negotiations about the need to re-formulate a national history that can meet the demands of silenced communities and at the same time open up routes to come to terms with the dark moments of the national past.

On the other hand, however, these shifts and changes in representation of celebrated moments cannot be seen as a profound challenge which dismantles pre-existing narratives. In their endeavour to re-inscribe ‘undesired components’ as intrinsic components of the nation and depict historical personages as weak individuals, these films do not trigger a confrontation with the wrongdoings of the state or scrutinize the role of dominant ideologies in denying and oppressing various pasts and experiences, nor do they interrogate traditional discourses on historiography and historical representation. In contrast, both films solidify conventional discourses concerning memory, history and representation, and by relying on them, they attempt to ‘domesticate’ the traumatizing events to which diverse communities have been subjected as the ‘shared experiences’ of the entire nation, including the historical personages these films portray.

It should be noted that *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* have not been regarded as historical films that depart from traditional discourses on history. However, both films have been received in Turkey and abroad as attempts to ‘re-glorify’ the nation-building process and the Ottoman past so that entrenched understandings of the national past as being rife with ‘glory’ can be reinstated. This has been also associated with the form of these films, because unlike Yeşilçam films which were referred to as ‘low-quality’ and ‘unrealistic’ and ‘failed’ attempts to imitate Hollywood and European historical films, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* have been perceived as films that were able to ‘finally’ include ‘high quality’ historical images on the grounds that they portray grandiose imagery, battle scenes with casts of thousands, colossal sets, meticulous costume designs and ‘authentic’ historical landscapes created through special effects.

In terms of their cinematic quality, the critical responses to these films’ representations of history can be defined in terms of two different approaches. Some have claimed that, like Yeşilçam historical films, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* say nothing new about national history and the historical figures they portray because both films merely visualize ‘official’ accounts and handle their subject matter one-sidedly, from the perspective of the Turks, by eliminating all opposing views. In this way, these critics have argued that the essential purpose of *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* was to praise historical personages as god-like heroes and emphasise the ‘invincible nature’ of Turks, just like Yeşilçam historical dramas (Ekinci 2010; Günerbüyük 2012; Aydemir 2012a; Özgüven 2012). Scholars,

historians and critics who take this stance have noted that despite the significant increase in investments in historical filmmaking, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* have nothing more to offer than Yeşilçam historical dramas that reduced history to a duel between ‘good’ (Turks) and ‘evil’ (non-Turks).

A second group of critics have compared *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* to Yeşilçam films as well. But in contrast to the first approach, they have considered both films to be the apex of national cinema because these films ‘finally’ present ‘realistic’, ‘authentic’ and ‘proper’ representations of ‘glorious moments’ of history. In this way, the flamboyant and exorbitant details of production have been seen as indicative of an improvement in historical filmmaking that contrasts with the ‘reckless’ representations in Yeşilçam, such as portrayals of ancient Turkish heroes wearing watches or airplanes flying overhead in the skies of eighth century Anatolia. For these critics, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* offer spectacular Hollywood-like productions with sophisticated storylines and fascinating costumes and set designs (Duman 2010; Dorsay 2012; Gülerce 2012; Akbıyık 2012). Members of parliament and the prime minister also shared such views and special screenings were organized for them and the producers and directors of both films sent them DVDs. Following these screenings, the prime minister and members of parliament delivered speeches about how they found those films’ depictions of the national past to be milestones in ‘Turkish cinema’ (Kaplan 2010; *Zaman* 2010; *Zaman* 2012).

At the same time, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* triggered heated debates that have transcended their depictions of the past as they were identified as being representative of two opposing ideologies which aim to ‘re-glorify’ two contradicting takes on the past and resist each other’s discourses. *Conquest 1453* has been referred to as a celebration of an Ottoman past which dovetails with the AKP’s agenda of ‘neo-Ottomanism’ (Bilefsky 2012; Gibbons 2012; Torchia 2012; Tharoor 2012; Günerbüyük 2012) and in this regard it has been seen as a stimulus for revitalizing Turks’ imperial past and a rehabilitation of the Ottoman legacy which had been subdued for decades by previous secular governments. In contrast, *Farewell* has been perceived as a film that reinstates Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s position as the ‘father’ of the nation and seeks to re-consecrate the ideals of the secular Republic which have been put into question particularly by

the ‘neo-Ottomanist’ vision of the AKP and contested narratives that problematize Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s status as an inviolable leader.²

Although these contestations provide a basis for discussing *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* in the historical and cinematic context of Turkey, such remarks reduce these films and their communication with the national past to uniform sets of meanings such as a duality between the historical films of Yeşilçam and technologically advanced filmmaking, films that remain faithful to ‘historical reality’ and those that exaggerate historical narration for the purpose of stimulating national pride, and the Republican ideology versus Islamic Conservatism and neo-Ottomanism. However, I propose that the relationships that *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* establish with the national past and traditional historical narratives are much more complex. This is because rather than being in opposition or serving as vehicles of specific ideologies, both films mirror each other in the ways they reflect, and become part of, the obsession with re-shaping the national narrative that is bound up with the on-going process in Turkey in which republican discourses on the national past and national identity have been diminished. And the complex relationship that both films establish with traditional representations of the national past and the initiatives to re-define the nation, national identity and history, can only be revealed by a close examination of their formal structures.

To explicate these claims, in what follows I will initially examine the temporal structures of both films in terms of the representation of temporalities and the formulations of flashbacks and then argue that while *Farewell* confines the ‘glory’ of the republic to a distant past in flashbacks, *Conquest 1453* unfolds chronologically without the present-tense of the film being interrupted by the past and with a constant emphasis on the future. I will argue that such discrete organizations of temporality indicate how these films mirror each other, as *Farewell* demonstrates the disintegration of republican discourses on national history by restricting the ‘glory’ of the republic to the past, while *Conquest 1453* brings the past into the present with a promise of the future by underlining a

² In particular, *Farewell* has been widely considered to be a response to Can Dündar’s ‘derogatory’ portrayal of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in his documentary *Mustafa*. Although Zülfü Livaneli has tried to refute this comparison, he has referred to *Farewell* as a ‘resistance film’ that stands out against people who discredit and denigrate Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the ideals of the Republic (Ekinçi 2010).

celebration of diversity and multiculturalism in the Ottoman Empire. Secondly, in relation to their temporal structures I will analyse the positioning of the narrators in both films and how the stories of the nation-building process and the conquest of Constantinople are told. *Conquest 1453* tells its story through a non-diegetic narrator who is never seen in the film and who is ‘endowed’ with the authority to speak about the past, while in *Farewell* the narrator is a character in the film, and through his recollections we ‘witness’ the events that unfold. Despite this difference, both films exhibit similar degrees of ‘omnipotent’ narration and allow spectators to ‘witness’ the past ‘objectively’ and ‘the way it happened’. Thus, I will argue that both films rely on conventional codes of historical representation, including historical film, and rather than raising questions and stimulating critical engagement with history and filmic representations, their narration operates to underline the ‘objectivity’ of the stories they convey and suppresses any questions regarding representations of the past in films. Thirdly, I will explore how, by relying on melodramatic modality, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* seek out ways to deal with the dissolution of the ‘gloriousness’ of national history and come to terms with the past. To do so, both films portray oppressed communities as intrinsic and formative constituents of the nation and position ‘omnipotent’ emperors and leaders as ‘victim-heroes’ who suffered as the result of equally traumatizing events or were themselves the victims of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the nation-building process. In this way, I will contend that *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* attempt to dispel the ‘burden’ of the guilt of history and come to terms with the dark moments of the past, while treating memory and history as completely unproblematic fields in the production of re-edited versions of conventional histories by ‘domesticizing’ traumas.

The Temporality of ‘Glorious’ History

Based on the memoirs of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s childhood friend and aide-de-camp Salih Bozok, *Farewell* tells the story of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s life from his childhood up through his death in 1938. Through the eyes of Bozok, the film depicts Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s childhood in Thessaloniki in the 1880s, the loss of his father, his friendship with Bozok, his relationship with his family and friends, his estrangement from his mother brought about by her second marriage, and the two women he was involved with, Latife and Fikriye. Latife

later becomes his wife, and Fikriye kills herself out of grief. In addition to his relationships with Latife and Fikriye and his longing for his homeland Thessaloniki, which the Ottoman Empire lost in the Balkan Wars, *Farewell* depicts the fall of the empire, World War I, the War of Independence, and the founding of the Republic of Turkey. The film also depicts Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's experiences as a soldier in the Ottoman Army and as the leader of the national resistance movement, as well as his time serving as the first president of the Republic of Turkey. The film ends with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death in 1938.

Conquest 1453 narrates the events surrounding the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by Sultan Mehmet II, also known as the Conqueror. Starting with Prophet Mohammed's prophecy in the seventh century in Medina about Constantinople's eventual conquest by a blessed commander and army, the film portrays the arduous struggle Sultan Mehmet II and his army went through to fulfil Mohammed's prophecy. Sultan Mehmed II's relations with his father and his son, as well as his despair at being an outcast son and sultan who didn't live up to his father's and others' expectations, are portrayed as being intrinsic elements of the story of the conquest. In addition to Mehmed II's despair and vulnerability, *Conquest 1453* depicts the fall of Byzantium and expansion of the Ottoman Empire, and the film ends with the conquest of Constantinople.

Both films, however, present these stories in different manners, as they make shifts in time and jump forward and backward, and their temporal structures are organized in differing ways. In 'Time and Tense in Cinema', Alexander Sesonske writes that there is a tendency to associate cinematic representation solely with the present tense by disregarding the formal aspects of time in films and their shifts in temporalities (1980: 419). For Sesonske, conceptions that describe film as a medium of the present tense and thus regard to it as having no past or future tense are false (1980: 419). This is because Sesonske explains, in cinema time is created; some events may be depicted as occurring in the present, and other events related to them in the past or future often function to indicate these temporal relations (1980: 423). In relation to these temporal shifts in cinema, Brian Henderson suggests that, 'To study the tense of a narrative is first of all to compare the order in which events are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these events have in the story' (1983: 5).

That is to say, while events happen successively or simultaneously in *fabula*, these can be deployed in *syuzhet* in a straightforward chronology or deviations from it; they can be represented as being successive or simultaneous, or a film can begin *in medias res* and then go backwards and forwards in time or unfold retroactively by rearranging the temporal order of events (Bordwell 1985: 74-98; Henderson 1983: 5).

For Henderson, however, cinema does not have an explicit tense system. Thus, when films go back and forth in time, to the past, present and future, and rearrange the temporal order of events, they utilize cinematic means to mark these changes in tense and make it possible for viewers to understand different temporalities through various means such as optical treatments, the use of sound and music, the fading of voices, and so on (1983: 7). In terms of flashbacks, for instance, Turim suggests that when the present-tense of the film dissolves to an image of the past, films tend to use voice-overs or intertitles that mark the anteriority of the images and they often reinforce visual cues that indicate a return to the past (1989: 7). In addition, film colour is also used to mark temporal shifts, for instance the present and past are often marked by shifts from black and white to colour, or from faded colours to vivid ones. At the same time, as Turim argues in relation to flashbacks, a film can make temporal shifts rather obscure and render them less straightforward (1989: 7-8). Mary Ann Doane defines this structuring of temporality and representation of time in cinema as the temporality of the diegesis and states that this can be explained as the way in which time is represented by images in relation to varying invocations of the present, past, future and historicity (2002: 30). And for David Bordwell, many processes of narration depend upon this manipulation of time in cinema (1985: 74).

For this reason, in her analysis of historical films, Marnie Hughes-Warrington suggests that 'no history is a single tense': 'Historical films are never just about one time, whether that is a represented past, the filmmaker's present or the viewer's present' (Hughes-Warrington 2007: 76). Based on the use of cinematic means such as editing, mise-en-scene and film colour, through which a shaping of time can be achieved, Hughes-Warrington puts forward that rather than representing a single tense, historical films exert a temporal heterogeneity which opens up various time paths, and these paths do not simply offer 'a chorological

continuum in which the past leads inevitably to the present and the future emerges predictably out of the present' (Hughes-Warrington 2007: 58-79).

In this respect, I argue that, rather than narrating the nation-building process progressively in which the past leads to the present and from which the future emerges, in *Farewell* the way that the temporality of the diegesis is structured underlines the decay of the republican ideology. The film deploys a *retroactive* narration, which starts with the day of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death and continues with the story of the founding of the Republic as an extensive flashback of Bozok. By emphasising the 'past-ness' of flashbacks through the use of shifts in film colour and the voice-over narration of Bozok, *Farewell* restricts the 'glory' of the republic and its discourses to a distant past; in other words, it illustrates the impossibility of narrating the nation-building process in present-day Turkey solely as a set of 'glorious' moments, and the nation as nothing but a 'unified' and 'singular' entity. Conversely, *Conquest 1453* narrates the story of the conquest *progressively*, starting from the 'miraculous' birth of Mehmed II and ending with the day of Constantinople's capture. *Conquest 1453*'s progressive narration is interrupted by two flashbacks, first Mehmed II's painful memories about his father's indifference towards him, and second, the burning down of a Muslim village by Crusader Armies. However, unlike *Farewell* in which flashbacks operate to relegate the 'glorious' story of the founding of the Republic of Turkey to a distant past, flashbacks provide *Conquest 1453* with the means to progress further.

Conquest 1453 opens with an extreme long shot of an ancient city and title over this image reads 'Medina 627'. We first see in a long shot the bazaar and then the interior of Prophet Mohammed's home. From Mohammed's point of view,³ we see four Muslim men sitting and talking about a holy war, and a few seconds later these men ask for the prophet's permission to share the news with their fellow Muslims. Then we see the interior of another house and the four men enter the house and sit as the crowd in the house asks what the prophet said. They

³ In Muslim belief, depictions of the Prophet Mohammed are forbidden. In films such as *The Message* (Moustapha Akkad, 1977), which centres on the birth of Islam and Mohammed's life, his existence is indicated only by point of view shots, as the viewers never see his figure or hear his voice. *Conquest 1453* follows this tradition and in the film we never see Mohammed's face or body or hear his voice, but understand that he is present through point-of-view shots.

say to the other Muslim men, 'Our prophet said Konstanniyye [Constantinople] will be conquered one day. The commander who conquers it will be a blessed commander. His soldiers will be blessed soldiers'. When the man finishes speaking, a hawk in the house takes flight above Medina and flies over deserts, mountains and lowlands and ultimately reaches Constantinople.

In bird's eye view, we see the landmarks of Constantinople, the hippodrome and Orthodox church Hagia Sophia, and then the hawk perches on the roof of the church, which will be turned into a mosque after the siege of the city. These images are accompanied by a masculine voice-over that tells viewers about the 'miraculous' events that took place on the day of Mehmed II's birth, such as horses giving birth to numerous twin foals, quadruple yields of crops, and the branches of fruit trees bent to the ground as they are so laden with fruit. After the hawk perches on the roof of Hagia Sophia, the city grows dark in the middle of the day as a comet blocks out the sun, and the narrator tells us that these were all signs that proved that Mehmed II was the commander mentioned in the prophecy of Mohammed.

From Constantinople the hawk continues to fly and the camera zooms in on its pupil. In the hawk's pupil, again from a bird's eye view, we see another city with colossal minarets and swathes of greenery as the camera glides through the skies, and the title over the image reads 'Edirne 1432'. The hawk flies over a palace and perches on the windowsill of a room in which the Surah of Conquest from the Quran is being recited. The camera pans right to reveal that it is Sultan Murad II, Mehmed II's father, who is reciting the Quran, and then an agha enters the room to give the news about his son's birth. Murad II names his son Mehmed, to show his respect to the prophet Mohammed.

Following this scene, the film fades to black and then we see Mehmed II practising sword fighting with Hasan, a Turcoman warrior. The title over this image reads 'Saruhan Post, 1451'. Mehmed wins the sword fight and then a messenger arrives, delivering a letter bearing news of Murad II's death. Mehmed becomes emotional as he reads the letter, and then the film cuts to Mehmed riding a horse to Edirne to ascend the throne. While Mehmed and his entourage ride to Edirne, the narrator states that Mehmed first ascended the throne when he was twelve years old after his father abdicated the throne due to the unexpected death of his favourite son Aladdin, Mehmed's brother. However, the grand vizier had

convinced Murad II that Mehmed II was unfit to rule as a sovereign and told him to reclaim the throne, and as a result Mehmed II was overthrown and sent back to Saruhan Post. After the narrator gives viewers background information about Mehmed II's first term as sovereign, the film cuts to Edirne Palace as Mehmed arrives, and he asks to be left alone with his father's body. Mehmed II kisses his father's hand and tells him what a great Sultan he was. Mehmed II goes on, however, to say that he failed as a father. Mehmed II says that no matter how much he loved his father, he received no love in return. Then he promises his father that he will conquer all the lands his father had attempted to conquer in the past and build a world-wide empire from what his father left him. In the next shot, we see Mehmed II on the throne as sultan.

In the rest of the film, aside from two flashbacks, *Conquest 1453* unfolds chronologically. From the prophet's prophecy to the moment Constantinople is conquered, we see Mehmed II building an army, having fortresses built and canons made, and contemplating the siege of Constantinople. In short, throughout the film we witness step by step how Mehmed II plans to conquer Constantinople. We also learn about the defence strategies of Byzantium as they seek help from various other Christian communities, and these scenes are all shown progressively in chronological order.

While the story in *Conquest 1453* unfolds progressively, *Farewell* starts by telling the story of the founding of the republic on the day of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death. And it narrates his life retroactively as his aide-de-camp, Bozok, recalls all the 'glories' and painful moments of the past that they experienced together. *Farewell* opens with the sound of knocking as the camera shows in a tracking shot a desk with a bottle of ink and a notebook, and the tracking shot stops on a calendar. The image of the calendar fades to black and a title appears on black leader: '10 November 1938, Dolmabahçe Palace, 07:05' which is one hour and five minutes before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's death. From here the camera tilts up and shows a hand knocking on a desk and a gun and then Bozok's face in a mirror as he looks in the mirror and at the camera, and we see Bozok grabbing his gun and placing it under his chin. At that moment in the film, Bozok's servant tells him that his son has arrived. Bozok hides the gun in the drawer of the desk and his son Muzaffer enters the room. In shot counter shot we see Bozok telling Muzaffer about his secret: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is in a coma

and he says that if Mustafa Kemal Atatürk dies, he plans on killing himself. Then Bozok says ‘farewell’ as he hugs his son and sends him off. As both of them walk to the car at the entrance of Dolmabahçe Palace, Muzaffer gets in the car and in a long shot we see Bozok waving as the car pulls away. The title of the film appears over this scene.

Bozok goes back into the palace and we see him going up to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s room. Inside the room the camera follows Bozok as he approaches Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s bed and then he sits on the bed as the camera pans down to show Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, for the first time in the film, lying in a coma. Bozok looks at Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and tells him that he has been through worse times and always achieved the impossible, and that he can overcome this illness as well. He asks Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to try to wake up and tells him that if anything happens to him, as his aide-de-camp he will follow him wherever he goes. From here the film cuts to Bozok’s son crying at his school in front of a statue of Atatürk and Turkish flags, and Muzaffer’s teacher asks him why he is crying. The film cuts back to the interior of Dolmabahçe Palace, and we see Bozok sitting at the desk we saw at the beginning of the film. Bozok gets a pen and paper and starts to write a letter to his son, Muzaffer. As Bozok writes, the voice-over narration of Bozok himself, starts to tell the story of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

In a voice-over, Bozok says, ‘Our story started in Thessaloniki’ and the film cuts to Thessaloniki in 1887 in a flashback, and in contrast to the predominance of the greyish tones in the previous images, we see Thessaloniki in vivid colours. We see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at the age of six with his father Ali Rıza and they are both dressed in suits, and we hear the *ezan* and church bells in the background. Then a group of students pass by dressed in religious gowns and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk tells his father that he does not want to go to the same school with those children because they are strangely dressed. His father, Ali Rıza, tells him that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s mother, Zübeyde, wants him to go a religious school to become a *hoca*, a teacher of Islam. The film then cuts to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his father leaving a mosque during the month of Ramadan after performing their prayers, and then they walk around the streets of Thessaloniki. In a voice-over, Bozok tells us that this stroll in the month of Ramadan left an impression on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and he goes on to say that

in the city of Thessaloniki in that era, Muslims, Orthodox, and Jews, all subjects of the Ottoman Empire, were living in peace.

Farewell narrates the rest of the story in this manner, by showing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in a coma at Dolmabahçe Palace and Bozok by his side recalling his memories in the present tense of the film which is depicted in images that are dark and grey, and in the flashbacks, in the past tense, by showing Bozok and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk growing up together, becoming soldiers, fighting for the Ottoman Empire and then rebelling against the Sultan and starting the War of Independence via bright images accompanied by Bozok's voice-over narration. In short, from start to end the film intercuts between the past and present by showing what these two characters went through until the moment in the present-day of the film, the one hour before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk dies.

In the first few minutes of *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*, both films demonstrate the contrasting approaches to narration that dominate the remainder of the films. *Conquest 1453* starts with a prophecy, in other words with a promise for a future. The images we see in the film and the sounds we hear are referred to as signs which promise that in the future, the prophecy of the prophet will be fulfilled by Mehmed II. The most powerful sign in the film is presented as the birth of Mehmed II, who is destined to bring about a 'new age' for his people by expanding Ottoman territories in which diverse communities will live in 'peace'. Through the unseen narrator we are informed about Mehmed II's birth, but the film does not show Mehmed II as a baby, nor does it portray the difficult times he went through as a child and overthrown sultan. On the contrary, the first time Mehmed II appears is the scene in which he wins a fight and is told about his father's death, which points to an end of an era and the beginning of a new one.

All the scenes in the film are connected with the flight of the hawk as it flies from one time and space to another, connecting them. Throughout *Conquest 1453*, apart from two flashbacks we are always in the present tense, regardless of whether the scenes take place in the seventh century or the fifteenth century. And as the story unfolds, we 'witness' the progress of time. In contrast with *Farewell*, it is the flashbacks which are dark and grey in *Conquest 1453*, while the present-tense images are always colourful. Through the use of colour, then, it becomes clear that *Conquest 1453* promises a 'bright' future and traumas are left behind in the past, including the traumas of the nation, and the celebration of diversity in the

Ottoman empire suggests that it should be celebrated in the present as well as in the future.

Farewell, in contrast, is oriented toward the past. While the present tense of the film focuses on the hour before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk dies, it narrates Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's life story and the 'glorious' moments of the nation-building process in flashback, and hence the past tense. *Farewell* signals an end of an era as well, and in the past tense we see the accomplishments of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his people and battles and successes in wars as he builds a future for his people; in the present tense, however, we only see him immobile, in a coma and dying. Also, the present tense of the film is grey in hue, filled with darkness, whereas the past is vivid, bright and colourful. This also suggests the present-day undermining of republican takes on national history and its identity, as opposed to the days in the past when it was filled with promises for the future.

In this respect, I argue that the temporal organization of *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* communicate with present-day discourses on history in Turkey and at the same time challenge the pre-existing representations that centred on these two celebrated moments. Both films indicate the reformulations of national history in the present day and their opposing strategies of narration point to the deviations to which traditional takes on history and the construction of national narratives have been subjected. By narrating the process that led to the founding of the nation-state and the republican reforms in flashback, in other words by locating them in the past tense, *Farewell* restricts discourses about the 'glory' of the republic and its takes on national, national identity and history to a distant past. In addition to the title of the film, the current state of the republican ideology is demonstrated through the body of its founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as from the moment the film starts to the moment it ends, we see him in the present day of the film dying in a coma. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is mobile, potent and powerful only in the flashbacks, in the past tense of the film, and also in his hallucinations. The first time that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk appears on screen we hear Bozok voice his belief that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk has been through even more difficult times and he can fight this as well. Bozok's belief and insistence that Mustafa Kemal should get better and stand on his feet again also suggest that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's condition and the nation-building process have been subjected to questioning and contestation.

The way *Conquest 1453* narrates its story with an orientation to the future, in this respect, can be interpreted as an accommodation of the future of the nation in promises that dovetail with the current re-shaping of the national narrative with an emphasis on diversity and the revival of the Ottoman past. Thus, while *Farewell* places emphasis on *death*, *Conquest 1453* highlights *birth*.

Looking at the organization of the temporal order within the frame work of previous historical films, which focus on similar subject matters and are rife with a focus on ‘progress’ and the ‘monumentality’ of the nation, the shift in conventional narrations of the nation-building process and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in *Farewell* becomes overt. The prospective imaginings and projections of promises for a future which had predominated in earlier cinematic representations of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the republic are replaced by nostalgia in *Farewell* for the times when the ‘glory’ of the nation-building process was not subjected to questioning. Thus, instead of drawing ‘glory’ into the present day and future, the film confines this ‘glory’ to a remote past.

In *Nostalgia for the Modern* (2006), Esra Özyürek argues that from the 1990s onwards, when the foundational principles of the republic came under threat, a nostalgia for the first ten years of the republic emerged and took on greater meaning. Although nostalgic Kemalism expressed an intense desire to return to the past, Özyürek writes that ‘it also marked the end of an hegemony of Kemalist principles in their classical sense’ and in this respect, she maintains that Kemalism was no longer all powerful and hegemonic but rather a fragile ideology in need of citizens’ protection (2006: 16). In relation to the end or death of republican principles, one can observe that a disappointment in the present day has sprung up for some people. And dissatisfaction with the present, Anton Kaes notes, propels historical films to seek a way out of it by either reaching towards a distant past or other imaginary worlds (1989: 131). In seeking a way out of this ‘disconcerting’ present in which the ideals of the republic and its ideology have come under scrutiny both by the current government and by the voicing of the oppression of diverse ethnic groups and acts carried out in the name of building a ‘homogenous’ national identity, or inversely by protecting it, *Farewell* locks up the ‘glorious’ history of the republic in the past tense through flashbacks. In this way it demonstrates that today it is impossible to portray Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

or the founding of republic with an aim to reiterate and perpetuate previous discourses on progress and offer any up any promises for the future. As a result, the mood that predominates *Farewell* is sombre and nostalgic.

The final scenes of the two films are notable in this sense. In the last scenes of *Farewell*, we see a close up of Bozok's letter as he finishes it by writing the last word 'Farewell'. This shot cuts to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk lying on his bed in a coma, and, for the first time, in the present tense of the film, he moves his head right and left as he dreams. Accompanying this shot we hear the voice of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's dead mother, Zübeyde, calling his name: 'Mustafa, come my son'. The film cuts to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's eyes in an extreme close up, and in contrast to the grey tones that dominate the scene, a warm yellow light glows and dissolves on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's face, and he opens his eyes for the first time in the present tense of the film. In the mirror, we see him standing up, and then the film cuts to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk walking down the steps of Dolmabahçe Palace as people run up and down the stairs, not seeing him. From here the film cuts to a garden in the daytime, the scene suffused with a glowing white light, and from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk' point of view, we see his mother sitting on a bench in a white dress. In the next shot, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, aged 57, starts walking towards his mother and the camera follows him in a tracking shot. After a while the camera pans left to show Mustafa as an adult wearing his military uniform and walking in the same direction. Then the camera pans again, 360 degrees this time, and shows Mustafa as an adolescent in his military school uniform, continuing to walk towards his mother. The camera pans once more for the last time, and shows Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as a child in a white night-gown and follows him as he reaches out to his mother and sits next to her. He tells Zübeyde, 'Don't worry mother, I am fine' and Zübeyde has him lie on her lap.

Earlier in the film, Zübeyde tells Mustafa (he is a child at the time) a tale about a mother and a son who run away from a group of cavalrymen because they were intending to abduct the boy. The mother, Zübeyde relates, took a bowl out of her bag to protect her son, and threw it in the direction of the cavalrymen, and the bowl turned into a sea. Mustafa falls asleep before his mother finishes telling the story, and thus it remains unfinished.

In reference to this scene, right after assuring his mother that he is fine, Mustafa says, lying on his mother's lap, 'You never finished that tale. Did the

mother manage to save her son?'. The film cuts to a close up of Zübeyde, who is in tears, and as a tear drop trickles down her cheek the film cuts back to a close up of Mustafa as a child, and the teardrop falls down towards his eyes. The child Mustafa looks up at his mother and the film cuts to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's eyes in close up at Dolmabahçe Palace in the present tense of the film. Then it cuts back to Zübeyde, pensive and in tears looking down at her son, and again cuts back to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's eyes in an extreme close up in the present tense of the film at Dolmabahçe Palace and then he dies.

Among weeping doctors and soldiers, Bozok approaches his dead body and kisses his hand, then walks down to the office we saw in the beginning of the film and shoots himself. Bozok's blood splatters on the last page of the letter he was writing throughout the film. In close up we see the letter, the word 'Farewell' and the blood, and then the frame freezes. On this freeze frame, titles appear and we are informed that Bozok was rescued and died later in the 1940s. The film then tells spectators where the other characters were buried and informs us that none of them ever saw Thessaloniki again and, after these titles, the freeze frame fades to black and on black leader another title appears which states, 'The republic, founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his companions, celebrates its 87th anniversary', and then the film fades to black again.

Conquest 1453 ends with the moment Mehmed II enters Constantinople. In the last scenes, we see Hasan get killed as he is replacing the Byzantium flag with the Ottoman one on the parapets of Constantinople. Eva, pregnant with Hasan's child, holds her belly while looking at Hasan above the forest, dead and holding the Ottoman flag. This scene cuts to Ottoman soldiers arresting Byzantium dukes and informing them about their emperor's death and the image fades to black. Then, in bird's eye view, we see Mehmed II entering the city on his horse with thousands of soldiers chanting 'Long live the sultan'. In a long shot, Mehmed II sees the dukes of Byzantium gathered around the dead body of Constantine, and in close-up he tells them to stand up. The dukes get up and Mehmed II advises them to bury their emperor with a ceremony per the terms of their religion. Then he keeps riding his horse with his entourage of viziers and soldiers, and the main gate of the city opens and Mehmed II passes through. Then the camera tilts up, and in an extreme long shot we see the city of Constantinople. This shot cuts to the gates of Hagia Sophia from the interior and we hear the

people of Constantinople praying in the church, fearing for their lives. The gate opens and Mehmed II enters the church, leaving his soldiers outside and in shot-counter-shot we see him walking in the church and the people there are terrified of him. As Mehmed II draws nearer the crowd in the church, the camera shows them together in a long shot, and then in a medium close up, and Mehmed II says ‘Do not be afraid. From this moment on our lives, our property, and our destiny are united. You are free to practise your religion as you wish.’ The crowd appears relieved and a little girl reaches for Mehmed II and hugs him. From here the camera raises up and the sunlight shining through the windows of Hagia Sophia fills the frame with glowing white.

The last scenes of *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*, yet again, consolidate the formal reciprocity these films deploy. Both endings mark an ‘end of an era’; in *Farewell* while the end signals a frozen time that is buried in a distant past, in *Conquest 1453* the film ends with bright glowing sunlight, heralding a bright future. The mother’s inability to protect her son in *Farewell* coupled with Zübeyde’s silence and tears and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s desire to go back in time, as indicated by his hallucination, clearly point to the impossibility of a bright future, which is also demonstrated in the last title of the film, as the image fades to black. The only information about the future in *Farewell* is given by titles about where the people who built the nation-state are buried and the dates of their deaths. Conversely, *Conquest 1453* points to the future by informing us about the birth of Hasan’s child, the birth of an empire and Mehmed II’s forthcoming policies as a sultan which, as is implied, will ‘embrace’ all religions, ethnicities, languages and identities; in other words, the empire will celebrate diversity rather than suppress it.

In this way, *Farewell*’s inability to portray the future and *Conquest 1453*’s avoidance of portraying events in the past tense culminate in a situation in which *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* mirror each other and imply that the ‘future of history’ can no longer be depicted as residing in republican takes on national history with consecrations of the nation-building process and a homogenous national identity. That is why, although it is cosmetic and cliché, the way *Conquest 1453* ends in Hagia Sophia with the bright light illuminating the interior is crucial. Instead of ending with Mehmed’s entrance into the city of Constantinople, the film, by depicting Mehmed II’s dialogue with Orthodox

Christians who will later become Ottoman citizens, inscribes the influence of current discourses on history with a stress on the multi-cultural character of the empire, an issue that had been suppressed by the republican ideology. In line with a political and cultural climate in which the republican ideology and its imaginings of a singular national identity have been scrutinized both by the dominant discourses of the government and unconventional takes on history, *Conquest 1453*, in its final scene, situates the future of history in these new discourses which drive the boundaries of definitions of national identity through ‘official’ history.

However, it should be noted that even though the film does not underscore the ‘supremacy’ of Turks over other nations and ethnicities as in earlier films but rather places emphasis on multiculturalism in its ending scene. This can be best explained by Morris-Suzuki’s concept of ‘cosmetic-multiculturalism’ (2002), as I shall elaborate in the section on melodramatic modalities.

Narration of ‘Glorious’ History

Even though the temporal organization in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* mark a shift in dominant narratives, by no means do these films question previous traditions of historical representation or problematize the processes by which the past is re-shaped and re-appropriated as history. In contrast, both films rely on conventional discourses of historical representation and employ conventional codes of cinematic representation. And by portraying the past as being easily ‘accessible’ through the deployment of conventional strategies of narration, they treat history, memory and trauma as unproblematic fields. Through their narrators and use of flashbacks in conjunction with questions concerning ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’, both films attempt to establish an ‘authority’ to speak about the past and impede any further questioning by treating their representation, and history, as closed fields.

In terms of narration, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* employ different approaches as regards through whose agency viewers ‘witness’ the stories of the conquest of Constantinople and the life of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In *Farewell* the narrator is a character in the story, Salih Bozok, and the story of the film unfolds through his reminiscences about growing up and building a nation with his best friend, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Through Bozok’s narration, the life of

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk becomes a subject of internal inquiry and Bozok's recollections of the past form the basis of flashbacks. In *Conquest 1453* the narrator is not a character in the story. We never see him, nor do we find out who this voice belongs to, but he is 'omniscient' and 'omnipresent' as he tells us the story of the conquest by transcending different geographies and temporalities.

Utilization of such different sorts of narrators in cinema film theorists argue, puts forward diverse claims about 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' and this results in varying degrees of engagement with cinematic representations of the past. In 'Securing the Fictional Narrative as a Tale of Historical Real', Janet Staiger claims that when films use masculine, non-character narrators 'it is a voice of some authority, being neither weak, nor highly pitched, and it is non-diegetic: this masculine narrator never appears in the story itself' (2000: 199). This, she argues, functions as a supporting narration device for the films' claims of truth because the narrator is not a participant that 'a typical reader would tend to assume the narrator has no motivation for lying to us' (2000: 199). Not only that, Staiger continues, but through 'public opinion', patriarchal structures, narrational conventions, and intertextual knowledges, the non-diegetic narrator is positioned as all-knowing. 'Thus the function of this voice-over is to get us believe what it says' (2000: 199). Similarly, by referring to this voice as a 'disembodied voice', Mary Ann Doane suggests that the voice-over commentary is necessarily presented as being outside of diegetic space and it is this radical otherness with respect to diegesis, for Doane, that endows this voice with a certain authority:

As a form of direct address, it speaks without mediation to the audience, by-passing the 'characters' and establishing a complicity between itself and the spectator -- together they understand and thus place the image. It is precisely because the voice is not localizable, because it cannot be yoked to a body, that it is capable of interpreting the image, producing its truth. (Doane 1980: 42)

In this respect, Bordwell and Thompson designate this voice as the 'voice of God' and state that this sort of narrator is commonly used in documentary (2004: 86-87). Fiction films as well, Bordwell and Thompson maintain, may employ this 'voice of god' as a dry, matter-of-fact commentator to lend a flavour of 'objectivity' or to lend a sense of realism (2004: 87). However, they note, in terms of narration, the process by which the plot presents story information to the

spectator, a shift between restricted and unrestricted ranges of knowledge and varying degrees of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' can occur; furthermore, either sort of narrator, whether character or non-character, may present various sorts of narration. In this fashion, Bordwell and Thompson suggest, a character narrator is not necessarily restricted and may tell of events that she or he did not witness and 'might be highly subjective, telling us details of his or her inner life or might be objective, confining his or her recounting strictly to externals' (2004: 87). In a similar manner, they continue, a non-character narrator need not be omniscient and can give us access to subjective depths or might stick simply to surface events (2004: 87).

Conquest 1453 and *Farewell* demonstrate how deploying such diverse strategies of narration in engaging with the past result in similar degrees of solidifying claims of 'objectivity' and 'truth' in historical representation as well as claims about the films' agency to provide 'full' and 'unmediated' access to the past. In *Conquest 1453*, which is one hundred and sixty minutes long, the voice-over narration of the non-character narrator lasts only for a total of seven minutes at the beginning of the film. It commences with the prophecy of Mohammed and ends with Mehmed II's accession to the throne, and the rest of the film unfolds without the narrator telling us about the events that take place. Although it lasts for a very short time considering the length of the film, the narrator's voice-over narration in the first seven minutes of *Conquest 1453* makes a pivotal statement about the 'truth status' of the story being told that spans the entire film.

To begin with, in line with Bordwell and Thompson's, Doane's and Staiger's observations, in *Conquest 1453* the 'voice of God' status of the disembodied voice is assured by the images confirming what the narrator tells viewers on the sound track. The majority of the events he narrates on the sound track appear on the image track and unfold exactly the way he describes them. Secondly, and more significantly, his 'voice of God' status is reconfirmed by the repetitive use of bird's-eye views and his omnipresence in various temporalities. As he starts to tell the story in the beginning of the film, whatever he says appears on the image track in bird's eye view, in other words it is the 'god's point of view', as the camera glides through the sky. Then his narration takes us into the interiors of the palaces of sultans and the home of the prophet, ranging across disparate times and geographies. In the very first shot of the film, as we see

Medina in a bird's-eye view, the film cuts to the point of view shot of Mohammed and we see through his own eyes as he delivers his prophecy. In addition to these shots and the narrator's ability to traverse time and space in the following scenes, we hear Murad II reading the 'Surah of the Conquest' from the Quran, which are the words of God, right after the narrator points to the 'miraculous' events that signalled the birth of the commander who was heralded in the prophet's prophecy. When Murat II reads the 'Surah of the Conquest' we are told about the birth of Mehmed II the Conqueror. Then, the narrator continues to tell us about Mehmed II's youth and his failure as a sultan in his first term and when Mehmed II ascends the throne, the voice-over narration stops and the film starts to 'narrate itself'.

Through the deployment of the cinematic means mentioned above, I argue that the first seven minutes of *Conquest 1453* attempt to situate the narrator in a position beyond which one cannot, indeed 'should not', distrust the film's and the narrator's claims of 'truth' and 'objectivity'. The unseen narrator, his 'voice of god' status which is assured with his 'omniscience' and 'omnipresence' in various temporalities and geographies coupled with bird's eye view shots and his ability to 'see the future', all function to ensure that the film's claims to truth are unquestionable. Representing the peak of this state of unquestionability, *Conquest 1453* then presents the Surah of Conquest from the Quran, in other words 'the absolute and unmanipulated words of God'. Thus, beyond employing narratological devices to ensure and consolidate reliance on the narrator right from the start, *Conquest 1453* frames the entire story of the film as the 'words of God' and through such framing it confers on its narrator the absolute 'authority' to speak about the past and makes it impossible for viewers to inquire about the representation of the events in the film. After endowing its narrator with such absolute 'authority', *Conquest 1453* then absents its narrator from the narrative because it no longer needs the narrator's agency to reaffirm the 'unquestionability' of the story in the rest of the film. And as with the claims made by Carr (2001) and Barthes (1986: 132) in relation to traditional historiography, which I examined in the introduction, after the moment *Conquest 1453* absents its narrator, 'the facts' and 'history' 'speak themselves'.

In contrast to *Conquest 1453*, *Farewell* employs a character narrator, Salih Bozok, whom we see in the film and get his 'subjective' version of the nation-building process. However, corresponding to Bordwell and Thompson's

discussion (2004), Bozok's narration is unrestricted; not only does he tell us about events he did not witness, he also tells us about the mental subjectivity of the other characters in the film, such as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's flashbacks about his mother after she dies. Like the unseen narrator in *Conquest 1453*, Bozok is 'omniscient' and 'omnipresent' as a narrator; he narrates intimate moments between Mustafa Kemal and Fikriye and Latife, as well as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's meetings with various pashas in the Ottoman Empire as he seeks to change the regime, and these are moments Bozok could not have not witnessed because he was not there. He also narrates events such as Fikriye's treatment in Munich, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's fights with his wife in Ankara, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's moments with his parents in Thessaloniki when he was a child and in Istanbul, all of which happen while Bozok is absent and thus he would have no way of knowing about them. His omnipresent and omniscient status as a narrator is also reflected in his use of tenses as he narrates the entire story as his own experience. In Turkish, there is a distinction in the past tense for narrating events one has witnessed, *past definite*, and one for things you have heard from someone who witnessed an event, which is known as *past indefinite*. Bozok tells the entire story of *Farewell* in the past definite, that is, as if he himself 'witnessed' all the events the film depicts, even when he is recounting events he did not see and describing the mental subjectivity of other characters.

Through these means, instead of highlighting Bozok's narration as 'subjective' recollections and a version of the nation-building process, *Farewell* confers upon its narrator an 'all-knowing' status as someone who can 'know and tell' us about events in an 'objective' manner, and thus, rather than a version of the past, *Farewell* frames its story as a precise *history* which relies on traditional discourses that surround historical representation, including historical films. And, accordingly, Bozok's memories are treated in the film as an 'open' and 'unmediated' window on to the past, through which 'full' access to 'truth' of the past can be accessed.

In this respect, all the cinematic devices in *Farewell* work to 'objectivize' the 'subjective' narration of Bozok and make it unrestricted and omniscient so that the truth status of the story can be solidified and it can be forged as a closed history. First of all, throughout the film, whatever Bozok tells us and writes on the letter appears in the image track in flashbacks exactly the way he remembers

them, thus confirming his recollections and assuring the ‘truth status’ of his narration. In relation to such deployments of voice-over, Doane writes that ‘although the voice-over in a flashback effects a temporal dislocation of the voice with respect to the body, the voice is frequently returned to the body as a form of narrative closure’ (1980: 41). Furthermore, she notes that ‘the voice-over very often simply initiates the story and is subsequently superseded by synchronous dialogue, allowing the diegesis to “speak for itself”’ (1980: 41). This is exactly how Bozok’s voice-over narration works in conjunction with the formulation of flashbacks in the film. Bozok’s recollections spur the flashback in a ‘subjective’ manner as he starts to narrate each moment of the past as if they are his own memories. However, once we are in the flashback, in the past tense, events start to narrate themselves and become ‘de-subjectivized’ and these flashbacks depict events that Salih Bozok has no way of knowing. At this point, it would be useful to mention Turim’s and Bordwell and Thompson’s discussions of flashbacks as they relate to the question of ‘objectivity’ and ‘subjectivity’.

If flashbacks give us images of memory, the personal archives of the past, they also give us images of history, the shared and recorded past. In fact, flashbacks in film often merge two levels of remembering the past, giving large scale social and political history, the subjective of a single, fictional individual’s remembered experience. This process can be called ‘subjective memory’ which here has the double sense of the rendering of history as a subjective experience of a character in the fiction, and the formation of the Subject in history as the viewer of the film identifying with fictional characters positioned in a fictive social reality. The play of different voices within the film narration however implies certain departures or divisions within this formation of subjectivity. Even flashbacks that are themselves marked by subjectivity or single focalization of a character may engender a representation of history not so subjectively circumscribed, or so unified. (Turim 1989: 2)

Flashbacks offer a fascinating instance of the overarching power of objective narration. They are usually motivated as mental subjectivity, since the events we see are caused by a character recalling the past. Yet once we are inside the flashback, events will typically be presented from a wholly objective standpoint. They will usually be presented in an unrestricted fashion, too, and may even include action that the remembering character could have no way of knowing. (Bordwell and Thompson 2004: 92)

In this respect, although the flashbacks are set off by Bozok's recollections in *Farewell*, they engender a representation of the past that is not 'subjectively' circumscribed but marked by the claims of 'objectivity' of narration through which 'full' access to the events can be assured. This 'objectivization' is also furthered by the way the film draws a sharp line between the narrator's present and the past events he is recounting through the utilization of different colours for different temporalities and also Bozok's voice-over narration marks the 'past-ness' of the story being told in flashbacks. This is because, as Sesonke argues, 'where the narrator's present is a relatively fixed point from which a distant past is viewed, we may get a strong sense of the passage of time and the remoteness of the past' (1980: 423). And when the narrator both describes the past and makes present-tense comments, it may combine the intimacy of close contact with the greater 'objectivity' of a distanced view (Sesonke 1980: 423). In addition to this 'de-subjectivizing' of flashbacks, in this regard, *Farewell* establishes a distinct temporal 'distance' between the past and present, and this 'distance' also operates to constitute a space from which Bozok can deliver the past to the viewers 'objectively'.

All these formal structures that work to 'objectivize' the representation of the past in *Farewell* rely on discourses that revolve around traditional historiography, and also memory and history, and its established terms of constructing 'authentic' representations of the past by adhering to 'objectivity', 'distance' and appeal to memory as a tool for reaching an absolute 'truth' about the past. In doing so, the film leaves no room for questioning whose experience and memories we 'witness' in the flashbacks and how we gain 'access' to those events, and it also disregards processes of memory, including its disruptions, omissions and confluences. This approach also privileges history as being a 'more correct' means of accessing the past by relying on discourses of traditional historiography. In this way, the cinematic devices the film deploys operate to obliterate the mediation of Bozok's narration and makes claims about 'unmediated' representations of the past to give us 'full access' to the events on which it centres. Thus, the narration in *Farewell* bears the claim of 'objectivity' inherent in conventional historiography and conventional historical representations.

To put it concisely, while the use of a character narrator with inherent subjective accounts of the past in *Farewell* might have been used as a tool for questioning the processes of memory and construction of history by calling viewers' attention to the ways the past is 'fixed' in traditional narratives by discourses on 'objectivity', *Farewell* renders the past, including events Bozok did not experience, readily accessible to the narrator and spectators. Thus, it attempts to preclude any inquiry in relation to its 'claims of truth about the past'. And in so doing, it assures the 'objective' standpoint of the narrator and does not subjectivize the past by underscoring that the story being told in the film, like any other representation of the past, is an 'interpretation' not an open window onto it. For this reason, although *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* deploy different types of narrators, they end up making similar claims about historical representation, and both work to 'objectivize' and 'fix' their representations of the past and suppress questions.

However, as re-shaping traditional narratives in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* also demonstrate, both memory and history are anything but fixed; they are constantly reshaped, re-appropriated and re-narrativized within the 'needs' of the present day. However, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* do not call attention to the ways that the past is transformed while it is constructed as narratives and histories. It treats memory, history and representation as unproblematic, 'objective' and closed fields.

The Guilt of 'Glorious' History

In her seminal essay 'Melodrama Revised', Linda Williams argues that melodrama is a modality that has infiltrated genres and served as the foundation of classical Hollywood films.

If emotional and moral registers are sounded, if a work invites us to feel sympathy for the virtues of the beset victims, if the narrative trajectory is ultimately more concerned with a retrieval and a staging of innocence than with the psychological causes of motives and action, the operative mode is melodrama. (1998: 42)

In her article she sets out the terms of a revised theory of melodrama in opposition to the more familiar notion of melodrama as a genre and traces the melodramatic modality in a variety of films including *Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915)

and *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993). By identifying directors like John Ford, Francis Ford Coppola and Steven Spielberg as melodramatic filmmakers, Williams argues that the common thread among these films is an indicator of the most distinctive characteristics of melodramatic modality: the recognition of virtue and a desire to regain a lost innocence (1998: 51-62). Like Williams, Gledhill also addresses melodrama as a formative cinematic mode, rather than as a genre, and writes that the notion of modality 'defines a specific mode of aesthetic articulation adaptable across a range of genres, across decades, and across cultures (2000: 229).

In this respect, by analysing the forms of a range of American films, Williams offers five features of the melodramatic modality. She describes the first feature of the melodramatic mode in the following terms: '[m]elodrama begins and wants to end in a space of innocence' (1998: 65). The narrative begins in a space of innocence into which the villain intrudes, and if the protagonists can return to this space of innocence, the narrative ends happily and if they do not, the film ends unhappily (Williams 1998: 65). She claims that pathos arises from the audience's awareness of the loss of an idealized past and a present suffused with this loss. Following Elsaesser's suggestion that melodrama concentrates on the point of view of the victims, Williams defines the second feature and states that '[m]elodrama focuses on victim-heroes and the recognition of their virtue' (1998: 66). Williams emphasises that 'the victim-hero of melodrama gains an empathy that is equated with moral virtue through a suffering' and this can be represented by suffering alone or by turning suffering into action. For her, 'the key function of victimization is to orchestrate the moral legibility crucial to the mode' (1998: 66). As regards the third feature, Williams observes that '[m]elodrama appears modern by borrowing from realism, but realism serves melodramatic passion and action' (1998: 67). With reference to Gledhill, Williams asserts that the mode of realism pushes toward a renewed truth and stylistic innovation, whereas melodrama's search for something lost, inadmissible, or repressed ties it to the past (1998: 68). In this way, Williams claims that problems in melodrama, such as a stern patriarchal order and a double standard which oppresses women, are not addressed and confronted as deep-seated social problems; in contrast, the narratives work to 'solve' these problems through the retrieval of the innocence of victim-heroes (1998: 68-69). Fourthly, '[m]elodrama involves a dialectic of

pathos and action – a give and take of “too late” and “in the nick of time” (Williams 1998: 69). Here, Williams notes that the feeling of something important being lost is crucial to melodrama. Time is the ultimate object of this loss and the irreversibility of time engenders the feeling of being ‘too late’; for a recognition of where true guilt and innocence lie, a ‘film must move from pathos to action and from tears that pay homage to “too late” to a rescue of that is “in the nick of time”’ (Williams 1998: 70-72). And in doing so, melodrama offers the hope that it may not be ‘too late’, that there may still be an archaic sort of virtue, and that virtue can be achieved through private individual’s heroic acts rather than revolution and change (Williams 1998: 74). For Williams, the last minute rescue, the chase or the fight ‘in the nick of time’, occupies so much time in the narrative and defies time in that it is the desired reversal of the defeat by time in the pathos of being ‘too late’ (1998: 74). By defeating time, melodrama’s ‘main thrust’ is achieved, which is the impulse to reverse time and return to the beginning (Williams: 1998: 74). However, Williams notes, instead of confronting the origins of the problem and challenging older ideologies, rescues ‘in the nick of time’ save the system wherein the problem lies and offer solutions only within the conventional ideology (1998: 75-76). Lastly, Williams states that ‘[m]elodrama presents characters who embody primary psychic roles organized in Manichean conflicts between good and evil’ (1998: 77). Here, Williams points out that it is easy to see Manichaeian characters of melodrama as lacking the depth and social texture of more realistic and psychologically nuanced characters; however, she asserts that such a view perpetuates antagonisms between melodrama and realism, casting realism as being modern and melodrama as being an archaic form of characterization (1998: 77). She emphasises that it is true that Manichaeian polarities simplify and twist real social and historical complexities and problems, and melodramatic solutions for real issues raised by the form can only occur through a perverse process of victimization (1998: 80). Yet, for Williams, what we should take into consideration is that virtuous suffering is a pathetic weapon against injustice and ‘we need to recognize how frequently it has been the melodramatic weapon of choice of American popular culture’ (1998: 80). In this respect, Williams states that melodrama has long been the alchemic process through which Americans turn their deepest sense of guilt into a testament of their virtue. Thus, the ‘perceived access of the mode may be a function of a particularly

American insistence of innocence and good, as if American national identity required a constant assertion of innocence and virtue' (Williams 1998: 81).

Furthering Williams's discussion of melodrama as a distinctively American modality, Arslan explores how melodrama operates as a modality in popular cinema in Turkey in relation to nation-building processes and modernization projects, as well as their failures (2011: 94-96). Arslan argues that nation-building involves the cultural constituents of modernity 'that led to the creation of [a] canonical culture distinct from the culture of the past' (2011: 94-95). For him, the imaginary bond of nations emerges through that what is lost in this nation-building process and thus, with reference to Williams, he states that melodrama not only 'conveys claims of innocence and purity attached to a specific national identity' but also 'inadvertently makes this claim for nationalism itself' (2011: 95). From this standpoint, Arslan stresses that melodrama can also be understood 'as part and parcel of the process of purification, pitting us against them and good against evil' and for him this makes up 'the drama of nation-building, through which its violence and crime became coded as for the greater good and thereby erasable' (Arslan 2011: 95). Accordingly, Arslan reads melodrama not as a distinctively American modality but one that shares the same topos with other modern national cultures, and he locates the melodramatic modality as one of the key figures in the study of cinema in Turkey from its emergence to the present day (2011).

More strikingly, however, both Arslan (2011) and Erdoğan (2002) state that melodrama in Turkey sets forth an ambivalent relationship with republican projects as well as imaginings of national identity. This is because, as was discussed in the previous chapter, cinema in Turkey was left out of republican reforms and instead of an 'elite culture' inflected by the state, it reflected the 'culture of masses' (Arslan 2011). From this perspective, Arslan suggests that in terms of cinema in Turkey the melodramatic modality also became indicative of the failures of modernization projects because rather than catering to such projects it exists by not belonging; in other words, it exists spontaneously and persists independently (2011: 95). On the other hand, Yeşilçam drew upon the melodramatic modality and hence offered up an ambivalent and alternative 'Turkification' with all of its political and national disputes, and it belonged to that imaginary world of nationality that the republican establishment attempted to

impose from above (Arslan 2011: 95). Thus, Arslan contends that the melodramatic modality in popular cinema in Turkey is caught between restoration and reform, progress and regress; in other words, it is caught in a constant state of transition as it runs both parallel and counter to the republican ideology (2011: 91).

Erdoğan (2002) approaches the matter in a similar fashion, and by referring to melodramas in Turkey as ‘narratives of resistance’ he contends that melodramatic films are characterized by their ambivalent relationship with projections of national identity, and particularly the process of westernization and modernization. Erdoğan grounds his contention on the idea that the melodramatic mode in popular cinema in Turkey both responds to fantasies and imaginings of national identity and culture by mimicking them on the one hand, and by resisting them on the other (2002: 260). Thus, by building on analyses of both Erdoğan and Arslan, it can be argued that melodrama as a modality not only functions within the limits of an assertion of innocence and virtue but more significantly it can be perceived in Turkey as a platform upon which national identity and the past are under constant negotiation as they both parallel and counter dominant discourses.

In light of these discussions, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* represent two notable examples that rely on the melodramatic modality to dispel the guilt of history and respond to the current negotiations about what national history *is*. In this regard, the features of the melodramatic modality, with an emphasis on the loss of a ‘golden past’ and a desire to retrieve it, function in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* through impulses to retrieve past discourses on ‘the glory’ of a national history that has been shattered through the emergence of contested narratives which have undermined discourses on ‘glory’. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, since it is impossible to reiterate entrenched discourses on the ‘monumentality’ of national history in the present day, these films seek new ways to re-appropriate the traumas of the past within the boundaries of current reformulations of history in Turkey. In this sense, by drawing upon the melodramatic modality, both films attempt to exculpate and justify the appalling practices of the nation and empire-building process.

Farewell and *Conquest 1453* strive to re-shape and re-appropriate the history of the founding of the republic and the conquest of Constantinople in two ways: first, by portraying historical personages as victim-heroes whose virtue can

be recognized through their suffering, and secondly by ‘re-writing’ history by portraying any ‘undesired components’ as formative and significant components of the nation. Consequently, instead of addressing the entrenched problems of the construction of ‘official’ histories and confronting the deplorable acts carried out during the course of the building of the empire and nation, both films seek to ‘solve’ such problems by making assertions about the innocence of their victim-heroes and their deeds, in other words, by ‘domesticizing’ these traumas. In doing so, they seek to provide a basis for coping with, and finding relief from, the guilt of history.

As regards the portrayals of historical personages as victim-heroes, *Conquest 1453* depicts Mehmed II as an outcast son, a sultan who was overthrown. Both of these factors are depicted as having a crucial impact upon Mehmed II’s personality and the courses of action he chooses. Throughout the film, Mehmed II suffers because he was never loved by his father and thus he does not know how to approach his own son, Beyazid, who will ascend the throne after him. As an overthrown Sultan, Mehmed II also suffers as he seeks to garner support from his viziers, soldiers and subjects, all of whom are sceptical about his ‘competence’ as an emperor and they regularly compare Mehmed II’s skills at ruling with those of the preceding emperor, Mehmed II’s father, and see him as an inept sultan.

In *Farewell*, young Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is portrayed as a child who is pained by his father’s death and his mother’s second marriage. As an adult, he is depicted as being displaced because he will never again see his homeland Thessaloniki and he longs for this loss throughout the film. At the same time, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is portrayed as being the victim of a failed marriage, and as the result of this, he forsakes his lover, Fikriye. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s mother foresees what his marriage with Latife will bring about and she tells Bozok to stop them from getting married, but Bozok never shares Zübeyde’s admonition with Mustafa Kemal. And towards the end of the film, after being thrown out of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s house by his wife Latife, Fikriye shoots herself and dies. Bozok then states that this tragedy brought them all to ruin, and as a result, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk suffered for months.

In the course of the suffering of both characters, their relationships with their fathers take on a special role. In the first few minutes of *Farewell* and

Conquest 1453, both Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Mehmed II lose their fathers and these losses have a great impact on their lives. *Farewell* begins with two father and son relationships: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his father Ali Rıza, and Bozok and his son Muzaffer. *Farewell* starts, in the present tense, with Bozok telling his son about his plan to commit suicide if Mustafa Kemal Atatürk dies. The past tense of the film, the first flashback, starts with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk walking in Thessaloniki with his father Ali Rıza. A few minutes later we see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk standing by his father's deathbed and, before Ali Rıza dies, he advises Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to become a soldier. Then we see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at Ali Rıza's funeral and the funeral scene fades to black. This scene is followed by people singing a sentimental song about Thessaloniki, and the film cuts to Zübeyde telling the tale mentioned in the previous section in which Mustafa lies on her lap grieving for his father's death. Following this scene, Bozok narrates that a few years later Zübeyde followed Ali Rıza's advice and we see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as an adolescent wearing a military uniform, and then he finds out about his mother's second marriage and he leaves home to live with his father's sister. Just as in this period of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's life, throughout the film we hear details about what happens to him, in other words 'the past in the present tense', as a letter addressed to Muzaffer by his father, Bozok, who will also attempt to end his life and thus leave his son 'fatherless'. To this, I should add that the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – Atatürk literally meaning the father of Turks – will leave the nation 'fatherless' as well.

Similarly, *Conquest 1453* starts with the loss of a father when Murad II, Mehmed II's father, dies. In contrast to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's father, Ali Rıza, who was attentive to his son, Murad II is portrayed as being indifferent to his son. As Mehmed II says, Murad II never loved him, no matter how much Mehmed II loved his father. Here, however, it is not the father but the son who makes a promise about the future when he vows to conquer all the lands his father was unable to add to the empire. Mehmed II then takes his father's rosary and puts it in his belt before he leaves the room.

Throughout the film, Mehmed II's relationship with his own son is also portrayed as being problematic. Beyazid wants to call Mehmed II 'father' but he is warned by his mother that he should address his father as 'my sultan'. Beyazid wants to show affection by hugging and kissing his father on the cheek, but

Mehmed II remains emotionally distant. This leads Beyazid to wonder if sultans ever love their sons. Later in the film, we see Murad II again in a flashback and Mehmed II as a child who tries to get his father to pay attention to him. However, Murad II walks past him and ignores his son. Mehmed cries, his heart broken. This flashback is triggered when Mehmed II looks at his son Beyazid and, remembering his father's indifference and callous behaviour, Mehmed II hugs and kisses his son. Here, for the first time Beyazid calls him 'father' rather than 'my sultan'.

When Mehmed II's first attempts to capture Constantinople fail, later in the film we see that his soldiers and his viziers lose belief in his will as a sultan, and Mehmed II suffers a nervous breakdown. He isolates himself in his tent and refuses to talk to anyone, and he holds his father's rosary, which he then breaks into pieces and stomps on out of anger and despair. After a while, he stops out of remorse and collects the beads so he can string them back together. After he is convinced by a religious leader that he has no other option but to conquer Constantinople as the prophet heralded, he takes the rosary from his belt, kisses it and says, 'I promise you father, I will not return before I conquer this city'. And then he pulls himself and his army together and conquers Constantinople.

In this respect, far more than focusing on the 'competence' and 'superiority' of these characters, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* underscore their 'incompetence' by positioning Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Mehmed II as suffering victim-heroes, especially with regards to their 'fatherlessness' and 'despair' as husbands, lovers and sons. In *Conquest 1453*, pathos engenders the feeling that it is 'too late' for Mehmed II to confront his father, for the past is rife with failures and traumatic experiences. However, when he pulls himself together after a period of suffering as a father and as a sultan, it is not 'too late' for him to demonstrate his competence. Thus, more than just being an impulse or a desire to return to a 'golden past', here again *Conquest 1453* promises a 'brighter future' as a reward for Mehmed II's virtuous suffering.

In *Farewell*, although in terms of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's childhood we can speak of a desire to return and defeat time – as it was notably portrayed in the ending scene with Mustafa walking towards his mother as he became younger and younger – the past depicted in the film is also not so 'golden'. Along with 'glories', the past is contaminated by pain and suffering. And in the ending scene,

although the titles at the end of the film inform us that Bozok was ‘rescued’ after he shot himself, the film does not depict ‘the last minute rescue’, namely, the ‘happy ending’. In contrast, it ends with an image of Bozok’s blood splattered over the last frame upon which the titles appear, and we hear the last word of the film, as Muzaffer shouts, ‘Father!’. Here again, by not portraying ‘the last minute rescue’ *Farewell* leaves us with the pathos of being ‘too late’ and the film concludes with an unhappy ending, thus nullifying any hopes for the future.

In these regards, a critical question emerges: What are the underlying causes that drive *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* to portray these historical personages as being in states of crisis that result in male/masculine melodramas? And what do these films tell us about the past, present and future in the ways they rely on the melodramatic modality as they position these historical personages as suffering victim-heroes? The notion that cinematic representations in Turkey since the late 1970s have been filled with suffering male victims has been addressed by numerous scholars and portrayals of masculinity in states of crises are considered to be a fundamental characteristic of contemporary cinema in Turkey (Arslan 2004; Ulusay 2004; Arslan 2011; Akbulut 2012). By referring to films that portray masculinity in states of crisis as male/masculine melodramas, these scholars ground the upsurge of such films particularly on the changes in the socio-political and economic climate in Turkey following the 1980s. For them, the changes in the late 1970s and 1980s brought about a period of the dissolution and disintegration of fantasies concerning the nation as being unified and homogenous, and this led to a questioning of identities, including masculinity (Ulusay 2004; Arslan 2004). Consequently, they observe that there has been a proliferation of a loss of ‘power’ and ‘incompetence’ in the portrayals of male characters in the majority of films in Turkey. Building on these theories, I suggest that the transformation of depictions of historical personages from ‘great’ sovereigns and soldiers to suffering victim-heroes stems from the crises of traditional narratives of the nation that this thesis deals with as these figures and their deeds are subjected to constant questioning.

Anton Kaes observes that in the late 1970s in Germany, since the belief in the future had diminished, writers and film-makers turned to a questioning of fathers and mothers in order to understand their parents’ involvement in World War II and the ways in which they either collaborated with or resisted the regime

(1989: 139-141). Consequently an autobiographical subgenre emerged which deals with fathers as representatives of German history and, as Kaes argues, often there was a questioning of fathers which implied an interrogation of German history (1989: 140-141). Although neither *Farewell* nor *Conquest 1453* turn to the 'fathers of our nation' in order to interrogate the national past, the questioning of their deeds in unconventional narratives impacts upon the portrayal of 'the fathers of our nation' in films which focus on the 'glorious' moments of history. Thus, a shift occurs in their portrayal from 'omnipotent' emperors and leaders to suffering victim-heroes.

At this point, it will be helpful to return to Williams's discussion of virtuous suffering as a recognition of innocence to help us understand the shift in representations of 'fathers of our nation'. Williams asserts that in melodrama the feeling of righteousness is achieved through the suffering of innocence (1998: 61-62). And in films like *Schindler's List*, the portrayal of historical personages as ordinary people rather than exceptional personalities relieves viewers and the nation of its historical guilt. Williams proposes that 'the greater the historical burden of guilt is the more pathetically and more actively the melodrama works to regain a loss of innocence' (1998: 61). Thus, the function of the melodramatic modality with its *victimization* of historical personages in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* can only be crystalized if we consider the context in which these films come into existence and function. The space of innocence to which these films attempt to return and is the time when it was possible to speak about a 'glorious history' of the nation without this glory being undermined by dissident voices. Today in Turkey, where pre-existing historical narratives that narrate national history as 'glorious' are being challenged and as the horrendous acts of the state in the past are being divulged, victimization by virtuous suffering emerges as a tool for dealing with this dismantling of national history and 'domesticating' traumatizing events. In this way, the films portray historical figures who have been considered to be oppressors in recent years as victims.

In relation to the deployment of victimization as a tool to cope with the guilt of history, Desser and Studlar argue in their essay 'Never Having to Say you are Sorry: Rambo' that the key strategy for displacing the crucial questions of America's involvement in Vietnam is victimization (2009). For them, films like *Rambo* and *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986) employ this key strategy to position

their characters as victim heroes and in this way they avoid confronting the painful revelations of America's involvement in Vietnam and repress a collective guilt of history. In doing so, they state, victimization serves as a powerful tool for coping with the problem of guilt because '[t]o be a victim [means] never having to say you are sorry' (2009: 146). Following Dessler and Studlar's statement, it can be argued that the portrayal of historical personages as suffering 'incompetent' victims is a means of avoiding central problems with the national past in *Farewell in Conquest 1453*, such as annihilation, massacres and the displacement of diverse ethnic groups, as well as slavery and the slaughtering of sons, fathers, and grandchildren in the name of 'protecting' and 'guarding' the state. While these representations strive to restrain the questionings of the 'fathers of the nation' by portraying them as victim-sons and victim-fathers, and in doing so relieve them of responsibility for their deeds, they also struggle to 're-write' history to relieve 'our fathers' and ourselves of the guilt of history.

As a response to the voicing of massacres and the displacement of diverse ethnic groups during the nation-building process and throughout the history of the republic, *Farewell* portrays Mustafa Kemal Atatürk not as an oppressor but as a victim who also suffers from displacement and equally traumatizing events. The film depicts the forced migration of Turks from the Balkans to Anatolia in the 1910s through Zübeyde, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's mother. Along with thousands of others, Zübeyde is forced to migrate, which brings about profound suffering and sorrow. Since he was at the front at the time and later in Istanbul, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk knew nothing about Zübeyde's whereabouts. After searching for her at mosques where immigrants gathered, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk finally finds his mother. In this scene, the camera pans across the faces of immigrants, showing us their poverty, pain and sorrow, and Mustafa peers into their faces. After he finds his mother, who is in a miserable state, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk hugs her and weeps. The issue of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's displaced status is evoked frequently in the film through songs from Thessaloniki, his conversations with his friends, and Fikriye. Zübeyde, Bozok, Fikriye and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk all long for their homeland, which one day they hope to see again. And at the end of the film, after the titles that inform us where each character is buried, another title appears: 'None of them ever saw Thessaloniki again'.

Thus, rather than depicting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk solely as a brilliant commander and powerful leader and his fellow soldiers solely as heroes, as was the case in earlier films, *Farewell* underscores their victim status by locating them in the same position as those who were displaced and were subjected to annihilation in the course of the founding of the republic.

Farewell's implied comparison of the experiences of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and those of his fellow soldiers and family, with the experiences of diverse displaced communities becomes most visible in scenes that take place in Ankara, Dumlupınar and İzmir. In Ankara, Fikriye sings a song from Thessaloniki to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and they both tell each other that they deeply long for their homeland. Following this scene, we see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk commanding his soldiers at the battle of Dumlupınar in 1922. Over these images, Bozok narrates that the Greeks were defeated on various battle fronts. This scene cuts to chaos on the streets of İzmir and we see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Bozok in a car, Turkish flags hanging out of windows, soldiers shooting their rifles, hundreds of people screaming and running away, children crying as they look for their parents and dead bodies lying on the ground. Accompanying these images we hear Bozok's voice-over narration as he continues his letter to Muzaffer, and he says, 'similar to the Turks who fled Thessaloniki ten years ago, this time the Greeks were running away from İzmir. Only those who have lost their homeland can understand what it means to be displaced. It means leaving the graves of your ancestors, your memories, your childhood, and your first loves behind. You are left with nothing but songs from your homeland that bring tears to your eyes'.

In these scenes, which start with a song from Thessaloniki that makes both Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Fikriye sentimental and ends with Bozok's comment about the songs of one's homeland, a comparison is being made between the Greeks who were forced to leave their homeland, İzmir, in the course of the founding of the republic and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, his fellow soldiers and family who were forced to leave Thessaloniki ten years before. Here again, *Farewell* responds to the raising of dissenting voices that problematize the nation-building process and it re-appropriates the acts carried out to homogenise and 'Turkify' Anatolia while victimizing the founders of the republic who implemented such practices. Unlike the historical films of Yeşilçam and earlier

films, however, Greeks are not described as ‘evil’ enemies, but rather as victims of the war ‘on equal terms’ with Turks. And their traumatic experiences are re-formulated in *Farewell* as the ‘shared’ experience of all the citizens of the nation.

In this re-appropriation of history, another significant matter in *Farewell* emerges through portrayals of Thessaloniki and the battle fronts. The first time we see Thessaloniki is in the first flashback in which Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his father talk about Mustafa’s education. As discussed earlier, the moment the flashback appears on the screen, we hear both the ezan, the Islamic call to prayer, and the ringing of church bells. Following this scene, we see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his father, Ali Rıza, leaving the mosque and then they take a walk on the streets of Thessaloniki. Over these images, Bozok says: ‘In the city of Thessaloniki in that era, Jews, Muslims and Orthodox Christians, all citizens of the Ottoman Empire, lived in peace’. In the scenes that depict the War of Çanakkale in 1915, we see soldiers on the battle front with their rifles aimed at the enemy on the opposing hill, and then in close up we see them sharing cigarettes, drinking water and waiting for the command of their general. As the camera glides among the soldiers, in a voice-over Bozok says, ‘it is hard for you to understand this now, but in the war of Çanakkale, we were a unified nation with Greeks, Armenians, Turks, Arabs, Kurds and Jews. We fought against the forces who occupied our country. Unfortunately, later on, powerful states provoked internal strife in order to destroy us and they made brothers kill each other’. Later on in the film, we see another long sequence of battle fronts in which soldiers fight and kill each other. The images of fighting soldiers dissolve into hundreds of dead bodies on the battlefield, soldiers of the Turkish army and other nations, and the camera shows their corpses in a tracking shot from a high angle for more than two minutes with Bozok’s narration about the meaninglessness and terrors of war. When Mustafa Kemal arrives at the battlefield, he sees the hundreds of corpses and is horrified by what he sees. He then tells his fellow soldiers standing next to him that ‘every war is a crime, unless it is necessary for the defence of a country’.

It becomes clear that, through the portrayal of such scenes, *Farewell* attempts to ‘domesticate’ traumatizing events, wars, displacement, annihilation and the oppression of diverse identities and re-writes the appalling practices of the national-building process as a ‘shared’ experience. In this way, it strives to come to terms with these traumas by ‘never having to say sorry’ and not calling for a

confrontation with dark moments; instead, it aims to do so by victimizing all the citizens, sovereigns and perpetrators as subjects of equally devastating traumas.

Like *Farewell*, the ending scene of *Conquest 1453* in Hagia Sophia is crucial for the re-appropriation and reshaping of history in line with the political and cultural climate in which the republican ideology and its imaginings of a singular national identity have been critiqued both by the dominant discourses of the government and unconventional takes on history. Although *Conquest 1453* does not make references to the multi-cultural character of the country as frequently as *Farewell* does, in Mehmed II's dialogue with the Orthodox Christians who will become Ottoman citizens, he stresses that from that moment on, their lives, property and destiny will be united and he states that Orthodox Christians are free to practise their religion as they wish under the rule of the Ottoman Empire; this speech addresses the 'embracing' of multiple cultures, religions and identities by the Ottoman Empire, as opposed to the republican ideology which imagined the nation as a single 'homogenous' entity.

As these scenes indicate, both *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* are re-shaped by and respond to discourses on the recognition of multiculturalism that have been implemented by the current government and the unconventional narratives that have emerged which deal with the oppression that diverse communities such as the Kurds, Armenians, Alevis, Greeks, Assyrians and Jewish people experienced in the Ottoman Empire and the republic. However, instead of confronting the dark moments of history and the practices of the state, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* attempt to purge the national history of these brutal practices by displacing the guilt of history through assertions of victimization and 'domesticizing' traumas.

In contrast to Yeşilçam films that consecrate the War of Independence, *Farewell*, with its scenes of battle fronts, reframes the War of Independence as a disaster but as a necessity to ensure the independence of the country. *Conquest 1453* reframes the siege of Constantinople as a religious 'requirement' and a 'command' of God rather than as an expression of the ambition to expand the borders of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, in contrast with Yeşilçam films, non-Turks in the state and empire are not portrayed as 'evil' and 'internal enemies' by which their displacement and massacres, in other words practices of Turkification, can be 'justified'. But just as in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*, in the majority of contemporary films, 'powerful states' are depicted as luring 'brothers' into killing

each other. In this way, such films attempt to cope with the guilt of history, of the dark moments and carrying out of horrifying acts, and thus reshape history with an emphasis on the victim status of Turks 'on equal terms' with other groups in the state and stress the 'embracing' of multiple identities. Thus, rather than confronting the core of problems with the past and constructions of national history, they embark upon a mission to 'solve' and address these questions within the constraints of conventional ideologies.

Tessa Morris-Suzuki observes a similar embracing of multiple identities in the official representations of national identity in Japan, which she refers to as 'cosmetic multiculturalism' (2002). With this term, she suggests that there is 'a vision of national identity in which diversity is celebrated, but only under certain tightly circumscribed conditions' (2002: 171). In this regard, she argues that diversity is desired only in terms of a narrowly defined vision of 'culture' and she claims that Japan introduced laws in support of the preservation of various cultures, including their dances, songs, and legends but not the memory of their struggles and civil rights. For that reason, she argues that 'diversity is accepted on condition that it remains essentially a form of exterior decoration that does not demand major structural changes to existing institutions' and she maintains that the 'growing acceptance of cultural difference is accompanied by increasing pressures for the visibility of "different" to earn acceptance by visible displays of their loyalty to the nation' (2002: 171).

Morris-Suzuki's claims about 'cosmetic multiculturalism' are applicable to conventional representations of history in Turkey today. Even though traditional narratives about the nation have changed shape and multiple identities have been acknowledged in recent years, the oppression of diverse communities and representations of these matters are negotiated in dominant narratives only through attempts to 'domesticize' traumatizing events as 'shared' experiences. Diversity, as Morris-Suzuki explains, is only desired when multiple identities remain loyal to the nation. As *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* demonstrate, with the transformation of conventional stories, multiple identities become part of the traditional narratives of the nation, not, however, via subjects of annihilation and oppression in the hands of the state but by 'loyal' citizens who fought with the 'enemy' like any other Turkish citizen would but then were 'tricked' by 'external forces'.

In brief, in this chapter I argued that since the mid-1990s, cinematic representations concerning conventional stories about the national past in Turkey have started to depart from earlier historical films and the discourses that are attached to them. *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*, in this respect, demonstrate the impossibility of reiterating pre-existing discourses on history which are shaped by the shattering of the grand narrative of Turks and the emergence of unconventional narratives of history. However, although these films depart from entrenched historical representations in Turkey, they rely on and deploy traditional discourses of historiography and filmic representations of history; all the cinematic devices in both films work to ‘objectivize’ the stories that the films tell and render them as an ‘open window’ onto the past, a window through which the ‘truth’ of history can be facilely and seamlessly ‘accessed’. In doing so, both films impede a stimulation of critical thinking about the past and its representations, and also aim to suppress questions rather than raising them. And by resting on melodramatic modality, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* portray denied identities as intrinsic constituents of the nation and depict once ‘omnipotent’ sovereigns, soldiers and citizens as victim-heroes. Instead of confronting entrenched problems concerning historical narration and traditional narratives, however, these films attempt to dispel the burden of the guilt of history by portraying historical personages and soldiers as victims who suffer from equally traumatizing events and are in states of crisis. As regards coming to terms with the dark moments of the past, *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* seek out ways to ‘domesticize’ traumatizing events and exonerate the appalling practices of the state. Thus, instead of offering up unconventional histories with their departures from earlier historical representations in Turkey, both films strive to re-shape dominant national narratives in line with the needs of the present day and produce ‘re-edited’ versions of conventional histories.

In this context, the following chapters of this thesis will explore other ways in which the dark moments of national history, the traumas, are dealt with in contemporary historical films in Turkey.

CHAPTER 4

TRAUMA AS HISTORY:

The Breath and Pains of Autumn

In *Memory, History, Nation*, Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone set forth the intimate relation between memory and history in which ‘memory both underpins and undermines the national narrative’ (2006: 169-174). They observe that on the one hand memory is at the heart of nationalist struggles, transmitted from one generation to the next as a sacred injunction, and on the other, it is associated with the notion of contestation, since constructing a narrative of the nation ‘implies a large task of suppression and denial of incongruous or undesirable elements’ (2006: 170). Thus, they argue, ‘[t]he materials available must be constantly reworked to cope with changing priorities, changing national boundaries, changing social and ethnic compositions’ (2006: 169-170). And in this manner, national narratives can be constructed from very different positions; for instance, a new postcolonial nation does not tell its story in the same way as an old empire, and likewise a stateless nation remembers a very different past from the one that is taught at schools of the state ‘which impede their access to national realisation’ (2006: 170).

In Turkey, as discussed in the previous chapters, the process described by Hodgkin and Radstone played a crucial role in the formulations of a new national narrative for the Republic of Turkey in the 1920s, and it spanned the subsequent decades. The construction of a new national narrative for the new nation-state involved denying and suppressing the memory of the multicultural Ottoman past and concomitantly implementing a narrative for the Turks that was rife with ‘glories’ and ‘supremacy’. In line with an ideology of the republic that imagines the nation as a ‘homogenous’ and ‘unified’ entity and the national past as a set of ‘glorious’ moments, historical productions in Turkey until the mid-1990s, apart from a few instances, projected the state’s official takes on history by constantly reminding the nation of its struggle for independence, victories, and the conquests and triumphs of Turks, while leaving the memories of ‘unsettling moments’ and ‘unwanted components’ aside. In addition to the dominant ideology of the state, as it is discussed in the second chapter, film scholars have linked this to firm

government control and the censorship on cinematic works through which any attempt to question strictly circumscribed notions of national identity and history were suppressed. As a result, while victories, conquests and triumphs stood out as the main themes of filmic representations of history, traumatic events, such as the ruthless aspects of the nation-building process and harrowing experiences of diverse groups in the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey, were completely ignored.

Since the mid-1990s, however, different versions of the past have been addressed in cinema, and the traumatic episodes of the national past and memories of the 'undesired components' have become prominent themes in the cinema of Turkey. With the emergence of recent historical films, dark memories of the national past, such as the catastrophic episodes of the nation-building process, gruesome practices of 'Turkification', workings of the 'guardians of the state' and suppression of the 'unwanted components', have pervaded cinematic representations and challenged the 'Turkish grand narrative'. Suppressed and denied identities, such as those of the Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Alevi and Assyrians, together with their memories, the memory of the military interventions, massacres of diverse communities, the war in Kurdistan, experiences of exile, forced migrations, displacements and assassinations, all carried out in the name of 'protecting the unity of the nation', have been taken to the big screen; in other words, traumatic episodes that are disavowed by the state have become the main topics of contestation about the past. While these cinematic representations started to become prominent in the 1990s and increased dramatically in the 2000s, film scholars have claimed that these films represent a new cinema in Turkey and argue that one of the most prominent characteristics of this new cinema is the narration of memories with a distinct mode of problematization as well as depictions of crises of national identity and belonging.¹ These scholars contend

¹A look at the recent publications on cinema in Turkey reveals that the central question that scholars have grappled with revolves around memory and the national past. Suner's book *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory* (2010), Gönül Dönmez-Colin's book *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance, Belonging* (2008), Senem Duruel-Erkılıç's chapter on cinema in Turkey following the 2000s 'History and Identity in Turkish Cinema Following the 2000s' (2012) as well as various articles that observe a 'new cinema' in Turkey after the mid-1990s all place the question of identity and memory at the centre of their analyses (see Arslan 2009; Suner 2002; Suner 2009; Gökçe 2009; Mersin 2010; Yüksel 2012).

that new cinema in Turkey marks a return to notions of remembering and forgetting again and again in relation to coming to terms with the national past. And from this perspective, they maintain that recent films can be considered to be unprecedented enterprises in the cinema of Turkey that aim at constituting a space of resistance to the hegemonic discourses on history through memory (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012: 168-169) and reveal tensions, anxieties and dilemmas around the questions of belonging, identity, and memory in contemporary Turkey (Suner 2010: 1). Such an upsurge in cinematic representations that focus on trauma, memory, remembering and forgetting can be associated with the changes in the political, social and cultural atmosphere in Turkey following the 1980s, an era in which one can observe a dissolution of republican ideals based on imaginings of a homogenous national identity, and thus discourses on the 'glorious' history began to be challenged in a profound way (Robins and Aksoy 2000; Gürbilek 1992; Gürbilek 2001; Ulusay 2004; Suner 2010; Özyürek 2007; Arslan 2011; Öktem 2011). In the 2000s, a significant change in the politics in Turkey occurred, as related to the European integration process, 'Democratic Initiatives', the increase in the number of Kurdish parliamentarians and mayors through the Peace and Democracy Party's (BDP) success in local and national elections, the discovery of mass graves mainly in Kurdistan where people who had disappeared while under detention were buried, the peace talks between the PKK and the state, the *Ergenekon* Case and the governments' acknowledgement of some of the horrifying crimes committed by the state, such as the massacres of Alevis in Dersim in 1938, and its denying of others, such as the Armenian genocide in 1915. This proliferation of challenges to the state's official takes on national narrative and identity have transpired in the cultural scene as well, as seen in television programmes, art exhibitions, language courses for languages that had previously been banned and suppressed, music and literature, mass protests, and commemorations. And all this mobility in the political, social and cultural scene places one issue at the centre of all debates: a need for a confrontation with the national past and ways that the national past is constructed as history.

From this perspective, cinematic representations of traumatic pasts play a pivotal role in keeping memories alive in this drive for confrontation. During their production and after their release, historical films that focus on traumatic experiences have triggered heated debates in a broader sense about the events they

depict. As I will discuss shortly, survivors of these experiences have appeared on television and shared their narratives with the public, historians have written reviews of films' treatments of events and politicians, and military figures holding high posts have watched these films and shared their thoughts on television programs and in newspapers. It is notable that through the agency of these films these 'undisputable' taboos have become disputable as the nation has come face to face with stories of the past that are not 'glorious' but traumatic. And although it is profoundly significant that these traumatic moments and contested versions of the national past have become one of the main topics of discussion in Turkey, seeing these debates as being sufficient and stopping here would be unproductive. At this point, it is necessary to take one step further and open up new questions in terms of how traumatic pasts can be communicated and disputed through filmic representations.

In this regard, I contend that while some films bring about a will to history for silenced groups within the nation and try to turn disavowed traumas of the past into history in a conventional sense, others reflect on the nature of trauma and its association with historiography. As I will explore in the next chapter, the latter problematizes the *accessibility* of the traumatic past by reflecting on the various ways history is constructed as a narrative and thus engenders critical thinking about the past. This chapter delves into the former tendency, films which treat the cinematic representation of traumatic moments as an 'open' window onto the past and thus seek to re-construct and re-form a traditional *history* out of the events they narrate. From this standpoint, I will analyse two recent films, *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn*, which focus on the Pogrom of 6-7 September in 1955 and the war in Kurdistan in 1993, and I will argue that although these films seem unconventional in the context of previously available representations of history because they narrate different pasts, a close formal analysis will bring forward the ways they seek to narrate traumas as conventional *histories*. To begin with, instead of addressing the deep-seated questions about traumatic experiences and their irretrievability, both films seamlessly seek to access and extract the 'buried truth' about the past so that it can be recovered and then supplemented as a part of national history. In other words, they seek to retrieve the catastrophic events of the past in order to re-insert them as 'missing pieces' in the narrative of the nation. In this respect it can be argued that *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* aim at re-

mastering these traumatic moments of the national past as *history* by *fixing* them on film. In doing so, they do not reflect on the nature of the traumatic experiences, in which accessibility to the original event and reinstalling it as a part of a narrative are considered to be profound challenges. At the same time, these films do not reflect on history as a construction or lay bare the role of the dominant ideologies in forming a national narrative but treat history as a field which happens to have shortcomings and missing pieces that can be recovered and re-inscribed sooner or later. And as for recovering the ‘missing pieces’ of the past and turning them into history, *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn*, along with other films that set forth a similar tendency, rely on the medium of film itself in relation to the presumption that cinema can fix the ‘realities’ of the world on film as ‘they are’. Thus, they adopt a reflexive form that calls attention to their own existence and the operations of the film medium with discourses attached to it as regards its ‘ability’ to capture and fix the ‘realities’ of the world and its status of ‘being there’ as a witness.

In this context, in what follows I will first dwell on the discussions of films in Turkey, in which a will to history can be observed. In this respect, criticisms and appraisals of *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* centre on their ‘inadequacy’ or ‘capability’ in representing the ‘realities’ of traumatic events. Some praise these films because they ‘show’ the ‘reality’ of the war and the Pogrom of 6-7 September, whereas others criticize them for not showing ‘enough’ and ‘distorting’ ‘historical reality’. This can be understood within the context of a need for confrontations with the unacknowledged and disavowed moments of the past and ‘reinstalling’ these events as crucial moments of national history. Clearly, all the debate on these films’ representations of the war in Kurdistan and Pogrom of 6-7 September articulate that the ‘reality’ of these episodes need to be narrated, uncovered and exposed so that they can be given meaning and assimilated into the national narrative.

To problematize this approach I will move on to explore theories on trauma that question the representability and accessibility of catastrophic experiences and their resonance in both film studies and practice. By analysing the formal structures of both films, I will argue that *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* with their realist and reflexive forms go against the grain of questions with which scholars, filmmakers and visual artists grapple as regards how trauma can be

represented and narrated. I will contend that in so doing both films completely rely on the film medium to provide spectators with an ‘omnipotent’ narration and hence locate them as external observers who can ‘witness’ the ‘reality’ of these traumatic events. In this way, I will suggest that the reflexive structure both films adopt functions not as a means for questioning the construction of history, nor does it open up its relationship to traumatic experiences. By relying on historical representation as an open window onto the past and discourses on the medium of film as regards its ability to record ‘reality’, *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* aim to fix trauma, the inaccessible past, as *history* and thus they preclude a critical engagement with the past and its construction as history.

Although these films rely on the tools that provide history with the authority to speak about the past such as ‘authenticity’, being ‘external observers’ and a ‘mastery of the past’, I will contend that *The Breath*, to a certain extent, departs from these claims and unintentionally emerges as a traumatic text by the way it oscillates between claims of ‘authentic’ representation of the ‘reality’ of the war and its formal structure that undermines these claims. This chapter will then conclude with a discussion of the notion that, regardless of *The Breath*’s split formal structure, both films seek to produce ‘solid’ knowledge from the inaccessible events of the national past and aim to narrativize, and historicise, traumatic events to make it possible to obtain the authority to speak about the past.

The Will to History

Released in 2009, when it became one of the highest grossing films of the year,² *Pains of Autumn* is the last film of a trilogy through which Tomris Giritlioğlu sought to bring the traumatic moments of the national past to the screen. The first film of the trilogy, *Suyun Öte Yanı / The Other Side of the Water* (Tomris Giritlioğlu, 1991), centred on the trauma of the 12th September coup d’état and the ‘population exchange’ between Turkey and Greece in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, and the second film, *Salkım Hanım’ın Taneleri / Mrs. Salkım’s Diamonds* (Tomris Giritlioğlu, 1999), focused on the wealth tax levied

² In Turkey, 576,428 tickets were sold for *Pains of Autumn* and the film became the seventh highest grossing national production in 2009. See <http://www.boxofficeturkiye.com/turkfilmleri/?yil=2009&yilop=tum> [Accessed: 24th June 2014]

on non-Muslim citizens in the 1940s. *Pains of Autumn* concentrates on the Pogrom of 6-7 September and narrates the story of Behçet, a nationalist research assistant, and Elena, a Greek prostitute, during the turmoil of events that took place in Istanbul in 1955. Behçet is the son of a wealthy landowner from the south of Turkey and is involved in politics, especially through the nationalist Cyprus is Turkish Association which was well-known for its contributions to the Pogrom of 6-7 September. Behçet's neighbour, Elena, whose mother left her when she was a child, lives with her grandmother who also acts as Elena's go-between. Behçet watches Elena through his window, and Elena, knowing that Behçet is peering at her, encourages him by leaving the curtains open and looking back at him. One day Elena comes face to face with Behçet in the streets of Beyoğlu and soon after they fall in love. But Behçet is engaged to Nemika and is close to her father, Kenan, whom we understand to have close relations with the state and its clandestine organizations. Kenan ultimately takes part in the organization of the Pogrom while also playing a role in the assassinations of various dissidents such as Suat, Behçet's best friend, who defines himself as a communist, and Ömer Saruhan, the owner of a right wing newspaper who is opposed to the government's policies.

Suat is also a research assistant at a university and the son of Behçet's family's butler who had died. Suat was raised by Behçet's father and thinks of Behçet as a brother, despite their sharply conflicting political opinions. After Behçet's father-in-law Kenan organised the assassination of Ömer Saruhan with the help of his henchman İsmet at Elena's apartment, Suat gets suspicious and secretly investigates Ömer Saruhan's death. Meanwhile, Behçet helps his father-in-law, and indirectly the state, by informing on his communist and dissident colleagues and other students. Even though Behçet seems unwilling to inform on Suat, he ends up giving his name. And in this way, as the result of Suat's investigation of Ömer Saruhan's death through which he discovers that Ömer Saruhan was poisoned, Suat becomes the target of Kenan and İsmet and is beaten to death by members of the Cyprus is Turkish Association. Suat is beaten in front of Behçet, but Behçet does not try to do anything to stop it but runs away in tears.

While his relationship with Elena evolves, however, Behçet seems to change and reconsider his political views, but he never rebels against his father or his father-in-law, although he starts to understand their involvement in the

assassinations, and he sees Elena and his father-in-law as they are having sex. Towards the end of the film as the pogrom takes place, Behçet faces his father and tells him that he loves Elena, and says that he is not interested in the life his father had contemplated for him, but Elena is killed by İsmet. The film ends with Behçet carrying Elena's dead body on the plundered streets of Beyoğlu in the course of the pogrom. This image cuts to archival photographs of the Pogrom of 6-7 September and after a while the credits appear adjacent to these photographs. At the end of the credit sequence, a list appears which illustrates in numerical values the damage brought about by the pogrom.

Released in the same year as *Pains of Autumn*, in 2009 *The Breath* also became one of the highest grossing films of the year.³ *The Breath*, subtitled 'Vatan Sağolsun' which can be roughly translated as 'long live the homeland' hints at the story in the film. 'Vatan Sağolsun' is a phrase generally uttered when soldiers die fighting in the name of the fatherland or motherland so that the country can live on. The film is set in Turkey in 1993 at a patrol station in the mountains near the Iraqi border in Karabal. It centres on the war between the Turkish Army and the PKK and narrates the experiences of 40 soldiers, as well as their commander lieutenant, Mete. As part of a cross-border operation carried out by the military, lieutenant Mete and a few soldiers are sent to Karabal Station. When Mete arrives, he finds the soldiers asleep and, from that moment on, he constantly reminds them of their fate: they are doomed to die fighting an enemy they have never seen.

In long montage sequences, the film depicts the daily lives of the soldiers, clashes with the PKK, their operations as well as their personal conversations, the ways they entertain themselves, and their relationships with their families, friends and loved ones back home through conversations on the phone. Over these images, Mete narrates the experiences of the soldiers in remote mountains where they have been assigned to protect the fatherland and he questions the meaning of the war, on the one hand, while also accepting the necessity of protecting the homeland. A long shot of the bust of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Turkish flag waving next to it appears repeatedly in the film, with the Turkish flag torn – due

³ *The Breath* sold 2,419,136 tickets in Turkey and became the third highest grossing national production in 2009. See <http://www.boxofficeturkiye.com/turkfilmleri/?yil=2009&yilop=tum> [Accessed: 24th 2014]

to the strong wind in the mountains – and the bust is covered with dust and snow. Throughout the film, soldiers clean the bust of Atatürk and at the same time replace the torn Turkish flag with new ones. Yet, no matter what they do, the flag keeps tearing. Apart from a Kurdish soldier who fights for the Turkish Army and a few Kurdish guerrillas, such as a woman who was shot and brought to the station for treatment, as well as a few men in the mountains and dead bodies in clashes, Kurds are never seen on-screen. But the voice of the leader of the guerrillas, a.k.a. the Doctor, frequently resonates in the film as he speaks over the radio and talks with Mete about the war, the state's appalling practices in Kurdistan, why he joined the PKK and why Mete is in the army. The film ends with a long sequence of a clash between the guerrillas and soldiers at the patrol station that ends with Mete and the Doctor killing each other, as well as the death of many soldiers and guerrillas, although a few of them survive.

In contrast with the linear narration in *Pains of Autumn* which, apart from the scene in the beginning of the film, is structured in a way that centres on the pogrom of 6-7 September as a story with a beginning, middle and an end, *The Breath* adopts a fragmented narration by flashing back and forward in time, with sounds disjointed from the images in long montage sequences. I shall return to this point as I analyse the formal structure of both films, but at this point it would be helpful to look at the notes of production in *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* and the controversy about these films' portrayals of catastrophic moments. In this regard, discourses on 'reality', 'truth' and 'authenticity', and the 'ability' of the film medium to recover these dark moments of the national past, reverberate in interviews with the cast and crew members of the films and in reviews, critiques, and public announcements. Thus, an exploration of these discourses will demonstrate that regardless of the divergent views in existence, there is consensus among every contention: a will to history.

The Breath is based on a book written by a former soldier, Hakan Evrensel, who served in the Turkish military in the 1990s near the south-eastern border. Evrensel, who also wrote the script for *The Breath*, states that the stories he narrates in his book, and also in *The Breath*, are based on his own experiences of the war (Bildirici 2012). And in an interview with the cast and crew members of *The Breath*, the assistant director of the film, Hande Güzide Türkel, states that the director of the film, Levent Semerci, decided to make a film about the war in

the southeast of Turkey after long deliberations with soldiers who served for the military in various parts of the region (Berköz-Ünyay 2009b). In the same interview, Türkel explains that they avoided working with well-known actors to make the film more 'believable'. The actors noted they were trained as soldiers at a base by three sergeants for 50 days. They said that at the base they were given military uniforms and rifles and their mobile phones were taken away, they slept in wards and woke up at 5.30 every morning, did their daily training, were assigned guard duties, cleaned the base on a daily basis and slept at 21.30. They were not allowed to watch television or read newspapers. Moreover, to make them feel the hierarchy in the military, the actors who played low-ranking soldiers slept in the wards whereas actors playing their commanders stayed in private rooms, and all the actors used their real names in the film (Berköz-Ünyay 2009b).

The actors go on to state that they also met real soldiers who fought in the war and listened to their experiences. The film was shot in the mountains at an altitude of 2,365 metres where there was a patrol station (Berköz-Ünyay 2009b). Notably, during the shooting of the film, the actors did not see their families, friends and their loved ones for a long period of time, and the scenes in *The Breath* in which soldiers are depicted as talking with their families and friends on the phone were filmed when the actors were actually talking with their own families and friends (Berköz-Ünyay 2009b).

It is evident that all these techniques used by the cast and crew members of *The Breath* sought to bring about an 'authentic' and 'realistic' representation of the war, that would provide the film with the 'authority' to speak about the past. The assistant director's description of the film confirms this intention as she explains that while showing the painful realities of the war,

The film does not have any political message. [In *The Breath*] we mirrored and showed what is taking place in the southeast [of Turkey], nothing more. People [in Turkey] had some knowledge about [what is going on in] the southeast, the patrol stations at the borders, the soldiers, the martyrs and the war. We took them into the patrol station and gave them an opportunity to observe what is happening. We basically told them, 'Go inside and take a look at what is taking place there with your own eyes'. (Berköz-Ünyay 2009b)

The cast and crew members of the film emphasized that they achieved this goal, because, after the release of the film, real soldiers who fought in the war

approached them and confirmed that *The Breath* showed people in Turkey what words could not tell in 20 years, and many spectators asked them whether the actors in the film were real soldiers (Berköz-Ünyay 2009b). Further confirmation of the ‘authentic’ representation of the war came from politicians, generals and the Chief of General Staff of the Turkish Army of the time, İlker Başbuğ, as he stated that the film accurately reflected the events taking place in the southeast (*Milliyet* 2009).

Critical responses to *The Breath*’s representation of the war in Kurdistan and the harrowing experiences of the war has sparked conflicting views in terms of whether *The Breath* is an anti-militarist film that demonstrates the meaninglessness of war or a militarist and nationalist film that consecrates the military (Çelik 2009). Interestingly, these debates also revolved around the questions of authenticity and representation of reality, as the film was praised and criticized on the grounds of both what it ‘showed’ and what it did not ‘show’. Some critics praised the film and described it as ‘illustrating the hard-core reality of the politically and geographically hazardous East’ (Yıldırım 2009) and suggested that the film ‘can be regarded as an instructive documentary on the tough conditions soldiers must face for the sake of the nation’ (Çelik 2009). From another perspective one critic criticized *The Breath* for being irresponsible as regards the film’s insistence on a ‘realistic’ representation, because, the critic explains, the film depicts one soldier speaking freely in Kurdish to his mother on the phone in the climate of the 1990s when, let alone in the army but even at cafeterias at universities, it was common to lower your voice when uttering the word ‘Kurd’ (Gökçe et al. 2008).

In an interview, the actors and the director stated that the ‘mission’ of *Pains of Autumn* was to remind younger generations about the ‘forgotten’ incident of the Pogrom of 6-7 September and provoke them to ‘refresh’ their memories (Bakış 2008). To achieve an authentic representation of the Pogrom of 6-7 September, *Pains of Autumn* was shot on location, in Beyoğlu, a part of Istanbul where the pogrom mainly took place. The actors talked to the witnesses of the events to prepare for their parts, and those who played Greek characters were coached by Greek instructors for their dialogues in Greek and also so they could speak Turkish with a Greek accent (Akman 2009). Zeliha Berksoy, who plays Elena’s grandmother, wore her mother’s jewellery from the 1950s and the

costumes of the film were designed based on the fashion of the 1950s (Berköz-Ünyay 2009a). The film uses archival photographs taken in the course and aftermath of the event and the director of *Pains of Autumn*, Tomris Giritlioğlu, explains that the reason she added the original photographs at the end of the film was to ‘show’ what ‘really’ happened in the Pogrom of 6-7 September while at the same time point out that the atrocity of the original event was much worse than it is depicted in the film (Akman 2009). One of the extras in the film was the daughter of a survivor who was circumcised during the events and Tomris Giritlioğlu informs us that this person expressed the sentiment that it was immensely important that their story was finally being told (Akman 2009). Similar to discourses that revolve around the production of *The Breath*, all these details suggest a desire to emphasize the ‘authenticity’ of *Pains of Autumn* in its ‘representation’ of the pogrom.

However, more than praise for its ‘authenticity’, *Pains of Autumn* was mainly criticized for its ‘insufficiency’ in representing the historical ‘reality’ of the pogrom. Eren Yüksel, for instance, suggests that *Pains of Autumn* does not analyse the events of the time and the political climate that led to the pogrom, elucidate the connections between the pogrom and the state, or indicate the figures behind the Cyprus is Turkish Association (2012: 21). After itemizing the features of the film’s narrative, such as its focus on individuals, impossible love story and its melodramatic ‘excessiveness’, Yüksel argues that the film severs the Pogrom of 6-7 September from the historical context (2012: 21-22). Thus, she maintains, the only relation film establishes with historical ‘reality’ occurs with the depiction of archival photographs and the list appearing at the end of the film through which we are informed about the massive amount of damage brought about by the event (2012: 21-22). Nevertheless, Yüksel finds the list ‘inadequate’ as well because, for him, it only shares information about the vandalized property of the ‘minorities’ and skips over the killings, rapes and the number of people who left the country in the aftermath of the event (2012: 22).

Similarly, Dilek Güven notes that *Pains of Autumn* does not narrate the historical background of the pogrom and posits the Cyprus issue as the cause of the events. Yet, she writes, this is the official discourse of the state, and to pave the way for a confrontation with history it would have been ‘more accurate’ if the film narrated the pogrom as a part of the ethnic homogenization of Turkey (Güven

2009). Serhan Mersin also examines the representation of the pogrom in *Pains of Autumn* in terms of ‘historical reality’ and argues, like Güven and Yüksel, that he finds the film ‘inadequate’ (2010). Mersin takes up scenes from the film, such as the scene in which we hear on the radio about the bombing of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s childhood home in Thessaloniki by the Greeks – which was a hoax – and argues that although the film implies the state’s involvement in the organization and staging of the pogrom through such scenes, it quickly skips through this ‘reality’ yet ‘in fact’, he points out, this incident was the major driving force that incited the pogrom (2010: 22-23). Thus, he suggests that the film cannot be considered as representation of the entire ‘historical reality’ but as a certain interpretation of it (2010: 23).

Despite the film’s supposed ‘inadequacy’ in representing the historical ‘reality’ of the pogrom, all these critics appreciate *Pains of Autumn* by stating that it has stimulated a heated debate on an ignored and disavowed moment of the national past. This approach corresponds to Tomris Giritlioğlu’s remark that by making *Pains of Autumn* her intention was to provide a platform upon which a confrontation with the past could be set up (Arman 2013) and push spectators to read more about the event in order to ‘complete’ the fragments of history that are not recovered in the film (Akman 2009). The script-writer of the film Etyen Mahçupyan, also ascribes a similar ‘mission’ to *Pains of Autumn* by pointing out that ‘[b]ecause there’s been a vacuum and this issue was never discussed, the film now fulfils an important mission’ (*Today’s Zaman* 2009). Yet, more remarkably, the spokesperson of the Greek Orthodox Church in Istanbul, Dositheos Anagnostopoulous, commented on the film by defining the Pogrom of 6-7 September as their Kristallnacht, referring to the Nazi pogrom of 1938, and stated that the Turkish youth ‘need to learn that this catastrophe occurred, [and] that is why the film is important’ (*Today’s Zaman* 2009).

All these contestations about *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* suggest that although it is quite important to ‘remember’ the dark moments of the national past through filmic representations, remembering alone is not enough. Something more ‘solid’ and ‘permanent’ is needed to accommodate these horrendous experiences in the national narrative, to shape and ‘freeze’ them in order to render their representations indissoluble. Here a will to history emerges with a desire for these events to be discussed in the context of history. Thus, what is needed

appears in accordance with conventional ways of doing history, via tools that can secure these representations as ‘accurate’ and ‘authentic’. Since these events have long been ignored, disavowed and practically excluded from the national narrative, one can infer that an ‘accurate’ representation is needed to ‘authorize’ their narrations not as traumatic *memory* but as *history*. That is why at the heart of discourses about these films, those means which provide history with the authority to speak about the past, such as ‘historical reality’, ‘truth’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘accuracy’ tend to prevail. And when these films are seen as falling short of fulfilling these ‘needs’, a tendency towards ‘filling out’ the gaps in the films can be found in reviews, public statements and even in the interviews with the cast and crew members.

In this way, almost each discussion on *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* turns into a ‘historical narrative’ which brings up the number of people who died in the pogrom and the war, details about the atrocities diverse communities have been subjected to, and the role of the state in organizing and then disowning these dark moments. And these details are supported either by reference to the works of historians or the testimonies of survivors. In other words, in line with the films’ aim of fixing the trauma of the pogrom and the war as history, a goal that resonates with an emphasis on actions taken for the sake of delivering an ‘authentic’ representation, critical responses to these films also seek to ‘reveal’ further ‘missing pieces’ so that the narration of these traumas can be ‘completed’ and assimilated into the national narrative. In this regard, the discussions that circulate around *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* in relation to what they render ‘visible’ and what remains ‘invisible’ seep in as a will to history that can be interpreted as a desire to fix these moments in an indissoluble way through ‘authentic’ ‘realistic’ and ‘accurate’ representations of the original event.

However, the will to history and the re-shaping of trauma as history establish a hierarchy between traumatic memory and history. And in this hierarchy history prevails and memory is subordinate. As the quotes above regarding the production of *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* and their reception illustrate, concepts that are associated with memory – such as remembering, forgetting, denial, trauma and silence – recur in discussions about traumatizing events that the films are based on and in terms of their filmic representations. Memory and the concepts associated with it are profoundly complex and, as the

field of memory studies indicates, they demand close attentiveness particularly in terms of their intricate relationship with history. But in their circulation in the debates on *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath*, these concepts and their elaborate relationship with history are taken for granted, and memory is treated as a means that assists history in the process of forming an ‘unmediated’ window onto the past.

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the field of history, with the agency of its claims to ‘accuracy’ and ‘objectivity’, is conventionally considered to be an ‘open window’ onto the past. The authority of history, backed by such claims, has been shaken by postmodern historians and at the same time an appeal to memory has become a popular means of contesting ‘official’ versions of the past. In relation to the concepts of memory and history, it can be argued that *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn*, as well as the critical responses about them, appeal to traumatic memory to undermine traditional discourses on what national history *is* and tell stories that challenge the ‘official’ version of the national narrative. Here, in particular, the memories of the survivors are treated as repositories of a ‘truth’ that can speak about the events which are excluded from the historical records. And relying on the memories of the survivors and witness testimonies ‘authenticates’ the stories both films tell.

Like history, however, as seen in the first chapter, the authority of memory in delivering the ‘truth’ about the past has also been challenged. Nevertheless, in reliance on ‘true’ memories and discourses on authenticity, the claims of history, of conveying ‘historical reality’, reverberate. And in this respect, contested-memories do not function as a means for dismantling the ‘authority’ of traditional history which disavows these horrendous events. On the contrary, relying on the same tools that provide traditional history with ‘authority’ and adapting them to re-inscribe its ‘missing pieces’ further consolidates traditional history’s discourses on being an ‘open’ window onto the past. This is because the more ‘missing pieces’ are disclosed to re-install and assimilate them into the national narrative, history is thought to be in, or at least nearing, a state of ‘completion’. In *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn*, as well as the debates they engender, memory is therefore perceived as being in the service of history to be construed, substantiated, and then utilized as a segment of the national narrative. This is the goal both films aim to fulfil through a will to history. And this will and desire for

history suggests that memory can only acquire meaning once it is fixed and assimilated into the realm of history.

Such a formalization of the concepts of memory and history establishes a rigid hierarchy between them that recapitulates the conventional approaches which conceive of memory as a subjective, unstable, fallible, and volatile way of engaging with the past and history as a solid, reliable and permanent reconstruction of that past. From this perspective, Pierre Nora suggests that memory and history appear to be in fundamental opposition (1989: 8) and thus '[a]t the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it' (1989: 9). As with *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn*, the will to history can also be interpreted as a suppression of memory, as it circumscribes the realm of memory with the conventional tools of history. Restricting memory's means of engaging with the past to those that belong to conventional history implies the inferior treatment of memory compared to history, even when memory is not considered to be fallible but 'authentic'.

In relation to the will to history, a set of other questions arise which are pertinent to the temporality of memory and history, and conventional associations of memory with impermanency and history with permanency. An opposition between memory and history is also perceived here, as memory is usually associated with the present, while history is associated with the past. Nora states that because memory is alive in the present, it is considered to be a bond tying us to the present, while history, because its object of study is past events, is conceived as being a representation of the past (1989: 8). William Guynn furthers this view and argues that '[h]istory conceives of time as rupture and studies, at a retrospective distance, social groups as they change over time. Memory is living and continuous; history is discontinuous, cut into periods, over and done with' (Guynn 2006: 172). In terms of the opposition regarding permanency and impermanency, as Hodgkin and Radstone point out, memory is commonly considered to be impermanent because memory dies along with the bearer of memory (2006: 9). And because it is fixed, history is perceived as being permanent: 'history traditionally might have been seen as that which replaces memory, as generations replace one another' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 9). The desire to fix traumatic memory as history in *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath*,

in this respect, is moulded by corresponding to these concerns, and here it can be inferred that a will to history is a will to arrest the memory of the past and fix it by incorporating it into the realm of history. However, as I argued in the previous chapter, and as was seen in chapter one, history, like memory, is also anything but fixed. It is reshaped and re-appropriated in line with the politics and discourses of the present day. Thus, if memory is about the present, so is history.

In this respect, establishing a rigid opposition and a hierarchy between memory and history translates into ignoring the intrinsic questions pertinent to the process whereby the past is communicated through memory and history. It also impedes a critical engagement with the process in which the past is constructed as memory and history and their relation with the entrenched and transforming discourses on the past. In this way, by adopting conventional discourses on memory, history and representation, *The Breath and Pains of Autumn* and the responses to the ways they represent the traumatic episodes of the past hinder us in re-thinking the processes in which the past is narrativized and given meaning.

As it is explored earlier in this thesis, in their introduction to *Memory History, Nation*, Hodgkin and Radstone assert that the question of the relationship between memory and history is not so straightforward, but complex (2006). They emphasize that questions pertaining to the relationship between memory and history have been addressed in detail in the field of memory studies, yet history, including postmodern historiography, with certain exceptions seems to be uninterested in memory. Despite this neglect, they observe that in the last two decades appeals to memory have significantly increased, particularly with an interest in the field of oral history and holocaust studies. Hodgkin and Radstone ground this recent interest in the field of memory to the challenges history has faced as regards poststructuralist undermining of its authority and, in this state, they contend, 'the concept of memory seems to offer a more cautious and qualified relation to the past than the absolute assertion that for some is associated with history' (2006: 2). Accordingly, some historians turned to oral history because in its origins, works of oral history 'laid claim precisely to an authentic truth excluded from the historical records' and 'solicited voices of those who have been silent and ignored throughout centuries' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 4). In doing so, works of oral history found through memories evoked 'a counter-narrative, a corrective to the simplifying and patronising assumptions of the

traditional makers of history' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 4). And thus, in the first instance, as related to witnesses' status of being-there to know how things took place, oral history 'offered a validation of memory as *more* true and more reliable than other records' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 4).

As Hodgkin and Radstone explain, oral history developed into a fruitful area for engaging with memory via the ways it revealed that memory, even when it seems most real and definite, is not a certain guarantee of truth. And this revelation acted as a stimulus to shift perspectives from the search of 'true' memories to an emphasis on memory as a process and how to understand its motivation and meaning (2006: 4). Correspondingly, the idea of memory as a tool to contest 'official' history shifted 'from an opposition between the subordinate truth versus dominant lie to a concern with the ways in which a particular version of an event may be at various times and for various reasons promoted, reformulated and silenced' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 5). Rather than seeking out a 'truer' version of the past, then, a dissection of the process of the past not only becomes history, but also memory, thus paving the way for a critical engagement with the past.

Another field in which the notion of memory is examined as a process to analyse the past, is the field of holocaust studies, as noted by Hodgkin and Radstone (2006: 6-7). In terms of its preoccupation with the process of memory, its mechanisms of meaning, ways of registering and recording events and the ways memories are recalled and remembered, holocaust studies has been hugely influential since it engages with traumatic memory. In discussions of the Holocaust, as Hodgkin and Radstone claim, trauma theory has become the home of a cluster of recurring concepts such as remembering, memory, history, denial, witnessing, testimony and silence, and questions regarding representations of an experience, of what can be remembered and how, have dominated these discussions (2006: 6). The idea of 'unrepresentability', in this sense, has become the central concern in trauma theory, because, as Hodgkin and Radstone note, trauma theory suggests that when faced with a catastrophic event, memory goes into crises and refuses the knowledge of what has happened (2006: 6). This led to a situation in which the notion of trauma can complicate referentiality 'by interposing the disruptions of memory between the event and its representation' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 6). For trauma theory, it is a specific event that

disrupts memory which would otherwise be unperturbed, whereas for oral history these disruptions -such as omission, distortion, conflation and masking - are intrinsic to memory (Hodgkin and Radstone 2006: 6). In both cases, Hodgkin and Radstone observe, one can make the inference that, ‘neither the event nor their meanings can be straightforwardly known’ (2006: 6). After noting that these main concerns of trauma theory have been immensely influential in discussions of the holocaust, Hodgkin and Radstone state that they seldom appear in other national and historical contexts, and other genocides, massacres, experiences of violence, suffering and displacement are studied contexts other than trauma theory (2006: 7).

As the discussion of Hodgkin and Radstone illustrates, the relationship between memory and history is intimate and complex and, apart from a few exceptions, they are not closely followed in the field of history. As can be also seen in the discourses that revolve around the representation of traumatic moments in *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn*, while the cluster of concepts that are associated with traumatic memory - remembering, forgetting, silence and denial - recur in the discussions, neither of the films or critiques are preoccupied with the questions of traumatic memory, its inaccessibility and crisis of meaning-making. Similarly, questions about trauma and its complex relationship with history are also not addressed.⁴ On the contrary, for both films as regards the ways their cast and crew members describe their production and for critics as well, the traumatic past can be seamlessly represented by relying on tools which can guarantee ‘authenticity’.

Memory, in this sense, particularly the memories of the survivors who inspired and influenced these films, as well as their confirmation about the ‘authenticity’ of the representations, are acknowledged as being reserves of the ‘authentic truth’ about these traumatic moments. This ‘authentic truth’, which is excluded from the historical records, is then deployed as a tool to challenge ‘official’ history as it is facilely and unproblematically given meaning and fixed

⁴ Duruel-Erkılıç (2012), Suner (2010), Mersin (2010), Yüksel (2012), for instance, in their discussions of ‘new cinema in Turkey’ use the notions of trauma, history and memory iteratively to the extent that they analyze these films under the rubric of ‘memory cinema’ (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012) and ‘traumatic visions of the past’ (Suner 2009). However, none of the works of these scholars address the complex relationship between memory, trauma and history.

so that it can gain authority, and hence can be assimilated into the national narrative. And as a result, it becomes history.

Thus, it can be argued that both *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* perpetuate the dominant discourses on history, its agency of seamlessly representing the past, which disowned and left out the stories of *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* in the first place, and memory, which is the repository of ‘true’ knowledge about the past, and yet it needs to be supplemented with the tools of conventional history to acquire ‘authority’. Establishing such opposition and hierarchy without reflecting on central questions in the field of memory studies and the field of history, in this regard, precludes a critical engagement with the past because it completely ignores the meaning-making processes of memory, its disruption, conflation and masking, and the work of dominant ideologies, discourses and politics in re-formulating the past as history.

Film, Trauma and the Question of Representation

One of the central questions in the realm of trauma theory, as mentioned above, is how traumatic memory can be communicated through representation. These questions mainly stem from the conception that trauma renders the past inaccessible, because as Hodgkin and Radstone note, when faced with an overwhelming event the memory goes into crisis and refuses the knowledge of what happened. However, trauma returns later and haunts the traumatized against his/her will via repetitive and intrusive hallucinations, dreams, nightmares and flashbacks (Caruth 1995: 4-5; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995; Kaplan and Wang 2004: 5). Cathy Caruth elucidates these recurrences as ‘the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its possession of the one who experiences it’ (1995: 4) and for this reason she argues that ‘to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event’ (1995: 5). In this regard, notions such as the collapse of understanding, not knowing, an unassimilated nature, the inaccessibility of the past, and thus the impossibility of history are perceived to be intrinsic to traumatic memory (Caruth 1995: 5-12). Here the problem of representation surges forward: if the traumatic memory is not fully accessible, and cannot be fully known, then how can trauma be narrativized and represented?

Scholars seem to agree that representing trauma, both as regards individual and collective experiences, requires a new language and non-traditional narrative forms (Williams 1993; Caruth 1995; Caruth 1996; White 1992; White 1996; Walker 2001, Walker 2004; Walker 2009; Hirsch 2004; Kaplan and Wang 2004; Hodgkin and Radstone: 2006). To this end, film, with its potential to push the limits of traditional narrative forms and with its portrayals of temporal heterogeneity, fragmented structure, flashbacks and juxtapositions, is considered to be a significant model for work of memory, particularly in relation to traumatic events and experiences. The debates on the question of representing trauma both in the field of films studies and trauma theory thus revolve around calling into question realist forms of representation and thinking through non-realist, modernist and reflexive strategies of narration. And for representing, or rather rethinking, the nature of traumatic experiences of the individuals and collectives, scholars privilege non-realist forms that push against conventional strategies of narration and raise questions about their own representations by adopting reflexive and self-conscious formal structures. In contrast, films that adopt realist form are assessed as being problematic because realism's discourse of omnipotent representation is considered to work against the inaccessibility of the past in relation to trauma.

In this context, Joshua Hirsch propounds that realist historical films, both documentary and fiction, consist of 'an array of formal and rhetorical techniques by which a film could claim to make the past masterable by making it visible' (2004: 102). Hirsch analyses documentaries that focus on the Holocaust and breaks down the formal characteristics of realist historical films, as well as what he refers to as post-traumatic films, and he examines their discourses. He contends that, in realist historical films, tense, the temporality of the film text and the events recounted by the film, 'works to provide a spectator with a sense of mastery over time, a sense of power to travel back in time to see the past, or to make the past visible to the present on command, usually, in the form of a linear chronology' (Hirsch 2004: 102). For him, realism assumes an omnipotent point of view which is outside history and is 'free to enter into history through the image and assume a variety of embedded points of view, to vicariously see and feel history'. However, he continues, it is 'on the condition of being free to return again unscathed to exterior position from which one can know and judge the past without being

personally implicated by it' (Hirsch 2004: 102-103). Also, he maintains that realism presents the past unselfconsciously, drawing attention to the images, events, and interpretations in the presented away from its act of presentation (Hirsch 2004: 103). Hirsch argues that the formal structure and discourses of realist historical films, with their 'mastery' over time, omnipotent point of view and unselfconsciousness, render a representation that is linear and imply that one can summon up an image of the past seamlessly at will and insert it into a proper chronology (2004: 103). However, such a formulation operates in a way that is opposed to traumatic memory, in which linear chronology collapses, time becomes fragmented and uncontrollable, and the past becomes either too remote or too immediate as it 'remains inaccessible in the past or it presents itself uninvited, seizing consciousness' (Hirsch 2004: 103). It is for these reasons that Hirsch finds the formal characteristics of modernist films, their non-linear, fragmented and self-conscious structures as coherent discourses of historical trauma appeared in cinema, and refers to historical films that deploy these formal strategies, such as *Night and Fog* (Alan Resnais, 1955), as post-traumatic cinema. Nonetheless, he underscores that his intention is not to categorize films as modernist and post-traumatic as opposed to realist, for many films that he classifies as coherent discourses of historical trauma blend realist and modernist tendencies. Thus, he suggests, '[i]t was from the collision between realism's discourse of omnipotent representation and modernism's discourse of the impossibility of representation these [post-traumatic] films derived their formal and thereby their historical shock effect' (Hirsch 2004: 103).

Janet Walker also conceptualizes what she refers to as 'trauma cinema' and contends that trauma cinema refuses the realist mode of representation (2009). This is because, for her, trauma cinema adopts unconventional film strategies that are marked by repetition and the breaking of chronological linearity and raises epistemological questions about memory, history and representation by dealing with world-shattering events 'in a non-realist style that figures the traumatic past as meaningful, fragmentary, virtually unspeakable, and striated with fantasy constructions' (Walker 2009: 109). And Linda Williams in her article 'Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary' explores what she refers to as 'postmodern documentaries' and considers them a response to a crisis of representation linked with major traumas of the past (1993). In post-modern

documentaries, Williams argues that the past appears traumatic, violent and unrepresentable through images. To this end, postmodern documentaries abandon the voyeuristic objectivity of realism, and rather than being committed to realistically recording 'life as it is,' they seek to take up a deeper investigation of how life became what it is, and thus to undermine the claims of 'truth' of realist forms, they adopt a self-reflexive form (Williams 1993: 13-14).

These debates illustrate that realism as a form and a discourse, with its claims of recording the realities of the world as 'they are', has been problematized in terms of representing what is inaccessible, both in fiction film and in documentary. And modernist formal structures, because they are comprised of non-linear, non-chronological, fragmented and self-reflexive narration, are seen as being coherent ways of representing a model for traumatic memory with its disruptions, both in the case of individual traumas or collective traumas in larger historical contexts. Hayden White agrees with such contentions and states that 'our notion of what constitutes realistic representation must be revised to take account of experiences that are unique to our century and for which older modes of representation have proven inadequate' (1992: 52). However, he argues against views which call for a new language and a new form to grapple with the trauma peculiarly as regards the Holocaust, and suggests that not only representations of the Holocaust but any other event in history require a new style that is modernist (White 1992: 52). I shall return to White's suggestion in the next chapter in my discussion of a new historical film form, but at this point White's suggestion is significant pertinent to my analysis of the formal structures that both *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* deploy.

In response to these discussions about realist and non-realist forms and their engagement with traumatic events through representation, my intention here, by analysing the formal strategies used in *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath*, is to raise questions concerning what happens when films deploy both of them. Hirsch's analysis of *Night and Fog*, in this sense, is significant since as opposed to considerations of realist and self-reflexive narration as antithetical strategies, Hirsch contends that the form of post-traumatic films is based on a collision between realism's discourse of omnipotent representation and modernism's discourse of the impossibility of representation. I intend to reverse his analysis and ask: can historical films deploy both realist and self-reflexive forms, be

fragmented and non-linear, cohere with a model of memory in relation to trauma and still can be considered to be conventional? In this section, my analyses of *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* address this question.

The Breath and *Pains of Autumn* both deploy realist forms through which spectators see the events from various points of view and ‘understand’ and ‘comprehend’ these traumatic moments. At the same time, *The Breath*, and *Pains of Autumn*, to a certain extent, deploy fragmented structures and a self-reflexive form that calls attention to the *presence* of the camera to *record* these events ‘as they happen.’ Despite their blending of realist and self-reflexive strategies, both films attempt to seamlessly narrate these traumatic moments of the national past through the agency of cinematic representation, and they aim to assimilate them into the national narrative by giving them meaning.

The will to history that surrounds the discourses of both films also reverberates in the formal strategies they adopt, as they seek to form a coherent narrative by relying on the medium of film and its ‘ability’ to fix the past as history. With this will and desire, both films seek to ensure that nothing remains uncovered in the film, that all questions are answered, and that the horror of these moments is conveyed from multiple viewpoints by making connections between them. In this way, they attempt to provide *full access* to inaccessible pasts and support their narration with elements that can secure the ‘authenticity’ of the stories they tell. As a result, the formal structures that *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* deploy do not undermine conventional discourses on history and its claims of ‘authenticity’, ‘reality’ and ‘accuracy’, but rather they operate with the aim of re-authorizing history as a more ‘solid’ and ‘complete’ window onto the national past, by the narration of its ‘missing pieces’.

Pains of Autumn

Pains of Autumn opens with a high angle tracking shot and as the camera moves we first see the ground and then it pans right and shows a bucket filled with red paint. The camera continues to move and we see in close up the feet of a few men carrying the bucket and marking walls with crucifixes. The men’s faces are not visible and we only see parts of their bodies in close up. As they move the camera moves and shows us in a high angle close up shot the ground strewn with newspapers, broken lights, outfits, fabric, mannequins, hats, dolls, and strollers.

From here the camera tilts upwards and pans right to a grey wall, where the title of the film, *Güz Sancısı (Pains of Autumn)*, is written in red. The camera continues to pan right and then the wall with the title of the film dissolves into the curtains of the windows at Behçet's apartment. From outside the window, we see Behçet approaching and opening the curtains. Behçet looks out and the film cuts to Behçet's point of view, and we see Elena in the facing window through the half-closed curtains and she's getting undressed. The lights are off in Behçet's apartment and on in Elena's, and thus Behçet's face is lit by the light from the windows. Following this shot, we see Elena both from Behçet's point of view and then behind his shoulders, with the camera inside Behçet's apartment. Elena approaches the window and looks at Behçet. She holds the curtains as if she is going to close them but then leaves them open so Behçet can continue watching. Then we see Behçet from outside his window again and then the scene cuts to Behçet's point of view and we see Elena's grandmother as she goes to Elena's room and helps her get dressed. When we see Behçet from outside again, the phone in his apartment starts ringing. As Behçet walks towards the phone, the camera shows Behçet from inside the apartment and when he stumbles he hits his hand on a frame hanging on the wall and his hand starts bleeding. Then Behçet turns on the lights, and we see the broken frame of Behçet's father's picture hanging on the wall. Behçet answers the phone and starts talking to his father, and all the while his hand is bleeding. During this scene, Behçet's father's voice is not heard and when he is talking on the phone, Behçet continues to watch Elena. Then we see Elena, both from Behçet's point of view and from behind his shoulders, and from time to time she glances at Behçet. From here the film cuts to Behçet washing the blood off of his hands and then the water stops running and Behçet's hand is covered in blood again. Then the film cuts to Behçet with his jacket on as he leaves the apartment and from his point of view we see Elena in her apartment with a man. As she looks at Behçet, Elena closes the curtains.

There are certain strategies that are at play in this opening scene of *Pains of Autumn* that demonstrate the film's will to history and its reliance on the medium of film to represent the pogrom in order to assimilate it into a narrative. First of all, by showing us everything from a high angle and close up and without giving us a *full picture* of the space and people, the tracking shot at the beginning of the film renders ambiguous what is going on and restricts our understanding of

the scene. This tracking shot establishes a connection between the objects on the ground, the bucket filled with red paint, and the men who we partially see as they mark the walls, yet despite this connection, we do not understand who these men are as we do not see their faces or see what it is they are marking and why. Thus we cannot give meaning to what is taking place in the scene or comprehend the actions of these men. Towards the end of the film, however, this scene is repeated, and this time, because now we have the background information provided by the film itself, we see the faces of the men in full view and we realize that the scene takes place a day before the pogrom in Beyoğlu; the objects on the ground are from the vandalized properties of non-Muslims and the men are marking the buildings in which non-Muslim people live. As we are introduced to these characters throughout the film, when the scene is repeated at the end we know that they are nationalists and members of the Cyprus Turkish Association, and that they have close relations with the state and carry out its 'dirty business'. They killed Suat because he was investigating the murder of Ömer Saruhan, and, as it is implied, they have killed many other dissidents as well. So when the scene is shown again, we *give meaning* to what is going on by making connections and drawing conclusions based on the information provided by the film. And thus we can *assimilate* this scene into the narrative of the film.

Apart from this scene, *Pains of Autumn* narrates a linear story with a beginning, middle and an end. However, this scene, by breaking the linear chronology of the film, challenges our comprehension of the temporality of the events that are recounted. With the repetition of this scene, the temporal order of events in the film can be interpreted in two ways: either the first time we see the scene in the beginning is a flashforward and the entire film until the moment of the repetition unfolds in the present tense of the film, or the scene takes place in the present tense of the film, and the entire film until the repetition is a flashback. Whether the scene is a flashforward or not is not clarified in the film and such an intricate portrayal of temporality precludes the spectators' ability to establish 'mastery' over time, to make sense of the temporality of the events the film narrates. One might consider this to be a model of traumatic memory, since, similar to this scene and its repetition in the film, trauma consists of a broken linear chronology, fragmented time and a collapse of understanding. Accordingly, before its repetition in the film, this scene and what takes place in it is not given

any meaning, even though the images we see are clear and familiar. It is only once this scene is incorporated into a narrative, into a story with a beginning, middle and an end, does it *gain meaning* and thus can become a part of a narrative. Thus, the film states that the trauma of the pogrom can only acquire meaning once it is assimilated into a narrative, that is, the national narrative. That is the reason why the repetition of the scene comes towards the end of the film, at a point when we have ‘enough’ information, a narrative, to make sense of it. And thus it is *only* when we are provided with a narrative by the agency of the film that we can see the faces of the men, recognize them and identify the place, in other words, get the ‘whole image’ of what is going on.

Hence, I argue that the scene in the beginning and its repetition towards the end does not function to mimic the model of traumatic memory in order to complicate our sense of the time and to engender a rethinking of temporality in the case of trauma. Rather, it operates to make the statement that this traumatic episode of the national time can only be given meaning and conceived when it is placed in a narrative with a coherent, accessible and straightforward narration, that is, the representation of the event in the film. In this way, it can be further argued that this repetition works in line with the film’s will to history, its aim of narrating the story of the pogrom, so that it can be given meaning through its representation in the film and then be incorporated into the national narrative and the realm of history.

On this point, the pan from the objects on the ground and the partially visible men to the wall with the film’s name is significant for a number of reasons. First of all, the writing on the wall is written with paint that is used to mark the walls of the buildings with crucifixes. And the title of the film is written on a wall within the diegetic world of the film, not outside it in title credits. This implies that, since we do not know anything about the film or whose hands marked the walls or what their intentions were, the story of the film we are about to watch was written by the same hands, that is, by those who carry out the state’s ‘dirty business’. And because we will figure out who these men are and understand their intentions of marking the walls with crucifixes as the story develops the film, by inscribing its title *within* diegesis, also implies that it is through the film itself, via its ‘exposition’ of the events that surround the pogrom and representations of the

event, that we will be able to articulate a coherent narrative out of a traumatic moment of the national past.

In this sense, it not surprising that the title of the film dissolves into the curtains of the windows at Behçet's apartment. The curtains here also stand for the screen and, as it opens, we, the spectators, start watching the film in the theatre, *watching* the events that took place before and during the pogrom. And via Behçet's position, as he literally opens the curtains and looks out from a dark room at a lit window with curtains, the film reminds us through a reflexive structure of its own existence as a representation and our position as spectators. It can be argued that, as the director of the film also suggests (Akman 2009), reflexivity in this scene, and also throughout the film as Behçet's actions mimic that of a viewer/spectator, prompts spectators to identify with Behçet; however, I argue otherwise.

In this scene, and throughout the film, the spectators hold a privileged position, as their knowledge is not restricted to what Behçet and other characters know or see. On the contrary, the spectators always see things from various viewpoints and know more than all the characters in the film, and their privileged status is always underscored by the film through external viewpoints and the camera's ability to be present in places and 'show' things that other characters in the film cannot see. To begin with, when we see Behçet for the first time in the film as he opens the curtains, we do not see him from inside the apartment, but the camera is outside his window. As he watches Elena, standing in the dark, we watch Behçet not from Elena's point of view but from an external viewpoint. Here, rather than evoking identification with Behçet, spectators are reminded about their position as an outsider, an exterior observer who can look and see things from an external view point. As the scene unfolds, the spectators' viewpoint becomes omnipotent as they shift from Behçet's point of view to Elena's and they can observe both the windows and the characters from the viewpoint of an outsider to see the *whole image*. Thus as *Pains of Autumn* reveals its title within its diegesis with a will to narrate the story of the pogrom, it assures its spectators of their privileged position right from the beginning by positioning them as omnipotent observers who can shift positions and viewpoints, and observe and know things that the characters cannot see and know; in other words, it gives spectators *full access* to an *inaccessible* past.

In this respect, Elena's glance back at Behçet and the way she encourages him to watch her, coupled with Behçet's knowledge that Elena is aware she's being watched, are significant, as they all point to the reflexive structure of the film. In the same way that Elena encourages Behçet by leaving the curtains open, *Pains of Autumn* invites spectators to 'observe' the events that surround the pogrom and the pogrom itself. In doing so, the film reminds spectators of their privileged position with its reflexive form and emphasizes that since the spectators are positioned in the place of an omnipotent observer, nothing in the film remains uncovered. Also, the film, through its reflexive form, calls attention to its own existence by comparing the 'witnesses' in the film who observe their surroundings and the spectators who are 'witnessing' a traumatic episode of the past by the agency of cinematic representation. And because, as opposed to the characters in the film who cannot 'see everything' the spectators can 'witness' the events and incidents and observe the same scene from various viewpoints, the film establishes a hierarchy between the 'limited' viewpoints of those who were *there* to see things, and cinema which can show the events from various viewpoints and hence secure an 'omnipotent' narration.

This becomes most visible in the scenes when Behçet is repeatedly depicted as a spectator, watching Elena from his window, watching Ömer Saruhan's and Suat's murder and his funeral, eavesdropping on his father-in-law as he talks about the organization of the murders and the pogrom, and peering in as his father-in-law and Elena have sex. Behçet's position as a spectator reaches a point where Elena's grandmother tells him that his role in life is to 'peep' on people, to be a spectator, implying that he never leaves his seat, that he never revolts and takes action.

In these scenes, however, where Behçet is depicted as spying on people and listening to their conversations, the places Behçet cannot see and the conversations he cannot hear are made visible and audible by the presence of the camera to give us access to places and conversations that the 'witnesses' in the film cannot see and hear, even though they are *there*. In the scene where Behçet goes out to have dinner with his father-in-law, Kemal, Ömer Saruhan, İsmet and various other businessmen, for instance, they talk about politics and we hear about Ömer Saruhan's opposing opinions about the government. During the dinner, Kemal and İsmet try to set up Ömer Saruhan with a woman, but Ömer Saruhan

rejects the idea, as he says he has made previous engagements. Kemal and Ismet look at each other and make faces, and although Behçet is sitting next to them he does not pick up on their plan to murder Ömer Saruhan. A few minutes later in the film, we see Behçet in his apartment looking out the window and watching Elena, and from his point of view we see Ömer Saruhan lying dead on the sofa at Elena's apartment and she and his grandmother are in a panic. Then Behçet hears the sound of a car and looks down and from his point of view we see Ismet going up to Elena's apartment to get rid of the body. We see Ismet, Elena and the grandmother from Behçet's point of view as they converse, and as Ismet looks out the window Behçet hides behind the curtains. When Ismet closes the curtains, we see him from Behçet's position. And by placing our point of view at Ismet from Behçet's apartment, the film shows that from now on, the curtains are closed and Behçet will not be able to see the interior of Elena's apartment.

But here, the film cuts to the interior of Elena's apartment, and we see Ömer Saruhan's dead body. To remind us about Behçet's position, the film cuts back to Behçet and we see him from outside as he moves so he can see the interior of the apartment by looking through another window where the curtains are half-open. But Ismet closes these curtains as well, and the film again shows Ismet from Behçet's point of view to remind us once again that Behçet will not be able to see anything. Here, again, the film cuts to the interior of Elena's apartment. And we see Elena bringing sheets to Ismet. Then we see Behçet again from the outside struggling to see what is going on, but because all the curtains are now closed, Behçet cannot see anything. The film then cuts back to the interior of Elena's apartment and we see Ismet covering Ömer Saruhan's dead body with the sheet.

By intercutting repeatedly from Behçet and Behçet's point of view to the interior of Elena's apartment with its closed curtains, the film makes a comparison between Behçet's and spectators' access to the event. And by laying emphasis on Behçet's inability to see and hear things that spectators straightforwardly can, the film here underscores its own existence, its ability to give us *full access* to the events that take place behind the closed curtains. Just like the rest of the film, in this scene *Pains of Autumn* underlines that by *being able* to shift positions from the interior of Behçet's apartment to Elena's, from Behçet's point of view to an external viewpoint and through editing, a film can assemble various times and places to 'show' an event from various positions and hence make sure that nothing

remains unrevealed. Thus, through the agency of cinematic representation, it is implied that one can get a more 'solid' and 'objective' representation of all events, as opposed to those who were actually there.

Notably, *Pains of Autumn*, with its reflexive form, relies on theories on realism in the field of film studies rather than on the theorization of reflexivity and is based on the presumption that cinema can represent reality. In theorisations of realism, cinema has been regarded as unique medium due to its 'ability' to record and represent the 'realities' of the world 'as they are' since, as Andre Bazin argued, with the advent of photography 'for the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man' (1967: 13). To place emphasis on the 'objectivity' of the photographic image and cinema, Bazin added that although the subjectivity of the photographer, or the filmmaker, can affect the outcome and the final result may reflect his/her subjectivity, their role in shaping the final result is slight compared to that of other arts (1967: 13). Thus, for Bazin, the unique characteristic and key strength of the photographic image, and of cinema, are derived from its 'objective' representation of the 'realities' of the world, as he contends, between 'the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a non-living agent' (1967: 13).

In this context, as John Hill points out, in a 'realist' film it is what we see that is privileged, rather than what we hear (1986: 63). Since, in this regard, *Pains of Autumn* attempts to 'show' more than what the characters can see and thus spectators are endowed with the privileged position of being external observers with full access to the events taking place behind closed doors and curtains, it can be argued that the film claims that cinema can lay bare 'realities' more 'objectively' and straightforwardly than those who were *there* to witness them. For this reason, the film, with its reflexive form, stresses that it is because of the 'objective representation' of cinema that film *can* reveal what is going on behind closed doors - such as the staging of protests, contemplations of assassinations and the relationship between the state and their clandestine organizations. And it also *can* show us things from a perspective that we could seldom occupy, make connections between seemingly irrelevant events and form a narrative out of a complicated and inaccessible past so that we can understand its 'meaning'.

In so doing, *Pains of Autumn* makes the statement that the film 'shows' us 'reality' and the 'full picture' of the pogrom that we would not be able to 'see'

even if we were there to witness it. It is suggested that only through the agency of the medium of film can the 'reality' of the pogrom can be revealed. That is to say, *Pains of Autumn* does not adopt a reflexive form to undermine the claims of 'realism', 'authenticity' and the 'accuracy' in relation to history or memory. Conversely, its reflexive form functions as a tool that puts emphasis on the operations of the medium of film with discourses of representing 'reality' attached to it. And thus the claims of 'reality' and 'authenticity' that are consolidated by the reflexive form in *Pains of Autumn* work together with a will to history and a will to an 'authority' to speak about the past.

At this stage, it would be helpful to look at the final scene of the film which is an exemplary case of these claims made by the film as it 'authenticates' everything we see in it and 'verifies' its claims of 'delivering' an 'accurate' representation of the event. In the final scene of *Pains of Autumn*, we see Behçet carrying Elena's dead body, as she was murdered by Ismet. In the midst of the turmoil of the pogrom, the streets of Beyoğlu are being plundered and strewn with belongings from homes that were vandalized and the belongings of non-Muslims. Weeping, Behçet walks down Istiklal Street and the camera shows him and Elena from various angles, including a bird's-eye-view and various shot sizes, including close-ups and medium shots. Then, in the last shot of the film, we see Behçet with Elena in his arms in an extreme long shot as he walks in the direction of the camera. The camera then starts to tilt up to give a high angle view of Istiklal Street and leaves Behçet and Elena out of the frame. As the camera continues to move upwards and shows us the extent of the damage that resulted from the pogrom on Istiklal Street, the shot fades to black. Then with a fade in we see a black and white archival photograph of Istiklal Street taken during the course of the pogrom almost from the exact same spot of the camera in the previous shot, and from the point camera stopped moving in the previous shot the film starts to zoom out on the photograph to give us a wider view of Istiklal Street strewn with the belongings of non-Muslims. The last shot of the film resembles the archival photograph to the point that one can argue that the last shot is a re-enactment of it. This photograph, then, is followed by other archival photographs of the pogrom that appear on the screen one after another. After a while, the credits appear adjacent to these photographs. At the end of the credits, a list which itemizes the number of shops, churches and synagogues that suffered damage appears on the

screen and informs us numerically about the extent of damage that resulted from the pogrom.

With the last shot of the film and the following archival photograph, it becomes clear that *Pains of Autumn* attempts to represent the pogrom by being 'faithful' to the 'real' photographs of the event. The resemblance of the *mise-en-scene*, the camera position and angles in the 'real' photograph 'documenting' the event and the shot coupled up with the movement of the camera, connect the shot and the photograph and render the last shot of the film as a re-staged version of the 'real' photograph. In this way, the film utilizes the shot and the photograph, as well as the cinematic tools that connect them, as a means that can justify the film's claims of 'authenticity' and thus 'verify' *Pains of Autumn* as an 'authentic' representation of the original event. The utilization of the archival photograph as a means to 'authenticate' the last shot of the film as an 'accurate' representation of the pogrom can be appropriated for the entire film because many other archival photographs that appear adjacent to the credits also resemble various other scenes in the film.

These photographs concomitantly point to something else: the 'ability' and 'key strength' of the photographic image to 'fix' the realities of the world 'as they are'. In line with the film's formal structure, its reliance on the medium of film to give *full access to* and a *meaningful* picture of the events and also provide us with 'mastery' over time by making it visible, these photographs are ascribed the role of 'objective' conveyors of the traumatic past. This is because they are 'fixed' and *can* give us straightforward access to the original event by defying time, subjectivity, unstable memories, partial accounts and recountings that are shaped by ideological purposes or challenged by disruptions. Bazin suggests that it is only the photographic image that can free objects from the conditions of time and space that govern it (1967: 14). And as a result, for him, no matter how distorted, discoloured, and fuzzy the images are, no matter how lacking they may be in documentary value, by virtue of the mechanical process, the photographic image guarantees an ontological bond between itself and what it represents; it 'embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption' (1967: 14).

Pains of Autumn, by attributing the qualities Bazin suggests to archival photographs and at the same time by linking the film to these photographs with cinematic devices, claims that the story of the film is the 'missing' piece of these

photographs. Thus, it can be argued that, in line with the 'mission' that is ascribed to the film by its director, script-writer, actors and members of the crew and others, the ending of the film makes the statement that once the 'missing pieces' of the national narrative is made visible and fixed on film, like archival photographs they can defy time, unstable memories about the event and the disavowal of the state and become 'solid' representations that can then be re-inserted into the realm of history. And compared to such strong claims, the list of the damage caused during the pogrom, which appears at the end of the title credits, is positioned as a footnote, an additional reference to 'verify' the 'authenticity' of the film.

The Breath

Compared to *Pains of Autumn*, the formal structure of *The Breath* is much more complex. In relation to its will to history, the film, on the one hand, insists on accessing and seamlessly retrieving a traumatic memory and in order to narrativize and represent that trauma coherently and explicitly it deploys formal strategies that are mainly associated with realism. On the other, no matter how hard it tries to render the inaccessible past 'fully' accessible, its fragmented structure, temporal complexity and the way that sound operates in relation to the on-screen and off-screen space, undermine its claims of accessibility, retrievability, and the narrativization of the trauma of war. The film oscillates between these two formal structures and adopts both a realist and a reflexive mode. While discourses on 'representing the reality of the war' prevail in the form it deploys, its formal characteristics concomitantly work to dismantle these discourses.

The Breath opens with the sound of a helicopter and the voice of a man as he asks for a response from the Karabal Patrol Station via radio. As the voice identifies itself as Falcon 1-8 we see massive and barren mountains from a bird's-eye-view. As the camera glides on these mountains, Falcon 1-8 converses with other soldiers, Falcon 1-4, Falcon 1-6, Tuna, Tuna 5 and Whip, via radio about the condition of Karabal, and each states that none of them have been able to establish contact with the station but they all are on the move to get there. Falcon 1-8 then informs the others that he can see the station and it is covered in smoke and there are bodies lying on the ground. Then Tuna 5, the lieutenant, informs Tuna, the

commander, that he has reached the station. The commander asks the lieutenant to report on the situation at Karabal and here the camera stops and reveals two bodies on a hill, one soldier and one guerrilla, lying dead close to each other. Over this image we hear the lieutenant, via radio, and he says in shock: 'Commander...' but then falls silent. The commander asks Tuna to report on the situation at Karabal and Tuna continues: 'Commander, here...' but again he cannot finish his sentence and falls silent again. Here the film cuts to a close up of a soldier's dead body on the hill. Then the commander asks in a panic: 'Lieutenant, what happened in Karabal?'

The film then cuts to black, and a title '1993 Southeast', appears on the black leader. Following the title, an extreme close up of a weeping soldier appears, and blood drips from his head and a flashlight shines his face. The soldier asks: 'Have you ever fallen in love commander?' and an off-screen voice replies: 'Yes I have, Ibrahim'. Then the camera zooms in and out on the face of the soldier, Ibrahim, and he asks the off-screen commander: 'Did she laugh at you?' Here a second title appears on black leader: 'Karabal Patrol Station'. The title fades to black and an image of the sun rising over the clouds appears via a fade-in. The film then cuts to an extreme long-shot of the watch tower of the patrol station on the mountains and then shows a battalion arriving at the station.

From here the film cuts back to the sun rising over the clouds, and over this image we hear the voices of a commander and a soldier conversing via radio and they identify themselves as Kaya and Kaya 1, and the soldier informs the commander that they arrived at Karabal and found the lieutenant of the station asleep. Then the commander tells the lieutenant that he is on his way. The film then cuts to a close-up of commander Mete's hand banging a knife on a heater to wake up the soldiers in the ward, and as the camera shakes, focuses, and zooms in and out, we see Mete sitting by a bunk, and the soldiers wake up. At this point, Mete berates the soldiers for being asleep, and then the soldiers and the commander talk about a clash that took place a day before, in which Mete fought and lost one of his best friends. As Mete tells them about the clash and how he lost a few soldiers, we see the incident in flashback and the film intercuts between the ward and the flashback with the sounds of both scenes superimposed.

In the opening of the film, *The Breath* brings together various temporalities, intercuts between them and has a non-linear and fragmented

narration. In so doing, it challenges our comprehension of the temporal structure of the film and impedes coherent perceptions of the events it narrates. Over an image of mountains and dead bodies, the film begins with an off-screen conversation between the soldiers that informs us that, since contact couldn't be established with the Karabal station, the troops are on the move to get there. Then, we see a soldier, Ibrahim, and this image is followed by a battalion arriving at the station, with titles in between. Here, we automatically make a connection between the soldiers' conversation about arriving at Karabal, and a battalion arriving at the station. And we assume that the battalion that arrives at Karabal station are the troops that conversed about getting there on the radio. However, at the end of the film we understand that these two scenes are not connected in the way we perceived them.

In the beginning of the film, we assume that chronologically the first scene, which is the conversation about arriving at Karabal, takes place before the arrival of the troops at the station. But at the end of the film, in other words after we are provided with a narrative, we understand that these soldiers are two different groups in different times and places, and the first scene of the film chronologically takes place long after the arrival of the troops at the station. With the narrative information that the film provides us with, we understand that the troops that arrive at the station are the soldiers on which story of the film centres and who clash with the guerrillas at the end of the film and, in that clash, some of them die. And, thus, we understand that the soldiers who converse on the radio are the troops who were transferred to the area in the aftermath of this clash as a part of a rescue mission.

Once we are provided with a narrative, we can understand the chronology of these scenes and recognise the disparity between the troops, times and spaces. However, we cannot be sure that the first scene of the film is a flashforward and the entire story of the film takes place in the present tense of the film, nor can we be certain that the conversation about reaching Karabal takes place in the present tense of the film and the entire story of the film is a flashback. This is to say, *The Breath*, with its complicated temporal structure, entangles the past, the present and the future as it shuffles and blends them together by cutting back and forward in various temporalities. As a result, we cannot determine the present tense of the film and specify our own temporal stance.

The appearance of Ibrahim in between these two scenes, in this sense, further complicates our comprehension of the temporal structure of the film. The scene of Ibrahim is repeated towards the end of the film and with its repetition we understand that it takes place during the clash between the soldiers and the guerrillas that is depicted towards the end of the film. Ibrahim was shot in the clash and the commander he is talking to is the army doctor treating him. With its repetition towards the end of the film, we can assign a chronology to this scene in relation to the other scenes and understand what is taking place, but we still cannot be sure whether the first time we see this scene is a flashback or flashforward. Thus through the portrayal of various temporalities and shuffling their order, *The Breath* makes it difficult to infer the temporal structure of the film or create a straightforward narrative by filling the gaps. This sort of narration is utilized throughout the film and although, to a certain extent, we can understand what takes place in the scenes and can assign a chronology to the events the film depicts, we still cannot be sure about the *tense* of the film.

However, concomitantly, *The Breath* gradually unravels this complex temporal structure as the film unfolds and seeks to provide us with a narrative through which we can assimilate the ambiguous scenes. In this regard, it seeks to attribute meaning to the vague scenes as it moves towards the ending by producing ‘enough’ information about the chronology of the scenes and places through titles, voice-over narration, uncomplicated flashbacks and repetitions so that we can make sense of its complicated structure. In so doing, like *Pains of Autumn*, it indicates that the trauma of the war can only acquire meaning and be apprehended once it is assimilated into a narrative, that is, into the story the film narrates.

Thus, in relation to the film’s aim of providing a coherent narrative in which the trauma of the war can be given meaning and be assimilated and fixed, the appearance of the titles in between the scenes in the opening is significant. The first title, ‘1993 Southeast’ appears right after the question, ‘What happened in Karabal?’ heard over the image of two dead bodies on a hill. And the second title ‘Karabal Patrol Station’ appears right after the scene with Ibrahim.

First of all, these titles are deployed by the film to clarify questions about the temporality and spatiality of the scenes. And regardless of its shuffling of the order of the scenes and coalescence of various temporalities, *The Breath* informs

us that all the scenes in the film take place at the Karabal Station in the southeast of Turkey in 1993. But more significantly, the first title appears right after we hear the question, 'What happened in Karabal?' heard over the image of two dead bodies, a guerrilla and a soldier. Relying on our previous knowledge about the war, we can more or less guess the answer to this question, yet we cannot create a 'solid' and 'coherent' narrative. In this respect, the lieutenant's silence in response to the question, 'What happened in Karabal?' becomes crucial. After the lieutenant confirms that he has arrived at the scene, he is asked to report on the situation but he cannot describe what he has seen. He starts to describe the situation but he cannot go on, as if he is at a loss for words. Then by situating the title '1993 Southeast' right after the lieutenant's inability to tell what happened at the scene and the commander's question, 'What Happened in Karabal?' the film makes a strong statement in terms of its representation of the experiences of the soldiers and the clash at the station. *The Breath* makes the statement that this question which cannot be answered by a witness of the battle will be answered by the film. And the film will 'tell' and 'show' the story behind those dead bodies that lie on the hills, the smoke that rises from the station, and what renders the lieutenant unable to speak, in other words, it will 'explicitly' tell us what happened in Karabal.

From the point when we see the second title, in this sense, the film seeks to fulfil this 'mission' of elucidating the traumatic and inaccessible events that take place at the battle. And regardless of its fragmented structure and non-linear narration, it strives to tell a coherent story 'with a beginning', that is, the arrival of the soldiers and commander Mete at the station, that leads to an 'end', their experience of the clash which leaves some of the soldiers and guerrillas dead.

Following the second title, the film attempts to expound upon and give us *full access* to the trauma of the war. In order to do so, it aims to render the trauma of the war visible and position the spectators as external observers who can 'witness' what happened in Karabal. As the story unfolds after the second title, the film introduces each soldier to the spectators, indicating where they come from, depicting what they do at the station and how they are traumatized by the war, and it positions the spectators as omnipotent observers in the midst of the battle. It also aims to make sure that nothing remains unrevealed in the film particularly by the use of shot/counter shots and mirrors and windows that make off-screen space

visible as well. In order to unravel its complex temporal structure, it also seeks to extricate the traumatic past from its inaccessibility to give meaning to it by voice-over narrations and uncomplicated flashbacks.

In the beginning of the film, for instance, when Mete and the soldiers talk about the clash that took place a day before in the mountains, we see a flashback of the clash as Mete describes what took place in detail. As the film cuts back and forth between the flashback of the clash and Mete and soldiers in the ward, everything Mete tells the soldiers appears on the screen in flashback through the point of view of an outsider. Here we see both the ward and the clash from various viewpoints, and thus can specify the space and the characters, and although the film intercuts in between these scenes and their sounds are superimposed, we can tell which event takes place after the other and easily understand what takes place in both scenes. That is to say, in this scene, *The Breath* provides spectators with full access to both scenes.

The deployment of such formal strategies to narrate a coherent story with an omnipotent viewpoint adheres to the film's will to history, to narrate the trauma of the war explicitly so that it can be fixed and then re-inserted into the national narrative. This is one of the reasons that the depiction of the clash at the Karabal station at the end of the film lasts for a full 33 minutes and here, as well, the film seeks to make sure that nothing remains uncovered in the scenes. The experience of the soldiers in the clash, their positions and actions, the condition of the patrol station, the explosions, gun shots, and wounded and dead soldiers and guerrillas are depicted in extreme detail at the end of the film. Complying with its discourses on a realist representation, the film, while portraying the clash, positions the camera and the spectators as external observers who can 'see' and hence 'witness' what happened at Karabal via an omnipotent viewpoint. Since the question that is raised in the beginning of the film 'What happened in Karabal?' is to be answered by rendering it visible through a filmic representation, it can be argued that such extreme detail, a realist form and the length of the battle scene demonstrate the film's obsession with representing the trauma of the war 'realistically' and 'authentically' so that it can be seamlessly accessed and retrieved, assimilated into a narrative and fixed. And, thus, it can become history.

By giving spectators 'full access' to the trauma of war and the experiences of the soldiers, *The Breath*, like *Pains of Autumn*, relies on the medium of film by

resorting to discourses about its ability to capture and fix the 'realities' of the world 'as they are'. Throughout the film, *The Breath* makes us feel the *presence* of the camera in handheld shots, zooms, splashing of the blood on the camera lens and scenes shot with auto-focus in which we see the work of the camera automatically focusing on the objects as it shifts positions. The operation of the camera in the film calls attention to its existence in the course of the events which is *present* in the scene to 'record' and 'fix' the events 'objectively' as they take place. This emphasis on the presence of the camera, then, evokes a reflexive mode, as it reveals the camera's operations in the film. However, this reflexive mode is not employed to expose the representation of the trauma of war in *The Breath* as a construction; but it is utilized as a tool which can secure the claims of 'objectivity' and 'authenticity' pertinent to representations of war in the film and also can provide the film with the authority to speak about the past.

While *The Breath* tries hard to represent 'everything' about the battle explicitly and by giving full access to the spectators, its fragmented structure, interweaving of various temporalities and the way the sound operates in the film in relation to off-screen and on-screen spaces limit this 'full access' to the events and call attention to the existence of the film as a construction. From this stand point, particularly the way sound is used in the film and its relation to the off-screen and on-screen space, undermines the claims of *The Breath* in terms of providing an 'omnipotent' narration to represent 'the reality' of the war, as suggested by its cast and crew members and various critics, and which also resonates in its insistence on rendering the inaccessible past visible.

In realist films, as Hill suggests, there is a hierarchy between sound and image in which sound is subordinated to what we see on the screen (1986: 63). The strength of realist films, as pointed out by Bazin and also in the case of *The Breath* as noted by its cast and crew members, is based on the ability of the medium of film to represent, to render 'visible' the 'reality' of the world 'as it is'. These claims attribute authority to the image track of the film and, thus, what is visible becomes powerful. Sound, in this respect, is synchronized with what we see in realist films and in this way it operates as a means of homogenizing and unifying a heterogonous medium, the medium of film, with disparate components. All these disparate components in realist film, then, such as the sound effects,

music and dialogue, work in collusion to support the image track and create a unified representation.

In this respect, in her article 'The Voice in the Cinema', Mary Ann Doane (1980) suggests that the utilization of sound in the service of the image is prevalent particularly in the classical narrative films and realist films, and their unity assures us that what is heard is seen on the screen. This unity and homogeneity, Doane maintains, also conceals the material heterogeneity of the medium of film and the work of the apparatus (1980: 34-35). However, she adds, at the same time sound 'carries with it the potential risk of exposing the material heterogeneity of the medium' (1980: 35) and the use of sound in an unconventional way can disrupt the unity of cinematic representations. Doane takes up the particular issue of sounds that come from off-screen space and suggests that the voice-off, which refers to instances in which we hear the voice of a character who is not visible within the frame, carries the potential of exposing the temporal heterogeneity of the film, because it makes the viewer realise what they see is not what they hear and there is more to the diegesis than that which is visible in the frame.

In its traditional use, however, voice-off constitutes 'a denial of the frame as a limit' and works to conceal that there is more of the diegesis than revealed by the camera (1980: 37-38). Traditionally the camera reveals the source or the body of the voice and the voice returns to its source mainly through the shot/counter shot structure. This way, in its traditional use, the voice-off serves as an affirmation of the unity and homogeneity of the depicted space (1980: 38). In other words, the film can emphasise the existence of the off-screen space by the use of voice-off in a shot, and then it can show the body or the source of the voice in a second shot to re-assure us that nothing remains unrevealed in the depicted space.

In the light of Doane's analysis, it can be argued that, since *The Breath* skips the second shot, that is to say, the revelation of the source/body of the voices and sounds, and the use of sound and its relation with the off-screen and on-screen space in the film, in most of the scenes, does not work in the service of the image track to reassure us that what we hear is seen on the screen. On the contrary, it works to diminish the power of the image track, of its claims of omnipotent narration, because it points out that, in Doane's words, the screen limits what we

can see and there is more to the story, more to the diegetic world of the film. The way sound operates in most of the scenes also calls attention to the image and sound as disparate elements and exposes the work of editing to unify and separate them. Thus, the work of sound concomitantly reflects on the heterogeneous status of the medium of film and rather than consolidating the film's claims of being a 'realistic representation of the trauma of the war', it exposes *The Breath* as a construction.

It would be useful at this point to return to the beginning of the film to elaborate on this contention. In the beginning of the film, the voice of Falcon 1-8 is first heard over black leader, that is, without a visible image. Then we see mountains, and the entire conversation between the soldiers on the radio is heard over the image of those barren and immense mountains, but the film doesn't show us the source/body of those voices. Then another conversation between Kaya and Kaya 1 is heard over the image of clouds and a sunrise. As in the first scene of the film, the source/body of Kaya and Kaya 1 are not revealed. Later in the film, we understand that Kaya and Kaya 1 are Commander Mete and Lieutenant Barış. But in that scene, rather than showing us the body/source of their voices, in other words rendering the off-screen space on-screen by a quick move of the camera or an intercut, the film shows us clouds and a sunrise. Similarly, the soldiers that converse at the beginning of the film are never revealed and never appear in the film.

Unlike the traditional and conventional use of voice-off as an affirmation of the unity and homogeneity of space, in this regard, in *The Breath* sound breaks the unity of the image and sound, and also of space, because it leaves the source/body of these voices out of the frame and shows us other images instead. But at the same time, through such scenes the film acknowledges the existence of the off-screen space and its own choice of framing. In this way, the film points out that the screen limits what we can see and there is more to the world of the diegesis than what the camera shows. This also implies that, the camera, while showing us what we see on the screen, hides other images.

Throughout the film, then, the camera hides the soldier's families, friends and loved ones, as soldiers speak on the phone with them in long sequences, and the bodies of these voices or their surroundings are never revealed. This is particularly the case with the leader of the guerrillas, a.k.a. the doctor, as we hear

his voice repeatedly in the film via the radio, the transmitter and on the phone, conversing with Mete about his experiences of the war: that he left medical school to fight for his freedom, the atrocities to which his people have been subjected, the banning of his native language by the state, the burning down of Kurdish villages by the Turkish army and the way he and his people are exiled in their own homeland. Although the doctor's voice is heard in the film repeatedly, he is rarely seen in the film, and when he does appear, he is seen in a photograph, and then as a shadow during the clash at Karabal, and we see his body partially when he is dead. In all the scenes in which we hear the voice of the doctor speaking to Mete, the film shows a bust of Atatürk, the Turkish flag, extreme long shots of the patrol station, clouds, the sun, the boots of a soldier, mountains, and in some cases, Mete, while concealing the doctor and his surroundings.

In this way, the film implies that there are other versions of the war than that which the film depicts, other appalling experiences and horrendous events in relation to the trauma of war. And the film, by focusing on this segment of trauma, i.e. the experiences of the soldiers in the Turkish army, blocks our access to these other stories.

These scenes appear in the film in fragmented form, as episodes, and since they are not directly connected to the other scenes in the film, we cannot determine their chronology and apprehend them as a component of a coherent narrative. In another sequence, for instance, the sound of a clash between the soldiers and guerrillas comes over the radio at the station, and then the sound is put on the speakers. The sound of the clash echoes in the station through the speakers, and we hear gunshots, the doctor and other guerrillas speaking, soldiers shouting, and we hear screams and people being shot. As we hear these horrendous sounds, the camera does not show the clash but the soldiers in the station listen to it. It shows the radio room, the ward, the heater, the cafeteria, the painting of Mehmed II, guns, the bust of Atatürk, and the snow outside the station.

As with the opening of the film, and some of the conversations between Mete and the doctor, in this sequence it becomes evident that the film 'shows' us a fragment of the diegetic world, a limited portion of it, and hides the rest. This sequence also does not have any direct connection to the other scenes in the film and it appears as an episode. As a result, the chronology of this sequence and its order in relation to the other scenes remain ambiguous. The ambiguity of the

sequence and its disturbing effect, in relation to its appearance as an episode that cannot be assimilated into the chronology of events, is emphasised through the way the sequence is linked to the following scene.

The sequence ends with a cut to a close-up of a soldier waking up from a nightmare with a sound-bridge. The sound-bridge connects the last shot of the sequence and the soldier, and in this way it provides relief for spectators in the first instance, since the sequence can be interpreted as being a dream. However, the film then cuts to a long shot and we see other soldiers in the ward and understand that the soldier had woken up from a dream in which he was shot, not from the sequence we just watched and heard.

Hence, sound in the film and its relation to off-screen and on-screen space works to diminish the power of the images and the film's discourses on providing an 'omnipotent' narration because it indicates that there are many things that remain unaccounted in the film. At the same time, the way in which the sound track and the image track are disjointed in the instances I analysed above lays bare in a reflexive mode the disparity of cinematic means and the ways they operate to *form* cinematic representations. Thus, unlike the reflexive mode that is deployed in the film to underscore the presence of the camera as a 'witness' and thus consolidate the film's discourses on an 'objective' representation of the 'reality' of the war, the reflexivity that operates in relation to sound and off-screen and on-screen spaces undermines the authority of the images in *The Breath* because it reveals that the film is a construction put together by the deployment of various disparate elements. And in this way, the claims of 'authenticity', 'representation of reality' and 'accuracy' that were repeatedly insisted upon by the cast and crew members of the film, as well as the critics and soldiers who affirmed that the representation of war was 'accurate', are dismantled.

As Hayden White contends in relation to representations of history in historical records and narratives, as I explored in the first chapter, there is always more to any given segment of the past than any historical record or narrative can represent (1985: 51) and thus history is never completed and can never be regarded as an open window onto the past. This reflexive formal structure of *The Breath*, in this sense, indicates that while the film aims to turn traumatic memory into history by seeking to render the trauma of the war 'fully accessible' and fix it in a similar manner as 'official' narratives. However, at the same time *The Breath*

unintentionally reflects on its practices of hiding, blocking and hindering other versions of the past. Thus, while making claims about representing ‘everything’ about the ‘reality’ of the war, it concurrently reflects on its existence as a construction, a partial take on the trauma of war and its inability to recover the ‘whole picture’.

The Breath oscillates between its claims and a desire to represent the trauma of war through the discourses that surround its production and ‘ability’ of the medium of film to represent ‘reality’ on the one hand, and a reflexive formal structure that undermines the claims of accessibility of trauma, omnipotent narration and ‘authenticity’, on the other. Here, it can be argued that, since the film employs the majority of the formal characteristics that are attributed to realism, it still remains unable to represent the trauma of war with a coherent narrative, as becomes evident with its fragmented and non-linear structure, the use of sound in relation to images, and its intricate temporality. *The Breath*, in itself, can thus be regarded as a traumatic text. By saying so, I mean that it is a traumatic text in relation to its search for and struggle to retrieve the trauma of war in order to represent and narrativize it and the way this desire and will to history resonate in the discourses about its production and reception. Regardless of these claims, however, *The Breath* becomes a traumatic text in the way that it unintentionally confirms with its form that the traumas of war cannot be communicated seamlessly and facilely.

This also becomes visible in the way that *The Breath* includes repetitions through the numerous clashes that are depicted in the film, with Mete and the other soldiers’ arrival at the station after a clash and the transfer of Tuna 5 and other soldiers to Karabal in a rescue mission after the clash we see at the end of the film. In other words, when the film ends, another traumatic episode starts.

In his discussion of *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1991), Robert Burgoyne observes a similar split that emerges in *The Breath*, and he argues that with its obsession with explaining the event, *JFK* appears to represent the traditional view that a unified and fixed ‘historical reality’ exists; the temporal structure of the film, however, departs from the sense of continuity that traditionally defines a national past (1996). Burgoyne links this split in the film to the discontinuity and disorder in the national narrative and argues that *JFK* is a reflection of this disarray (1996: 114). In this respect, the structure of *The Breath* as a traumatic text reflects the

nature of traumatic memory, the traumatic past and its relation with the present, in the context of previous and current practices of creating a national narrative in Turkey.

This split in *The Breath* also can be seen as a result of the on-going trauma of the war in Turkey in relation to its immediacy and unassimilated nature, because, as Caruth suggests, traumatic events are not assimilated or experienced fully at the time of their occurrence, but only belatedly, in their possession of the one who experiences it (1995: 4). And since the trauma of the war is so immediate and on-going, it can be argued that *The Breath*, with its inability to recover the 'whole picture' of the event and its complex temporal and fragmented structure, as well as use of sound in relation to the off-screen and off-screen space, illustrates how traumatic experiences cannot be assimilated into a comprehensible narrative and be facilely accessed.

Though the ways that *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* communicate with the traumatic episodes of the national past vary, both films coalesce in the way that they seek to produce 'solid' knowledge about these inaccessible moments, these 'missing pieces' of history, in the sense that, as John Hill observes in some notions of progress, the production of the knowledge of injustices is seen as sufficient for wrongs to be somewhat righted (1986: 61). However, as it is argued in this chapter, this leads seemingly unconventional films to reinstate the discourses of the conventional approaches on history, memory and trauma, as well as cinematic representation, even when, as it is the case in *The Breath*, they unintentionally challenge their own claims with the forms they deploy. Thus, more than the production of a 'solid' and 'coherent' knowledge out of the inaccessible traumatic episodes of the national past and the search for a means to narrativize 'the missing pieces' and fix them to 'complete' the national history, a productive and critical way to communicate with trauma, and the national past, emerges from representations that seek out ways to dismantle the authority of history and challenge its claim of being an open window onto the past.

In light of this, in the next chapter I will take up this contention and analyse films which, rather than insisting on representing traumatic events, scrutinize history and its relation to traumatic episodes of the national past through the unconventional forms they deploy.

CHAPTER 5

A NEW HISTORICAL FILM FORM: *Waiting for the Clouds and Voice of My Father*

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth writes that before Alain Resnais made his acclaimed film *Hiroshima mon amour*, he was originally commissioned to make a documentary about Hiroshima. But after several months of collecting archival footage, he refused to complete the project as he claimed that such a documentary about Hiroshima would not be significantly different from his previous film on concentration camps, *Night and Fog*. For that reason, Resnais made *Hiroshima mon amour*, a film which does not tell the story of Hiroshima but rather uses the rebuilt city of Hiroshima as the setting for telling another story about a French woman and her love affair with a German man (Caruth 1996: 27). For Caruth, Resnais' refusal to make a documentary about Hiroshima and his decision to produce a fictional film that does not precisely focus on the event demonstrates the intricate relationship between trauma, history and representation; as she argues, through his refusal to make a documentary 'Resnais paradoxically implies that it is direct archival footage that cannot maintain the very specificity of the event' (1996: 27). In this regard, Caruth maintains that the production of *Hiroshima mon amour* indicates how Resnais and Marguerite Duras believed that such historical specificity can be conveyed through a fictional story that is not about Hiroshima but takes place at its site. And it is in the very indirectness of this telling, Caruth suggests, that *Hiroshima mon amour* explores a possibility of a faithful history (1996: 27).

In her contention about the indirectness of *Hiroshima mon amour*, Caruth draws on an earlier argument in her book in which through an exploration of the relationship between trauma and history she proposes that 'for history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it some different way, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence' (1996: 18). In other words, Caruth suggests that because traumatizing events are not fully experienced at the time of their occurrence, trauma narratives such as *Hiroshima mon amour* explore the possibility of faithful history but not just by the ways they tell us what

we can know about them; more profoundly, they explore the possibility of a faithful history by the ways they tell us how traumatic events cannot be precisely grasped and fully known (Caruth 1996: 4-6). In this regard, it can be inferred that rather than relying on the presumption that film can represent ‘reality’ and seek out ways to provide *direct* access to trauma, *Hiroshima mon amour* grapples with the trauma of Hiroshima through an *indirect* story that explores the inaccessibility and impossibility of comprehending the event. It is these complex ways of knowing and not knowing that lead Caruth to valorise the film as an exploration of the possibility of a faithful history.

While Caruth does not specifically focus in her book on the deep-seated questions that revolve around the cinematic representation of traumatic events, her analysis brings forward significant aspects of the tendency of some filmmakers to dwell on trauma and question the means of representing catastrophic events in films. First, unlike the tendency that was explored in the previous chapter by which the medium of film is seen as a means that can assure us ‘full access’ to traumatic events, Caruth’s discussion suggests that filmmakers like Resnais desist from the presumption that the medium of film can represent ‘reality’. Second, that line of understanding is indicative of how filmmakers, in abandoning that presumption, search for new languages and non-realist forms to deal with traumatic experiences of individuals and collectives in filmic representations. Hence, Caruth’s analysis of *Hiroshima mon amour* corresponds to the contentions of the scholars that I explored earlier in this thesis as regards the of a new language and a new form for representation of traumatizing events in which, as opposed to realist forms and coherent narratives, formal characteristics such as reflexivity, self-consciousness, fragmentation and non-linearity are considered to be critical ways of engaging with traumatic pasts (Tribe 1977; Williams 1993; Caruth 1996; White 1992; White 1996; Walker 2001; Walker 2004; Walker 2009; Hirsch 2004; Kaplan and Wang 2004; Burgoyne 2008; Hodgkin and Radstone 2006). What Caruth brings to these contentions about unconventional formal structures is the notion of ‘indirectness’ which emphasizes that the stimulation of critical thinking about the past does not just depend on the deployment of unconventional formal structures, as I also argued in the previous chapter. More substantially, however, it entails the utilization of unconventional formal characteristics with the aim of reflecting on the processes by which histories and

narratives are produced and scrutinizing conventional codes of historical representation such as realist forms that rely on the medium of film to deliver 'objective' representations of 'reality' and secure us 'full access' to traumatic events. To put it another way, the concept of indirectness implies that the moment a film forgoes the will to history, the obsession to represent traumatizing events directly and 'authentically' and seeks out deploying unconventional ways to communicate the past, it becomes possible to explore the notion of faithful history and think critically about the past.

By building on the concept of indirectness and its relationship with trauma, memory, history and cinematic representation, this chapter examines an unconventional way of thinking about the past that emerged in cinema in Turkey in the mid-1990s through a corpus of films which I conceptualise as being a 'new historical film form'. Like the films that were discussed in the previous chapter, these new historical films dwell on traumatic moments and events in the national past that have received little attention or have been excluded altogether from the national narrative, such as the war in Kurdistan, the massacres of Alevis, the displacement of the Pontic Greek communities, and various other practices of 'Turkification' that had dire consequences. Unlike the cinematic representations that were analysed in the previous chapter, however, these new films do not attempt to represent such traumatizing events directly with the aim of re-framing them as 'missing pieces' of the national narrative so that they can be 're-inserted' into the realm of history. On the contrary, they tell indirect stories by setting their narratives in the present-day, in the aftermath of those horrendous experiences, and hence explore traumas of the national past through fictional stories. The stories they narrate centre on traumatized individuals and families who try to either make sense of their traumatic pasts or avoid confronting them. These new historical films avoid assimilating those stories and the traumatic episodes they seek to communicate into an easily comprehensible narrative. And rather than searching for a form through which the traumas of the past can be straightforwardly represented, they are more interested in scrutinizing the complex ways that we mould narratives and histories out of inaccessible pasts.

Taking this as their goal, these films eschew deploying cinematic means that aim to consolidate discourses on realist and 'objective' representations and deliberately disrupt the notion that the past can be unproblematically represented

through any medium, including film. Consequently, they set out crucial questions about the accessibility and comprehensibility of trauma and open up fissures in the communication of the past through their formal structures that encourage spectators to reflect on the complexity of how much we can know about traumatizing events and how much there is that cannot be fully grasped.

More significantly, however, new historical films do not confine their questioning of how much we can know about the past to the realm of traumatic episodes that have been repeatedly excluded from the national narrative. For them, all histories and all narratives of the past are constructs that carry with them an ideology, an interpretation of the past and specific expediencies, not the 'exact' and 'easily accessible' knowledge of it. Accordingly, in addition to their aesthetics that work to problematize the presumption that the medium of film can defy time and provide us with a 'solid' and 'objective' knowledge of events, they question records of the past, including the ones they utilize to narrate their stories, such as photographs, sound recordings, archival documents, testimonies and so on. In so doing, they raise the pivotal question about what happens to pasts, to the stories and experiences that are not 'preserved' in archives, films and historical records.

This is not to say, however, that these films, via their narration of previously unaccounted stories, aim to produce new sources so that they can be included in the 'official' histories that have repeatedly denied their existence. Conversely, they point out that what is fixed on film or identified in any other record has hegemony over those that have been overlooked and don't appear in the records. At the same time, however, these films do not aspire to extract and retrieve the 'truth' about the stories that have been silenced and brushed aside in Turkey as the result of prevailing ideologies. Their main thrust is not to recover the 'truth' about the past, but to interrogate the discursive fields in which some stories are produced, fixed and preserved while others remain 'out of the frame' of history.

For new historical films, this frame also includes the on-screen space of films because they, through the use of the on-screen and off-screen space, point out that for every image we see on the image track, others remain overlooked and obscured. Thus, via the formal characteristics they employ, new historical films examine on the one hand the nature of trauma and lay bare their existence as constructs, as a version of the past that excludes others. On the other hand, they

explore traditional conceptualizations of history and cinematic representation while seeking to undermine understandings of these concepts as means through which we can obtain an 'objective' representation of the past. They do so by experimenting with the means of cinematic representation, such as juxtapositions, contradictions between the image track and sound track, framing, camera movements, and the use of on-screen and off-screen space. With these, they combine the unconventional stories they tell with traditional histories. Similarly they reflect on both of them as constructs in which selection, narration, invention, and manipulation play a part.

From this perspective, I argue that the unconventional stories these films narrate are not fashioned as 'alternative truths' that aim at replacing traditional histories with 'truer' ones. Nor do these films conceive of history and memory as fields which are disrupted in the face of overwhelming events and would otherwise work in a 'healthy' state. For new historical films, the past is constantly re-constructed, re-shaped and re-appropriated as narratives and histories via the discourses of the present day that seek out specific causes. In this sense, the unconventional structures they adopt work to dissect these discourses by interrogating the ways we make meaning of the past, asserting that some versions of the past are 'truer' than others and re-shape and fix them as narratives and histories.

In that regard, Hayden White's claim that not only the representation of traumatic events but also representation of any other past event requires new modes of representation is crucial because to do otherwise would entail relegating questions about representing the past exclusively to traumatic events (1992: 52). White's argument epitomizes the central debates on historiography that I explored in the first chapter of this thesis in which postmodern theories have undermined the authority of traditional histories in recent decades, setting forth a demand for new modes of representing the past (Ankersmit 1989; Rosenstone 1995a; Rosenstone 1995b; Rosenstone 1995c; Rosenstone 1996; Rosenstone 2006; Eaglestone 2001; Munslow 2006; Jenkins 2010). This new mode, as argued by postmodernist historians, should reflect on the process of production of history, a process in which the past is constructed as history (Rosenstone 1995c; Jenkins 2010). That is to say that readers should be made aware that the history they are being given is not an open window onto the past or an 'absolute truth' but rather a

construction that passes through the stages of collection, selection, organization, interpretation, and invention. Similar to the way in which film scholars privilege reflexive structures in films which call attention to their existence as construction, postmodernist historians also suggest that reflexivity is one of the key methodologies of critically engaging with the past in which you are given an ‘explicit analysis of why the history you are getting is the one you are getting and how you are getting it in the way you are not in other way’ (Jenkins 2010: 82). When historical narratives adopt reflexive structures, they render the narrator/historian and his/her methodology visible to the reader and provide information about the process of turning the past into history. And since the process of the production of history is shared with the reader in such reflexive histories, the narrator/historian, rather than making certain claims about his/her text being a direct and accurate representation of the past, can provoke the reader to engage with the historical text, the narrative, in an inquiring manner. In line with the suggestion that reflexivity is a key aspect of postmodern histories, it was argued in the first chapter of this thesis that Rosenstone and Burgoyne’s conceptualizations of ‘postmodern’ and ‘experimental’ film (Rosenstone 1995c) and ‘metahistorical film’ (Burgoyne 2008) propose that reflexive films are seminal sources for historical thinking on the grounds that the reflexive structures used in historical films stimulate spectators to re-consider their conceptualizations of history and explore new ideas about what the past means.

Within this context, new historical films build upon the questions surrounding traumatic experiences – questions about what we can know about the past and what remains unknown and inaccessible – and address historical representation in a broader sense. Thus they reflect on the organization of the past as narratives and histories, whether those be personal, national or otherwise. From this standpoint, it can be argued that new historical films not only correspond to theories on trauma, the process of memory faced with a catastrophic event, but they also correspond to understandings of history as a partial and selective knowledge of the past that is theorized by postmodernist historians who also argue that the past, even so when it is not traumatizing, is never fully accessible (White 1975; White 1985; White 1988; Ankersmit 1989; Carr 2001; Munslow 2006; Jenkins 2010). By reflecting on the processes of the production of knowledge about the past, including cinematic representations, new historical films in Turkey

in this sense produce unconventional histories which provoke us to confront the traumas of the national past and how much we can know about them while at the same time encourage us to re-consider our reliance on historical representation that we have taken for granted, including films, and how much access any given historical representation can provide to the past.

In order to produce probing questions about the ways we forge narratives and histories out of the past and, whether or not or to what extent the past can be accessed, new historical films also refuse to characterise the past as a temporality that is completed and slipped by. Although all new historical films deal with the past and with the traumatic experiences of individuals, families and collectives, aside from a few exceptions they do not directly represent the past but set their stories in the present day. And in the few instances when their stories take place in a moment in the past, they do not give us a ‘look of the past’, in Rosenstone’s words, through landscapes, clothes, calendars, props and buildings (1995c: 60) or affirm the ‘past-ness’ of the stories they tell via shifts in film colour. Nor do they constitute a temporal distance between the stories they tell and the present-day of the film’s production. On the contrary, they diminish the distance between the past, the present, and the future by rendering various times as intertwined and co-existing within the same frame. In this manner, the past in these films becomes ever present. And it also suffuses the future by effacing the boundaries between various temporalities. The conventional understanding of the past, of its ‘completeness’, ‘over-ness’ and ‘absence’ in the present day, is thus subverted, as these films relentlessly assert that the past is not over, is not complete, but is permanent, present and incomplete.

All these characteristics of the new historical film, I argue, germinate a form that pushes the limits of pre-existing definitions of the historical film genre and extends its boundaries. This new form I aim to conceptualize within the national context of Turkey, to a great extent, corresponds to, and at the same time build on, ‘postmodern’ ‘metahistorical’ and ‘experimental’ historical film, as well as ‘history as an experiment’ that are conceptualised by Rosenstone and Burgoyne (Rosenstone 1995c; Burgoyne 2008). And it drives us to re-think and re-examine the limitations of studies in Turkey that theorize representations of the past and characterise historical film. Consequently, the unconventional representation of the past in new historical films has prompted films scholars in Turkey to search

for new theories and new genres to identify the unprecedented engagement of these films with memory and history, and also distinguish them from earlier historical films and various other cinematic practices. However, in the conceptualizations of new genres and new theories used in the study of the new historical film form, scholars have tended to exclude these new films from the field of historical film and analyse them as components of various other genres and cinematic tendencies, ranging from ‘memory cinema’ to ‘political films’. I argue that this approach to new historical films as constituents of other cinematic practices rather than being a historical form stems from the unconventional formal strategies they employ, particularly as regards their portrayal of the past in relation to its presence in the present day as a temporality that does not slip by but persists.

To elaborate on these contentions I will analyse two recent films, *Waiting for the Clouds*, which indirectly centres on the forced exile of the Pontic Greeks on the Black Sea coast of Turkey in the 1910s, and *Voice of My Father*, which indirectly focuses on the war in Kurdistan and the massacre of Alevis in Maraş in 1978. I will propose that these films bring about a new and an unconventional form in cinematic representations of the past in Turkey. In this new form, one can observe the shattering of ‘the grand narrative of the Turks’ not by the creation of contested yet equally conventional histories that aim to find room in the previous ones, but by the narration of previously unaccounted stories in a new *form* that undermines the authority of conventional history altogether; in other words, this new historical form opens up a space in which an interrogation of historical representation as *constructs* can be carried out.

As I seek to define and analyse the characteristics of the new historical film form in this chapter, I will initially look at the production details of both films and explore how in studies on these films in Turkey a profound struggle with categorization crops up. Even though there seems to be consensus amongst critics and scholars about the ‘newness’ of new historical films as regards their unprecedented examination of the national past, a closer look at the scholarly debates demonstrates that there is a certain vacillation in defining these films; are they fiction or documentary? Political films or memory films? Films about present-day or the distant past? I will argue that this hesitance and difficulty with classifying these films occur because of the unconventional form these films deploy, a form that pushes accepted notions of historical, fiction and non-fiction

film; in other words, this form, like ‘postmodern’, ‘metahistorical’ and ‘experimental’ films, resists the desire to label historical films either as ‘based on a true story’ or completely fictional works. In relation to this desire to seek out a narrative and a form that can challenge the traditional accounts of history, I will survey theories of third cinema and intercultural films in which experimentation with film forms has been seen as a key means of dismantling ‘official’ histories. By building on these theories, I will analyse three particular formal characteristics that have been prominent in new historical films and argue that these characteristics challenge our established understandings of historical representation.

First of all, I will suggest that in new historical films a new hybrid form has emerged in which binaries between ‘non-fiction’ and ‘fiction’, ‘fact’ and ‘fabulation’ have been considerably diminished. However, I will not simply suggest that this hybrid form is comprised of discernable elements of fiction and non-fiction and iterative intercuts between them. In the hybrid form that new historical films deploy, I will argue that non-fiction, fiction, truth and fallibility are not easily discernible but rather are intertwined in an inextricable way. And in new historical films, all sources that bear with them some kind of knowledge about the past are approached with equal distrust and partial reliance. This in turn will lead to a discussion of the notions of presence and absence in these films in relation to what these films represent, as well as an exploration of the use of on-screen and off-screen space and the ways that sound operates in both films to connect and fragment the images and sounds. By delving into the notions of presence and absence, I will contend that new political films are equally preoccupied with what remains in the frame and what is left out of it, ‘out of the frame’ of history, so to speak. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the unusual portrayal of historical time in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* with the claim that unlike conventional historical films that draw a sharp line between the past, the present and the future, in new historical films various temporalities co-exist within the same frame. In this way, I will suggest that, in opposition to our perception of the past as a time that has passed and is over, these films render the past as being ubiquitous and ever-present in other temporalities.

Classifying New Historical Films

Both *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* trace the stories of their main characters, Ayşe/Eleni and Mehmet, who search for knowledge about their dispersed families so that they can confront and make sense of their traumatic and unsettling pasts. Set in the Black Sea region of Turkey in the 1970s, *Waiting for the Clouds* centres on the story of Ayşe /Eleni, a Pontic Greek woman who, as a child, was forced to march through the snowy mountains of the Black Sea to the south of Turkey with her family at the end of the First World War. Because many members of her family died during the march, Ayşe/Eleni and her brother Niko were adopted by a Turkish family. After a while, however, Niko was deported to Greece with other orphans, while Ayşe/Eleni stayed with the Turkish family and in order to survive kept silent for 50 years about her identity by pretending to be the daughter of the Turkish family that adopted her. This traumatic episode of Ayşe/Eleni's past, also part of the national past, is never depicted in the film. But we learn about the traces of her past through her struggle to remember what she experienced 50 years earlier. At the beginning of the film, Ayşe/Eleni's Turkish sister Selma dies and a photograph of her Greek family she then finds hidden in the attic triggers memories of her traumatic past, as does a trip from the village to the plateaus of the Black Sea. As these memories haunt Ayşe/Eleni, she isolates herself and is consumed by remorse about Niko having been abandoned. As Ayşe/Eleni sits and stares at the mountains of the Black Sea and searches for her brother Niko, she also starts to speak to herself in Greek for the first time in 50 years and mourns for the loss of her family.

Through her encounter with Tanasis, another Pontic Greek who was deported from Turkey to Greece 50 years before, Ayşe/Eleni starts to construct a narrative out of what she remembers of her past and shares it with Tanasis, and then she gradually pulls herself together. A while after Tanasis's departure for Greece, she receives a letter from him in which Tanasis informs her about Niko's whereabouts and Ayşe/Eleni goes to Thessaloniki to find Niko and ask for his forgiveness. When she arrives in Thessaloniki, Niko disowns her and claims that she cannot be his sister. At the end of the film, Niko takes out his family photographs and shows Ayşe/Eleni photographs of his friends at the orphanage and pictures of his wife and children. Then he tells Ayşe/Eleni that since she is not in those photographs 'that reflect his life', she cannot be his sister. Ayşe/Eleni

places the old photograph she found in the attic over the photographs that ‘reflect’ Niko’s life and the film ends.

Set in the present day, *Voice of My Father* focuses on the story of a Kurdish-Alevi family which consists of Mehmet, his brother Hasan and his parents, Base and Mustafa. Base lives by herself in Elbistan in the province of Maraş and desperately hopes that her eldest son Hasan, who joined the Kurdish guerrillas some time before, will return from the mountains and establish a new life. Her younger son Mehmet lives in Diyarbakır with his pregnant wife and he wants Base to move in with them because she lives alone. Going through his belongings one day, Mehmet finds an old tape that was recorded when Mehmet was a child; the tape was going to be sent to his father Mustafa, who was working in Germany at the time. The tape contains the voices of Mehmet, who was a child at the time, and Base as they speak about their everyday lives, telling Mustafa about what happened since he left. Mehmet then goes to Elbistan to see Base with the aim of taking her to Diyarbakır, and at the same time he intends to find the tapes that his father had sent them.

In Elbistan, Mehmet asks Base about the tapes but Base brushes aside Mehmet’s questions and says that she threw them away. Mehmet does not believe his mother and he searches Base’s home, but in vain. When Mehmet tries to talk about his traumatic past via the tapes, Base avoids confronting him on the issue. In response to Mehmet’s obsession with finding the tapes, she asks Mehmet what meaning he is seeking out and asks, ‘What use are they?’ Mehmet tells her that he does not remember anything about his father and that is why he wants to find the tapes, and then he asks: ‘What is the harm in wanting to know about the past?’ Throughout the film, as Mehmet searches for the tapes and Base refuses to let Mehmet know about their whereabouts, he and his mother talk about the past and about Mustafa and Hasan and their traumatic experiences, and sometimes they come up with differing versions of the same events. In addition to these conversations, through family albums, photographs and newspapers, in other words the traces of the past that fill Base’s house, Mehmet discovers things about his family that he did not know before. He finds out that his family was persecuted during the Maraş Massacre and in order to save his family from the crowd that murdered hundreds of Alevis, his father had to join to them so that they would believe that Mustafa and his family were Sunnis. He also finds out

that Hasan, ashamed of his mother's Kurdish name 'Base' because the other children were making fun of him, changed her name to Asiye, a Turkish name, on her state identification card without her knowledge.

Throughout the film, as Mehmet searches for the tapes and converses with his mother about the past, we repeatedly hear the voices of Mustafa, who is now deceased, as well as Mehmet and Hasan when they were children and Base when she was young; these voices come out of nowhere and drown out the sounds of the on-screen space. Even though we understand that they are from the tapes that Mehmet is searching for, we never see the source of the voices, aside from two instances which I will discuss below. We also never see Mustafa and Hasan in the film, apart from the photographs in the family albums and in frames hanging on the walls of Base's house and Mehmet's flat, but we feel their presence in each frame of the film from the beginning to the end.

Waiting for the Clouds and *Voice of My Father*, along with many other films which deal with traumatic episodes of the national past, have raised questions in Turkey regarding delimitations of national identity and history, as well as national cinema and historical film. Accordingly, in order to address these questions that have been raised by new historical films, film scholars in Turkey have attempted to ferret out new ways of studying filmic representations of the national past by developing new theories and using new terminologies in their discussions. To begin with, new historical films have challenged imagined conceptualizations of the past with their emphasis on diverse identities, cultures, languages and histories; in other words, through the demonstration of national contexts in Turkey that are not necessarily Turkish, these films have pushed the limits of presupposed definitions of the nation and national cinema.

By focusing on identities and histories of various communities that have been denied, such as those of Kurds, Greeks, Assyrians, Armenians and so on, and by producing films that are in languages other than Turkish, they have put the 'Turkishness' of the nation and national cinema into question. This has triggered in Turkey fervent debates about a need to re-consider pre-existing definitions and imaginings of national identity and national cinema as 'Turkish'. And as a consequence, today many scholars have invoked new terminologies and referred to these films and national cinema in a broader sense as 'Cinema in Turkey' or 'Cinema of Turkey', and apart from a few instances, no longer refer to it as

‘Turkish Cinema’ *per se*. At the same time, these films are also being studied as constituents of other national cinemas, particularly in terms of the growing field of Kurdish Cinema (Çiftçi 2012; Koçer 2014) and they have also been referred to as components of a ‘minority cinema’ in Turkey (Mersin 2010). Thus, it can be argued that, through their existence alone, these new films have led film scholars to take up the concepts of nation, national identity and history, and subsequently drive them to devise new theories and definitions so they can identify these films within the national and historical context.

Coupled with the questions of nation, national identity and cinema, the structures of production and the aesthetics new historical films deploy have helped scholars further analyse these films’ distinguishing characteristics in comparison with earlier films and other cinematic practices in Turkey. This has resulted in the identification of new historical films as a new cinematic practice and accordingly scholars have come up with new genres and new theories as regards these films’ production traits and aesthetics. In these conceptualizations, new historical films are taken up as examples of a ‘new political cinema’ and ‘art cinema’ (Suner 2009), ‘memory cinema’ (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012), ‘young cinema’ (Aytaç and Onaran 2009), ‘minority cinema’ (Mersin 2010) and ‘transnational cinema’ (Suner 2010). One of the main trends in these discussions is a positioning of new historical films in opposition to popular cinema, and with this move scholars argue that there is a major divide between art-house and popular films in Turkey based on the varying sources of financing, production and structures of distribution as well as in terms of themes and aesthetics (Suner 2009; Köstepen 2009; Duruel-Erkılıç 2012).

As regards their production and structures of distribution, new historical films have been referred to as belonging to the field of ‘art-house’ films and hence analysed as exemplars of ‘independent’ and ‘transnational’ cinemas since they largely secure funding from various national and international institutions and rely on European co-productions and sales and on the establishment of production networks across various regions¹ (Köstepen 2009). In addition to these networks, film scholars have also noted that these films receive financial support from

¹ The institutions that provide funding for new historical films include the Ministry of Tourism and Culture’s Committee for Supporting Cinema which began its allocations in 2005, Eurimages, and institutions such as the World Cinema Fund, Montecinema Verita, French National Cinema Centre (CNC) and Hubert Bals (Zaim 2008a).

project development workshops at various international film festivals that result in international partnerships with various domestic and international institutions to aid in the subsidizing of new productions.² Also, more recently crowd-funding campaigns that are launched on the internet and solicit financing for the production, post-production, and distribution of films have arisen as another source of funding (Koçer 2014). Derviş Zaim has also pointed out that sales for international television channels provide financing during the production stage (2008a) and Enis Köstepen has noted that firms which rent out cameras and lighting equipment, as well as post-production studios, sometimes give discounts to filmmakers and free equipment, and small independent production companies have released these films in limited runs and with no expectation of profits (2009).

The majority of these films are either screened at small, independent theatres for a short period of time or they rely on festival screenings and special screenings held at museums and art galleries. *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* are often regarded as being part of the ‘new’ ‘art-house’ ‘independent’ cinema in Turkey, as *Waiting for the Clouds* is a Turkish-Greek-French-German co-production and received financial support from various sources in Europe (Zaim 2008a). *Voice of My Father* received financial support from the Ministry of Tourism and Culture’s Committee for Supporting Cinema, the Meetings on the Bridge workshop at the Istanbul Film Festival and also through a crowd-funding campaign launched on the internet (Aşar 2012). However, as Derviş Zaim argues, categorizing films as being part of a ‘new’ and ‘independent’ cinema based on their structures of financing does not clearly distinguish them from other cinematic practices in Turkey, as popular and mainstream films also occasionally rely on the same sources of financing (2008a). And, as regards my conceptualization of a new historical form, I argue that the new historical film form has emerged from the unconventional structures of form that these films employ in their interrogations of the ways that the past becomes narratives and histories; likewise, I would argue that a popular or mainstream film that delves

² Meetings on the Bridge, for instance, provides a range of support including the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Tourism and Culture Support Award (USD 10,000), the Melodika Sound Post-Production Award, the CNC (French National Cinema Centre) Support Award (EUR 10,000) and the Mediterranean Film Institute (MFI) Scenario Workshop Award. For details, see <http://film.iksv.org/en/meetingsonthebridge> [Accessed: 17th July 2014]

into this process by deploying an unconventional form can also be exemplary of the new historical film form. Also, as *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn* demonstrate, not all films that centre on unaccounted experiences of oppressed communities and delve into traumatizing events bring out unconventional histories that challenge traditional narratives and their discourses.

A review of the scholarly debates on new historical films illustrates that film scholars tend to base their identifications on subject-matters, themes and structures of production and distribution by disregarding questions about the form of these films. In this respect, as regards the divergent ways that they deal with the national past, a firmer distinction between ‘popular’ and ‘art-house’ films has emerged in scholarly debates and scholars seem to be inclined to privilege what they refer to as ‘new cinema’ as a ‘more serious’ means of engaging with the national past (Suner 2009; Mersin 2010; Suner 2010; Yüksel 2012; Duruel-Erkılıç 2012). Asuman Suner in her book *New Turkish Cinema* (2010) and her article ‘Silenced Memories’ (2009) contends that one of the key characteristics of contemporary cinema productions in Turkey – whether political, art-house, mainstream, or otherwise – is a substantial engagement with questions regarding the national past and the events that have been excluded from the ‘official’ versions of national history. She suggests that these contemporary films can be split into two categories on the grounds of their discrepant tendencies in dealing with the past and history, and she formulates these categories as ‘new political cinema’ and ‘new popular cinema’. Taking up this standpoint, Suner elaborates on the divergent characteristics of cinematic representations of the past and states that in ‘new popular films’, ‘questions of history and politics are often given little importance and the past is remembered merely in a nostalgic mode’ (2009: 72). In contrast, in ‘new political films’, which for her is represented by *Waiting for the Clouds*, ‘subjective remembrance of the past is strongly interconnected with questions of history and politics’ (Suner 2009: 72) and thus she maintains that the past we encounter in ‘new political films’ is not nostalgic but disturbing (Suner 2009: 76). Suner explains that such a distinction occurs, because a film like *Waiting for the Clouds* examines how the lives of ordinary people have been destroyed by the turbulent political climate of Turkey in the recent past. Following up on this claim, she argues that ‘unlike popular nostalgia films, which avoid serious engagement with past political events other than in the form of a light-

hearted critique within the conventions of dark comedy, new political films focus attention directly on the question of how to come to terms with a traumatic past' (Suner 2010: 18).

Senem Duruel-Erkılıç puts forward a similar approach by underscoring the 'independent' 'political' and 'popular' status of contemporary films and argues for a 'memory cinema' that she claims arose in Turkey after the 1990s (2012). Duruel-Erkılıç examines *Waiting for the Clouds*, *Voice of My Father* as well as *Pains of Autumn* as exemplars of 'memory cinema' in Turkey (2012: 153-195), but she departs from Suner's discussion of 'nostalgic' and 'disturbing' remembrances of the past by suggesting that 'memory cinema' includes both 'popular' and 'art-house' films. Duruel-Erkılıç regards an exposition of traumas, in other words an 'excavation' of issues that had been suppressed and a rediscovery of history within a new context, as the main traits of 'memory cinema' (2012: 169). She contends that 'memory films' bring to the fore the paradox of remembering and forgetting as regards the national past in Turkey and offer up an appeal to remembering as a therapeutic means of dealing with traumatic experiences (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012: 169-170). For this reason, she suggests that cinema can have a therapeutic effect only through 'memory films' (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012: 169-170).

It is possible to perceive the pursuit of scholars who seek to come up with new theories to identify and locate the narration of the national past in new historical films as a new cinematic practice. However, what is striking in these debates is that although the words 'history' and 'past' appear repeatedly in these texts and all the discussions concerning *Voice of My Father* and *Waiting for the Clouds* examine how these films dwell on and treat the national past in peculiar ways, no one refers to these films as 'historical film forms'. Instead, scholars try to label them as something else. The case of Suner and Duruel-Erkılıç represents an example of a common approach to these new historical films; even though both scholars regularly deal with the questions of the national past, trauma and history and base their arguments on the divergent ways that these new films communicate with these notions, they refrain from identifying these films as historical film forms.

In *New Turkish Cinema* (2010), Suner explains why she avoids such a classification and contends that although all the films of 'new popular cinema' are

about the past and past political events, ‘it would be misleading to call them “historical films” since they do not produce an objective account of the past. Instead they emphasize subjective accounts of memory shaped around a strong sense of nostalgia’ (26). Based on this definition, since Suner claims that ‘new political’ films do not produce ‘objective’ accounts of the past but offer ‘subjective’ memories, it can be argued that, for Suner, the historical film form also excludes what she refers to as ‘new political cinema’. And paradoxically, while excluding films like *Voice of My Father* and *Waiting for the Clouds* from the realm of historical film, she considers the films that I explored in chapter 3 as being typical examples of the historical film form (Suner 2010: 26).

As I discussed throughout this thesis, Suner’s definition reiterates conventional discourses on historical representation and is problematic because it takes the concepts of history, memory, historical film and entrenched questions about ‘objective’ representation for granted. As for Duruel-Erkılıç, although she also critiques Suner’s identification of the historical film form based on an opposition between ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ narrations of the past (2012: 186), she reformulates a different dichotomy between memory and history by analysing films like *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* under the rubric of ‘historical film’ and *Voice of My Father*, *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Pains of Autumn* in terms of ‘memory cinema’ (2012: 153-185). The dichotomy Duruel-Erkılıç devises also rests on conventional approaches, as explored in the previous chapter, which frame memory and history as being antithetical concepts. And regardless of the way that her analysis of ‘memory films’ Duruel-Erkılıç draws on theories of postmodern historians and explores how these films establish a relationship with the recent history of Turkey, she also avoids designating ‘memory film’ as a historical film form (2012).

In this way, both Suner’s and Duruel-Erkılıç’s studies on new historical films are problematic because they take for granted the intimate, yet complex, relationship between memory, history and the entrenched questions surrounding the representation of the past in films. However, rather than elaborating on the problems with these classifications, I find it necessary to inspect how the new historical film form, which is typified in films like *Voice of My Father* and *Waiting for the Clouds*, drives Suner, Duruel-Erkılıç and other scholars to re-think

cinematic representations of the past and seek out new routes, theories and categories to make sense of these films.

At this juncture, I argue that since films like *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* challenge all the previous cinematic representations of history in Turkey with their unconventional form, scholars feel a need to define and explain the new form that these films utilise in their engagement with the national past. However, I further argue that the reluctance to study these films as constituents of historical film forms also underlines their unconventional formal structures. This is because the 'indirect' approach of both films to telling stories about the past transcends ingrained boundaries of traditional historical films. First of all, indirectness raises questions about the portrayal of temporality since these films disrupt conventional approaches to temporal characteristics of memory and history. As stated earlier, new historical films set their stories in the present day and at the same time diminish boundaries between the past, the present and the future with the cinematic means they employ. In so doing, various temporalities are fused together and co-exist within the same frame. In this sense, the tendency to study these films as 'memory films' instead of historical films can be linked to the traditional approaches that I reviewed in the previous chapter which conceive of history and memory as oppositional terms by associating memory with the present tense in relation to the notions of instability, permanency, and continuity, and history with the past tense as regards the notions of solidity, impermanency and 'completedness'.

I argue that since the new historical form challenges this opposition and renders the past 'unfinished' and 'incomplete', it is the 'present-ness' and permanency of the past, both in the case of memory and history, that challenge the pre-existing understanding of the historical film as a sole representation of the events that are considered to be 'over' and 'completed'. This is also what perplexes scholars and erroneously leads them to eliminate these films from the realm of historical film because majority of these films simply do not take place in the past yet they are about the past. I contend that the ubiquitous representation of the past is one of the pivotal characteristics of the new historical film form that corresponds to postmodernist approaches to historiography which emphasise the 'presentness' of the past as history in present-day contexts and defies discourses on its 'completedness' by pointing out the ways that it is constantly re-shaped, re-

written and re-appropriated to legitimize and justify present-day needs (Connerton 2011: 1-4). From this perspective, by fusing together the past and different temporalities and rendering each frame of the film as temporally heterogeneous, the new historical film form reflects on postmodern approaches to historical representation and instigates a re-consideration of an understanding which confines history and the past to a time that is over and gone.

In addition to disrupting conventional approaches to memory and history in terms of temporality, the new historical film form also raises questions concerning the notions of 'reality', 'truth', and 'authenticity' and subverts their utilization in conventional discourses on history, memory and cinematic representation with its 'indirectness' of telling. At this point, before moving on to analyse how this subversion occurs, it will be useful to provide an overview of my discussion in the previous chapters. As we have seen, discourses on memory and history are utilized in various ways in relation to their agency of purveying 'the truth' of the past. On the one hand, conventional approaches treat memory and history as antithetical modes of engaging with the 'truth' of the past in which history is valorised as being 'objective' and 'fixed', an 'open window onto the past', while memory is characterized as being 'subjective' and 'unstable', laden with potential 'fallibility'. This is also the contention adopted by Suner and Duruel-Erkılıç, and drawing up this they refrain from exploring new historical films as being part and parcel of the historical film form. On the other hand, however, as we have seen in the previous chapters, discourses on memory and the experiences of survivors can also be deployed as means to back claims of 'authenticity' in cinematic representations of the past.

Discourses on memory, in this sense, are utilized in some films to assert that they are revealing a 'buried truth' about the past to foster a confrontation with those traumatic moments and assimilate them into a narrative so that they can become history in the conventional sense of the word. Such an approach also resonates in the realist and reflexive forms some films deploy, such as *The Breath* and *Pains of Autumn*, as they rely on the film medium to represent and fix the 'realities' of the world as 'they are'. In this context, new historical films subvert all these traditional discourses that regard memory, history and cinematic representation as vehicles that can 'unleash' 'the truth' of the past or distort it. They do so by the cinematic devices they employ, and this is echoed in the

statements of the filmmakers in that they note that their films include autobiographical and biographical nuances, as well as the personal memories of filmmakers, to an equal extent as fictional elements. They also disavow claims of ‘authenticity’ and ‘accuracy’ when asked in interviews about the extent to which they narrate ‘true’ and ‘real’ stories.

As regards *Waiting for the Clouds*, Yeşim Ustaoğlu stated that the film is based on her childhood memories and the stories and traumas she’d heard about which resemble Ayşe/Eleni’s suffering in the film; these are among the stories and experiences that have been disavowed by the dominant ideologies in Turkey since the establishment of the Republic (Akpınar 2005: 232). But Ustaoğlu does not utilize her traces of memories to sustain the ‘truthfulness’ of the story that *Waiting for the Clouds* depicts, nor does she argue that the film sheds light on a dark moment in the national past to extract the ‘truth’ about the forced march of Pontic Greeks. Instead, Ustaoğlu explains that *Waiting for the Clouds* is a fictional story that traces the vestiges of the forced migration of the Pontic Greeks from the own point of view of its filmmaker and in so doing it draws upon a spate of sources including a novel she read about the event, her childhood memories, and the stories she was told. She tells us that it was also shaped by her desire to return to the Black Sea, her home, after a long absence; she was unable to return until she made the film because of her grief over her father’s death (Akpınar 2005: 232).

Similarly, yet in a more intricate manner, *Voice of My Father* is based on the experience of one of its directors, Zeynel Doğan, and on the life of Base, and they appear in the film as the actors playing their roles. Zeynel Doğan has noted when he was a child, his father, Mustafa, was working in Germany, while he was living in Turkey with Base, Hasan and his other siblings. They were corresponding with Mustafa through tapes they recorded and sent to each other, and with Doğan’s re-discovery of the tapes a few years earlier, he stated that he wanted to produce a documentary about them and learn more about his father, who is deceased. Zeynel Doğan went on to note that he brought up the idea with his co-director, Orhan Eskiköy, and with the producer of the film, Özgür Doğan and together they sat and listened to the tapes. After long deliberations, however, Zeynep Doğan stated that they came to conclusion that such a story could be told through fiction instead of documentary (Aydemir 2012b). Then they wrote a script which includes the experiences of Zeynel Doğan and his family, as well as his

memories and events based on survivors' fictional stories. And instead of using the original tapes, they used other people to create recordings for the voices of Hasan, Mehmet and their father (Aşar 2012). Yet for the parts of Mehmet, Base and Mehmet's wife Gülizar, they felt it would be necessary for the people that the fictional characters are based on to play those parts, since, as Zeynel Doğan explains, the Kurdish spoken in the film is distinctive to Maraş; furthermore, they were convinced that it was Base, the mother of Zeynel Doğan, who could play the character Base in the film (*Basın Express* 2012). Zeynel Doğan also noted that throughout the shooting of the film, particularly in the scenes in which he performs with his mother, he discovered things about his father, Hasan and Base that he did not know before, memories that his mother had been reluctant to tell before (*Öteki Sinema* 2012).

All these pieces of extra-diegetic information about the film have led critics and film scholars alike to question and try to identify the 'real' and 'fictional' elements of the film, and it has often been cited as being an example of the 'pseudo-documentary' genre (*Açık Dergi* 2012). In this way, questions regarding to what extent the film represents 'reality' have been repeatedly directed to the filmmakers (Aydemir 2012b). However, Zeynel Doğan and Orhan Eskiköy, like Yeşim Ustaoglu, respond to such questions by stating that regardless of whether it contains the experiences of its director, his family and other survivors, *Voice of My Father* is a fictional film (Aydemir 2012b; *Basın Express* 2012) which centres on the significance of remembering the past in a national context in which particular versions of the past have been subject to erasures. But the film, as Eskiköy suggests, does not dictate or aim to elucidate what to remember or how to remember; rather, it merely seeks to point out that it is crucial to remember the past any way possible (*Açık Dergi* 2012).

With such statements, the filmmakers of new historical film form, desist from a reliance on memory and personal experiences to secure the 'authenticity' of the stories they narrate in their films. Concomitantly, these statements also point out that in making *Voice of My Father* and *Waiting for the Clouds* these filmmakers abandoned the presumption that the medium of film can 'directly' and 'unmediatedly' represent the traumatizing events as 'they are', in other words, render the inaccessible pasts fully accessible. Yet this is not to say that these films privilege history over memory or that history can provide 'truer' versions of the

past compared to memory. For these films, there is no hierarchy between history and memory, for all representations of the past are constructs that carry with them certain ideologies, discourses, desires and rely on various sources. More interestingly, however, these extra-diegetic accounts about both films generate a reflexive structure, a correlation between the film and its production. As with the indirectness of the stories the films tell which refuses to give us 'full access' to the past and do not provide us with easily comprehensible knowledge about it, these extra-diegetic accounts defy our desire to know and have 'full access' to the stories of both films' productions, making it difficult to know to what extent we are getting 'fictional' stories and what segments of the film convey 'the truth' about the past.

Put concisely, through representations of the past in these films, a new historical film form emerges. This new historical form, with its abandonment of the presumption that the medium of film can represent 'reality' and refusal to satisfy our desire to know 'the facts' and 'the truth' about the past, and with its refusal to treat the past as a temporality that has passed, does not assimilate trauma and the past into a straightforward narrative. And it defies our pre-existing conceptions of memory, history and historical film. Whether it is 'independent', 'art-house', 'popular', or 'mainstream', or whether it centres in particular on the processes of memory in the face of trauma, the main thrust of the new historical film form is not to deliver 'truths' about the past but rather to interrogate the process by which we make meaning of the past and construct narratives and histories. In this sense, although these films seem to focus on specific traumas of the national past, they do not confine their interrogation to traumatizing events. Instead, they expand their scrutiny to the narration of the past in Turkey as stories, tales, songs, images, films and 'official' histories. And scholars, instead of attending to these crucial formal characteristics of the new historical film form, have tended to recapitulate conventional discourses on historical representation and overlook the significant means that these films have brought about for a critical engagement with the past.

Emergence of a Hybrid Form

As can also be seen in the statements of the directors of *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father*, one of the key characteristics of the new

historical film form in Turkey is a tendency towards narrating through fictional stories the traumatizing events and moments that the 'official' history overlooks. These fictional stories also tend to evade and disown claims to 'truth' while they are all partially based on the experiences and memories of survivors. Furthermore, the formal structures of these films struggle against conventional codes of cinematic representation, and particularly the codes of realist forms. In this sense, the retreat from discourses on realism and claims to 'truth', along with the turn to fictional stories, should not be seen as a means of escapism and merely an aesthetic choice. It is also a political choice that is embodied in the forms that new historical films deploy in an act of resisting and confounding conventional histories and the tools that provide them with an 'authority' to speak about the past, such as discourses on 'authenticity', 'accuracy' and 'truth'. By turning to fiction rather than seeking out 'factual' knowledge that can also provide these films with an 'authority' to speak about the past, *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* search for ways to repudiate the logic upon which conventional history is based and refute the discourses with which it establishes authority. Hence, by taking up an understanding that employing the same tools as conventional history will not dismantle the 'authority' it claims to possess, new historical films rely on new means of dealing with the past, such as myths, tales and fictional stories.

In their turn to fiction, however, new historical films do not suggest that all histories and narratives about the past are fabrication. Instead, they resist the conventional binarism of 'fact' and 'fiction' as a structure that is used to distinguish 'factual' and 'imaginary' knowledge about the past. And this has culminated in a hybrid form, the emergence of which cannot simply be explained in terms of these films utilising fictional and non-fictional elements and establishing a connection, or a comparison, by intercutting between them. The notion of hybridity embedded in the new historical film form can be explained in light of the ways that *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* erase the boundaries between 'fact' and 'fiction' and propose that each element that represents the past – be they archival footage, historical texts and records, family photographs, myths, tales, sound recordings or narrative films – are not repositories of 'truth', but *constructs* that are framed by the interplay of discourses, power relations, imaginings, ideologies, expedencies, and desires. As

a result, in both films the sources that represent the past do not give us direct access to the events they represent. They do, however, inextricably bear with them vestiges of the events they represent, the residues of fabulation and lived experiences, fiction, 'official' discourses, desires, intentions, fears and fantasies. In addition, they carry with them to a certain extent fallibility, volatility and retention.

New historical films illustrate that all these traces of past representations are not easily discernable but intertwined in an inextricable way. From this perspective, I contend that the new historical film form emphasizes that once the past is represented in historical records, narratives, and historical texts, as well as in documentaries, myths, films and tales, it is transformed into a hybrid form. And in doing so, it makes it impossible to extract and define any source of knowledge as clearly being 'fact' or 'fabulation'. In this sense, the hybrid form that arises from a shift towards disowning the tools of conventional historiography represents a compelling challenge to solidly entrenched discourses of conventional histories and traditional historical representations. It also means setting the terms anew for the production of histories.

These questions have been dealt with extensively in the fields of third cinema and intercultural cinema. And the turn to fiction has also been seen as a means for struggling against and confounding 'official' histories of the oppressors, whether they are colonisers or nation-states. In theories of third cinema, films that are produced in third world countries are conceptualized as being guardians of popular memory, of the stories 'official' history seeks to erase (Gabriel 1988; Gabriel 1989; Cham 2000). 'Official' history, in this sense, is regarded as an apparatus that is deployed by colonizers to make claims about a 'centre' that continuously marginalises other narratives and histories while preventing the people at the 'margins' from producing their own histories (Gabriel 1989: 53-54). In contrast, popular memory, with film as its guardian, is perceived as being an instrument that treats the past as a political issue and a theme of struggle (Gabriel 1989: 53-54). Popular memory, then, is referred to as a means that operates to eradicate the hierarchy between the 'margins' and the 'centre' and comes forward as fertile ground for the oppressed to narrate their own histories with their own voices.

While third cinema has brought about new histories by delving into the stories that 'official' history seeks to cast aside, scholars maintain that filmmakers have felt the necessity of deploying alternative tools because otherwise they would be incapable of dismantling those 'official' histories (Gabriel 1988; Gabriel 1989; Gabriel 1998; Cham 2000). Accordingly, Cham propounds that artists and filmmakers, particularly in Africa, have taken on the task of purging their histories from the imposed remembrances of the colonizers (2000: 262); in this process, the search for their own voices has led them to turn to popular memory, folklore, oral traditions and myths which have been passed down through the generations (Gabriel 1988; Gabriel 1989; Gabriel 1998; Cham 2000). In this respect, Gabriel and Cham's identification of a tendency towards fiction as a means to dismantle 'official' history is vitally important. The reason for this is that third cinema does not attempt to produce conventional histories that can tease out 'truer' versions of the past and temporarily replace those that are deemed 'official'. It does, however, seek to shake the foundations of 'official' history and set new terms for the production of histories.

Laura Marks (2000) takes a similar approach on this matter in her theorization of intercultural cinema, which she describes is characterized by an experimental style and attempts to represent 'the experience of living in between two or more cultural regimes of knowledge, or living as a minority in the still white, Euro-American West' (2000: 1). For Marks, intercultural cinema is also marked by a search for a new language and a new form that can be used to reconstruct the histories of minorities, immigrants, and those who have been subjected to cultural apartheid, in other words, events and experiences that 'official' histories overlook and suppress in a variety of spaces. In this undertaking, Marks maintains that intercultural cinema struggles against the dominant ideologies that set the terms for what counts as 'historical' or 'true' knowledge about the past. For Marks, intercultural cinema does so because in the production of histories that 'official' versions of the past overlook, conceding to the terms of the 'official' history would mean speaking its language and becoming subsumed in its regime (2000: 24).

For that reason, Marks notes that in the face of erasures, rather than conceding to the terms of 'official history' and deploying the tools by which it establishes the authority to speak about the past, intercultural cinema turns to a

variety of sources to come up with new venues of knowledge including written history, audio-visual archives, collective and personal memories, and fiction. She further suggests that sometimes the very lack of images and memories itself can be a meaningful record of what can be expressed about histories that are excluded from 'official' narratives (2000: 24). And by drawing upon this variety of sources, intercultural films seek to dismantle the 'official' records about their communities 'and then search for ways to reconstitute their histories often through fiction, myth or ritual' (2000: 24-25). However, she contends that in intercultural cinema when 'official histories' are deconstructed, 'no simple truth is uncovered' (2000: 25). This is because 'intercultural cinema is not sanguine about finding the truth of a historical event so much as making history reveal what it was not able to say. Any truth is lost in the events' discursive representation, in the layers of words and things that build up over it' (Marks 2000: 29).

Here it should be noted that although films that are produced by immigrants living in the West from Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Africa, and South America are central to Marks's discussion on the intercultural cinema movement, Marks also notes that 'this movement is an international phenomenon, produced wherever people of different cultural backgrounds live together in the power-inflicted spaces of diaspora (post- or neo-) colonialism, and cultural apartheid' (2000: 1). Thus, Mark's analysis on how, instead of producing 'corrective' histories about their communities, intercultural films engage with 'official' histories, interrogate the notion of 'historical truth' and representation, seek to dismantle the authority of 'official' histories, and disown their methods are pertinent to my discussion of hybridity in the new historical film form.

Through Marks's discussion of the notion that the truth is lost in discursive representation, I shall now explore new historical films' turn to fictional stories and the emergence of a hybrid form. In this sense, the opening of *Waiting for the Clouds* represents an outstanding example of how this works. The film opens with black and white archival footage which shows crowds of people walking, getting on boats and ships, and carrying luggage and crossing bridges, and there are also coaches moving from place to place, trains packed with people, and children walking in rows. Then in close up we see men and women in tears as they sit in groups in desolate settings, and then the film cuts to a medium shot of a young girl with a baby in her lap looking directly into the camera and smiling. The image

of the young girl and the baby gradually dissolves into an extreme long shot in colour of the cloud-covered mountains of the Black Sea with a few houses on their peaks, and the title of the film appears over the cloudy mountains: *Waiting for the Clouds*. After the title of the film dissolves, another appears over this image: 'Trebolu, 1975'.

This shot cuts to an interior of a house and we see a woman, Ayşe/Eleni, sitting on a *divan* looking out the window. As we see Ayşe/Eleni, we hear the sound of the call to prayer coming from off-screen space. Ayşe/Eleni hears her elder sister, Selma, coughing in the other room, and she gets up and walks out of the frame and the film cuts to Ayşe/Eleni carrying bedridden Selma to the bathroom on her back. In the next shot, as Ayşe/Eleni wipes her sister's face with a cloth, we see a little boy, Mehmet, approaching the house. He knocks on the door and Ayşe/Eleni lets him in. Then we hear the first dialogue of the film as Mehmet asks, 'Has *Battal Gazi* started yet?' – a reference to a well-known historical film from Yeşilçam which centres on the glories of Battal Gazi, a Turkish hero, and narrates his countless victories in his fight with Byzantium. Ayşe/Eleni then turns the television on to see if the film has started yet and on the television we hear a news anchor reporting on the census being carried out in Turkey at the time. The reporter says, 'The Republic carried out its first census in 1927. Since 1935, the census has been made every five years. Today's census will provide statistics about religion, language, and gender'. As we hear the reporter, we see close ups of Mehmet, and Selma praying. And then the film cuts back to the news footage in full screen and we see soldiers, tanks, and the streets of the cities which are empty because of a curfew that had been imposed, and the reporter goes on to announce that people who do not participate in the census will be punished. The image of the empty streets on television then cuts to two state officials walking around Ayşe/Eleni's village, and the sound of the reporter's voice resonates over these images. From here the film cuts back to Ayşe/Eleni's house and we see Mehmet watching television while a reporter speaks about 'anarchy in the country' in reference to the leftist movement in the 1970s. And we see politicians talking about the harm that street demonstrations have inflicted on the economic stability of the country.

With the sound of the television in the background, Mehmet tells Ayşe/Eleni, 'There are *karagoncalos* [mythic monsters] under my bed. They come

every night when I wet my bed'. Then Ayşe/Eleni starts to tell the story of *karagoncalos* to Mehmet, and in the process she blocks out the television and drowns out the voice of the reporter and the politicians commenting on the 'anarchy' in the country. Ayşe/Eleni says that the village was once cursed and *karagoncalos* started to whisper into people's ears at night. Frightened by *karagoncalos*, the peasants moved beyond the mountains to escape from them. But, she continues, they could not find a way to free themselves from the curse of the *karagoncalos*. Ayşe/Eleni tells Mehmet that there was a little girl among the peasants who lost her family in a snowstorm; she was all alone and about to freeze to death when a fairy came and saved her. While Ayşe/Eleni tells the tale of the *karagoncalos*, the film cuts between close ups of Mehmet, Ayşe/Eleni and Selma, who looks resentful. At the same time, although Ayşe/Eleni blocks the television, we can still hear the voices of politicians talking and the sounds of crowds protesting in the background. As Ayşe/Eleni finishes her story, the two state officials that we saw at the beginning of the film appear at the door and Ayşe/Eleni lets them in. The officials tell Ayşe/Eleni that they are there for the census and then ask her to turn the television off. The officials ask for the identity cards of Ayşe/Eleni and Selma and as Ayşe/Eleni gives them the identity cards, they start asking questions about her name, her father's and mother's names, and her place of birth. In close up, Ayşe/Eleni tells them that she was born in Mersin, in the south of Turkey, and that her father's name is Süleyman and her mother's name is Aysel. The officials write down her answers in a notebook containing demographic information. Then the officers ask Ayşe/Eleni why she is in Trebolu. Before Ayşe/Eleni can answer, Selma has a stroke, and the sequence ends.

This opening sequence of *Waiting for the Clouds* fuses diverse sources of knowledge and engenders a hybrid form that challenges our understanding of 'fabricated' and 'factual' knowledge about the past. Eleni is registered in the official records, the census book, as Ayşe, a Turkish-Muslim woman from Mersin. As proof of this, she shows another document to the officials, the official record of her existence, her identity card, which represents the existence of someone who does not exist. The story of the *karagoncalos* echoes her own traumatic experience as well as that of the Pontic Greek community, in terms of the forced migration and atrocities they suffered at the hands of the state. It also includes traces of Ayşe/Eleni's loss of her family in the snowstorm and then her

adoption by a Turkish family when she was about to freeze to death; in other words, these are stories that find no room in the official records, narratives and histories.

In this respect, Ayşe/Eleni tells two stories in this sequence. The first one is about her life as Eleni, via the myth of *karagoncalos*, which contains echoes of the forced migration and her trauma, and the second one is the one she tells to the state officials about her life as Ayşe. This is her silence about her identity, which is registered in the ‘official’ records. On this point, *Waiting for the Clouds* deliberately juxtaposes ‘official’ records, which are considered to be repositories of direct knowledge about the past, with myths and tales that are thought of as being mere imaginary stories. However, this juxtaposition in the film is not meant to suggest that ‘official’ records are imbued with ‘falsified’ information and ‘lies’ while the myths convey the ‘truth’. On the contrary, with this comparison the film debunks the establishment of such a hierarchy between them and points out that both the historical records and the myths are hybrid. And even though both representations harbour residues of the past, neither the ‘official’ records nor the myth can give us direct access to the past events because they are comprised of various inter-fused sources including experiences, fantasies, desires, dominant ideologies, memories and so on.

Waiting for the Clouds furthers this comparison in the film’s first dialogue with Mehmet’s desire to watch *Battal Gazi*, a fictional story about the ‘glories’ of the Turkish nation in its struggle against ‘evil’ Byzantium. Even though *Battal Gazi* is a fictional film, and as I discussed in chapter 2 it has also been classified as being one of the constituents of the fantasy film genre in Turkey (Scognamillo and Demirhan 2005), it reiterates the state’s official discourses on history in terms of its emphasis on the ‘supremacy’ of Turkishness in the same way it is told in ‘official’ historical narratives. As we also see later in *Waiting for the Clouds* in the scenes that depict Mehmet in the elementary school, the fictional story of *Battal Gazi* is hardly any different than the ones that are taught in the schools through history lessons, national songs, poems and oaths, narratives that fill history textbooks and are regarded by the state and historians as ‘factual knowledge’ about the past. Here again, in *Waiting for the Clouds* both *Battal Gazi* and the history that is taught in schools are defined as being hybrid, and neither of them are seen as being an open window onto the past.

This emphasis on the hybridity of historical representation is also delineated through the archival footage on the television that shows the curfew, soldiers, street demonstrations and politicians making statements because we hear but never see the reporter. As soon as Ayşe/Eleni turns the television on, the first thing we hear is the reporter talking about the census and the state plan to produce ‘solid’ knowledge about the country’s citizens in terms of their religion and language, and this is to be based on the ‘official’ records created through the information collected during the course of the census. However, as seen throughout the sequence, things are not unproblematically registered in the ‘official’ records as ‘they are’ and even so when the records rely on ‘evidence’ to produce knowledge, the evidence in this case being the identity cards and Ayşe’s existence, they do not represent ‘the truth’. So, historical knowledge that will be produced from these records is also doomed to be hybrid.

Here, the film makes another statement about historical representation through the archival footage on the television as the images and the comments of the politicians are non-fiction and the voice of the reporter that accompanies these images, whose face we never see, is that of an acclaimed actor. This indicates that the voice of the reporter was recorded for the film and placed over the archival images. The archival footage and statements of the politicians are hybrid because the past they represent is filtered through dominant discourses, and the way the news footage is edited is also hybrid.

All these elements that bear with them the vestiges of the past are superimposed in the film and they interrupt each other. The sound of the reporter echoes in Ayşe/Eleni’s house in the moments of silence when she stops talking. And when Ayşe/Eleni tells the story of the *karagoncalos*, she drowns out the sound of the news reporter and blocks our view by standing in front of the television. Ayşe’s telling of the *karagoncalos* tale is followed by the arrival of the state officials at her place to start the process of the production of official records. In this way, all these stories, the trauma of Ayşe/Eleni, her adoption, her life as Ayşe, the production of historical records, the sounds of turmoil on the television, and the discourses of the politicians about another traumatic moment in the national past, and the leftist movement in the 1970s which was preceded and followed by military interventions all join together on the same plane. None of

them, however, give us ‘full access’ to past events, and are only able to provide us with their hybrid traces of them.

The archival footage in the beginning that *dissolves* into the fictional world of the film then epitomizes the hybridization of representations, as the same footage, the young girl and a baby on her lap, appears again at the end of the film. In the final scene of the film, we see in close up Niko holding the photograph of Ayşe/Eleni’s Pontic Greek family that she found in the attic. The old photograph, which shows a man with a baby on her lap and two children standing next to him, gradually dissolves into the archival footage of the young girl with a baby on her lap. Here the film illustrates how the fictional story of the film, the photograph and the archival footage dissolve and melt into each other and form a hybrid relationship. Although in conventional discourses on historical representation, all these representations of the past are regarded as engaging with the past in varying degrees of ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’, *Waiting for the Clouds* suggests otherwise and indicates that in any given representation of the past, fiction and non-fiction, the personal and the historical, dissolve into each other in an inextricable way and result in a hybrid form.

In its opening sequence, *Waiting for the Clouds* clearly demonstrates that none of the sources that are considered to be repositories of knowledge are ever pure because the moment the past is represented it becomes contaminated with discourses, expediencies and desires. So the past, even so when it is not traumatic, is never fully accessible through representation. In this sense, the opening sequence of the film effaces the boundaries between ‘reliable’ and ‘fallible’ knowledge, ‘truth’ and ‘lies’, and fiction and non-fiction, and points out the hybridity of each representation. It also points out that each record of history and each representation are partial as constructs, never existing as an intact version of the past. And for that reason, they should be approached with distrust. In so doing, *Waiting for the Clouds* undermines conventional discourses on historical representation, including films, that claim that the past can be represented unproblematically and without mediation.

As the film continues the distrust of and partial reliance on historical records and materials that represent the past are cast into increasing doubt. From children’s playing cards which have pictures of Turkish heroes such as Battal Gazi to the oaths to Turkish prosperity that children recite every day at school,

from history lessons, historical films, regional myths, and archival footage to the songs children are made to chant at school and celebrations of the nation on various occasions such as national product day, and from family photographs to vernacular sayings, the film explores the ways that the past is re-shaped and produced as representation, as narratives and histories. And each representation, including the film itself, is treated with the same partial reliance and distrust, for they are all alloyed with discourses, experiences and desires and all are hybrid; thus, none can directly represent the past.

Similarly, in *Voice of My Father* Mehmet draws on various sources to make sense of his traumatizing past. These include family photographs, albums, tapes that contain the voices of his family members, and newspapers, the dominant discourses on history and memories. Base collects items that represent the past, including newspapers, tapes, family photographs, and letters, but unlike Mehmet she avoids confronting the past. In both cases, *Voice of My Father* treats all these materials that represent the past as hybrid; however, the film takes this hybrid form to a new level through its intricacy because no single source in the film, including the film itself as a representation, is straightforward and clear, and nothing in the film works to build a hierarchy between these disparate sources and verify or refute them as being 'truer' 'accurate' or 'fabricated' knowledge about the past. In this manner, *Voice of My Father* profoundly diminishes the boundaries between 'fact' and 'fiction' that are established by traditional historiography, and like *Waiting for the Clouds* it suggests that all representations of the past are a hybrid mix of experiences, desires, discourses, expediencies and fabulation.

Throughout the film we see Mehmet as he tries to gather up knowledge about the past through family photographs, his conversations with Base, the newspapers Base keeps in the basement of the house, and an old tape he finds in his flat which is a recording of Base, Hasan and himself. Mehmet seems to be convinced that the tapes that his father had sent them will 'complete' his narrative and that through them he will find answers regarding his past. For that reason, he treats the recordings of Mustafa's voice as the 'missing pieces' of his own narrative through which, as he explains to Base over dinner, he can know the past.

As Mehmet is fixated on finding the tapes and converses with Base about their past throughout the film, we hear again and again the recordings that Mehmet is trying to find on the soundtrack while seeing images of the present day

on the image track. These recordings of the voices of Mustafa, Base, Mehmet and Hasan are abrupt because we never see the source/body of these voices in the frame and their existence in the off-screen space is never implied, apart from two cases. The first of these occurs in the first few minutes of the film when Mehmet finds a tape while he is going through his belongings in his apartment and listens to it, which triggers his pursuit of the others. The second such moment occurs when Base listens to a recording towards the end of the film, a tape she made and had intended to send her husband to inform him that Hasan had joined the guerrillas. Mehmet overhears the recording as Base listens to it, but instead of staying to listen to the whole recording, he walks away after a few minutes.

In the film, as we hear the voices from the past in the recordings of Mehmet, Base, Hasan and Mustafa on the soundtrack, we see old family photographs that are hung on the walls of both Mehmet's and Base's homes, pictures of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk hung on the walls of the schools that signify a particular historical discourse, the newspapers and various other representations of the past that Base keeps in the basement, and we see Mehmet and Base in their daily lives. In the recordings we hear Base and Mustafa converse about their daily lives, covering a variety of topics ranging from snow to the long hours they have to work to earn a living, and in the case of Mehmet and Hasan we hear what they learned in school and how they longed for their father. Yet, these seemingly ordinary conversations indirectly tell us about the traumatizing experiences of the family, and also about the Kurdish-Alevi community and how dominant ideologies disavow the traumatizing experiences of 'unwanted components'. They also indirectly tell us about the turmoil in Kurdistan, the emergence of the Kurdish resistance movement and the subsequent outbreak of war.

In the tapes, Mustafa asks Base again and again not to speak about their past with Hasan and Mehmet, and in reference to the Kurdish movement, he advises her and the children to learn and speak Turkish and stay out of the turmoil. And we also hear in the tapes Base assuaging Mustafa's concerns as she makes her children speak in Turkish to their father and tell him about the things they learn at school as she reassures him that they are staying 'out of trouble'. Like in *Waiting for the Clouds*, these voices and the images we see, including the photographs, newspapers and present-day images, all carry with them vestiges of

the past but none can give us direct access to the events they represent because they are hybrid.

This also becomes clear in the way that *Voice of My Father* parallels Mehmet's fervent desire to find the tapes with our seemingly privileged position as spectators who can hear the voices of the past that Mehmet is after. Even though, as opposed to Mehmet, we hear in detail conversations between Mustafa, Base, Mehmet and Hasan on the tapes, we realise that they provide no direct access to the past as we cannot make sense or give meaning to them and assimilate them into a coherent narrative. This is because, as with any other representation, the tapes are hybrid. And more than revealing 'the truth' about the past, they demonstrate how the past is filtered through desires, fears, concerns, and dominant ideologies, and develop into a hybrid form. In this way, the recordings are not sources or representations that can give us direct access to the past experiences of the family. This is also the reason that when Mehmet gets close to obtaining the tapes toward the end of the film as he overhears Base listening to the tape in which she informs Mustafa that Hasan joined the guerrillas, he gives up on his belief that he can ultimately, and unproblematically, know the past through them. And he walks away.

The hybrid form of the tapes, as a representation of the past, crystallises in the scene in which Mehmet and Base have dinner and talk about the meaning of the desire to know about the past and in the subsequent scenes in which we hear voices of Mustafa and Base on the tapes that come out of nowhere. Before describing that scene and analysing the hybrid form it illustrates, it should be noted here that, in addition to Mehmet's treatment of the tapes as repositories of knowledge about the past, Base is also positioned in the film as someone who retains the residuals of the past through her eye-witness accounts and the materials she preserves, including the tapes, newspapers, photographs and so on. In this way, Base is endowed in the film from the very beginning with the authority to speak about the past. However, both the tapes' status as direct representations of the past and Base's authority are shaken in the film.

In the dinner scene, Mehmet tells Base that he vaguely remembers a day from his childhood; on that day, he recalled that his father hit him because he'd refused to finish his dinner. Base reacts harshly when Mehmet speaks of this memory and tells him that he is making it up because Mustafa never hit Hasan or

Mehmet, and she storms out of the kitchen. Following this scene, we hear the voice of Mustafa on a tape; in the recording, he tells Base that he was angry with Hasan because of the books he was reading, in reference to the beginning of Hasan's involvement in the Kurdish movement. Then he explains that instead of confronting Hasan, he misdirected his anger at Mehmet and hit him. As we hear Mustafa's voice on the soundtrack we see the present day in the film. From there the film cuts to another scene in which we hear Base's response to Mustafa's concerns about Hasan on the sound track and see Base in the present as she pensively lies on her bed. In that recording, Base tells Mustafa that he should not be worried about Hasan but concentrate on his work in Germany because the books he saw were not Hasan's but belonged to a friend of his. Base also tells him that nationalist students at the school constantly pick fights with Hasan and other Kurdish students, so all the Kurdish students go to school and walk back home in groups for their security.

However, it should be pointed out that these scenes do not serve to refute Base's versions of the past via a comparison with Mehmet's and Mustafa's accounts, nor do they imply that everything Base tells Mehmet consists of lies and that the recordings of Mustafa's voice can reveal the 'truth' about the incident. The film offers up these successive scenes with the aim of pointing out that once the past is represented through audio recordings or told in stories, it is filtered through desires, fears, discourses and concerns; hence, a representation can never give us a 'full picture' of the past and make it straightforwardly known.

This is because to ease Mustafa's concerns, Base tells Mustafa that the books belong to someone else and Hasan is not interested in the Kurdish movement, yet at the same time she acknowledges the situations that her children must contend with every day in the face of dominant ideologies, i.e. Turkish nationalism. The films never tells us whether the books belong to Hasan or not, but it is possible to infer that they indeed were his. The 'lie' that Base tells with the aim of dispelling Mustafa's concerns does not distort the 'truth'; on the contrary, it implicitly tells us about their traumatic experiences and fears, as well as Base's struggle to forget what she had been through. And Mehmet remembers this incident as the day when his father hit him because he refused to finish his dinner. On the other hand, Mustafa confesses that he was angry with Hasan, not Mehmet, and misdirected his anger. Mustafa, with his concern about his children

and his desire to keep them away from politics also tells us indirectly about his traumatic past, which we will figure out later in the film, and we understand that this is also the reason why he repeatedly asks Base not to discuss the past with Hasan and Mehmet.

Voice of My Father indicates such a simple incident, as a moment of the past experienced by a family becomes hybrid once it is narrativized and represented. As all the ‘witnesses’ of the incident remember different versions of it that are suggestive of their concerns, those versions contain traces of their traumatic experiences, desires, turmoil, and dominant discourses. As a result, when even a single moment from the past is represented, such as a family dinner that takes place during one of Mustafa’s visits, it morphs into a hybrid form. Furthermore, the hybridity of the three versions of the dinner described by the three ‘witnesses’ prevents us from gaining direct access to the original event because none of these versions of the incident are ‘pure’ representations of the past. They do, however, illustrate how the ‘the truth’ of such a simple event can never be fully known.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, instead of using the original recordings made by Zeynel Doğan’s family, actors recorded the voices of Hasan, Mustafa, and Mehmet. The voice of Base, the character, was also recorded for the film, but in this case, however, Base, Zeynel Doğan’s mother, on which character Base was based, made the recordings herself. Thus, the recordings we hear throughout the film are also hybrid. In addition to this, the film never makes it clear whether those conversations are reproductions of those on the original tapes or were fabricated for the film. And although the photographs that accompany the voices in the film and are hung on the walls and placed in family albums seem to be original photographs of Zeynel Doğan’s family, the film never denies or confirms their ‘authenticity’. This is also the case with the present-day depictions of Base and Mehmet and other members of their family, as the film never verifies the stories they tell about the past or informs spectators whether the stories that Mehmet and Base tell are based on their own experiences or those of other survivors; there is also the possibility that they could be fabrication. All the elements in the film and all the representations of the past on which Mehmet and Base rely to construct a narrative in *Voice of My Father*, ranging from the family photographs to tapes, and the film itself as a representation, are hybrid. For those

reasons, they can never render the past ultimately knowable, even when it is not traumatizing.

To put it concisely, in *Voice of My Father* and *Waiting for the Clouds*, the past is never directly represented, but attempts are made to communicate it *indirectly* through its representation in a variety of sources ranging from family photographs to the histories that are taught in schools. Both films demonstrate that the past in those representations passes indiscriminately and inextricably through the stages of selection, narration, invention, interpretation and manipulation. Moreover, they are also filtered through and re-shaped by ideologies, desires, fears and expediencies, and thus both films illustrate that representations of the past cannot serve as an open window onto it; all they can do is bear with them vestiges of past experiences. Once a moment from the past is represented, regardless of the ‘solidity’ of discourses on ‘authenticity’, ‘accuracy’ and ‘reality’, it becomes hybrid.

The Presence of Absence

Marita Sturken writes that the relationship between camera images and memory and history is one of contradiction (1997b: 689). As she argues, ‘on the one hand, camera images can embody and create memories; on the other hand, they have the capacity, through the power of their presence, to obliterate the other, unphotographed memories’ (1997b: 689). For this reason, Sturken suggests that as technologies of memory, camera images actively produce both memory and forgetting (1997b: 689). Sturken elucidates this argument by stating that forgetting can be produced through the absence of camera images since many of the horrific events of the twentieth century, such as the Holocaust, have been copiously documented through camera images and represented in narrative films, while other traumatic events, such as the Cambodian genocide and mass murders in Rwanda, have gone relatively undocumented (1997b: 689-690). For Sturken, forgetting can also be produced through the presence of camera images; ‘a single image icon can screen out other images of a historical event’ as in the way that ‘the iconic image of the mushroom cloud of the atom bomb obliterates the less well-known images of the bomb’s destruction’ (1997b: 690). In many ways, this contention resonates with Teshome Gabriel’s assertion that ‘every image is a mask; it conceals another image’ (1998: 81). Both of these claims suggest that

every image stimulates a remembrance of the past by concurrently prompting a forgetting of others.

These seminal claims made by Sturken and Gabriel about the notions of presence and absence and their relation with memory, history and forgetting provide a crucial entry point for the ways that *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* grapple with these concepts. However, for both films, it is not only camera images but every representation of the past, every narrative and history, that intrinsically harbours this contradiction and makes it necessary to scrutinize the means by which forgetting is engendered; what is fixed on film, or recorded and told through any other medium with the goal of representing the past, holds hegemony over those that are overlooked and not narrated. In this sense, both films equally delve into pasts that have a strong presence and are prevalent in a myriad of representations, and those that are primarily absent in dominant narratives. In this way, both films interrogate the process of the construction of narratives and histories and explore the discursive fields in which some stories are fixed, preserved and propagated while others are disregarded and kept ‘out of the frame’ of history. In addition, *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* deploy reflexive structures to reveal themselves as representations and constantly call attention to what is absent in the on-screen space, in other words, what is left out of the frame. Thus, instead of making claims about an ‘omnipotent’ narration, they indicate that the frame of the screen is a limit that screens out other stories.

The preoccupation of these films regarding the presence of some versions of the past and the absence of others emerges in *Waiting for the Clouds* through the sources that are brought together and interfused in the opening scene, particularly the ‘official’ records upon which Eleni is registered as Ayşe. The identity card and the consensus book, while indicating the presence of Ayşe, are also records of Eleni’s absence. Similarly, those histories that praise ‘Turkishness’, such as *Battal Gazi* and the historical texts taught in school, are also records of annihilation and the absence of various other identities and histories, such as the history of Pontic Greeks and their displacement. In *Voice of My Father*, the tapes appear as records of a trauma, the gruesome experiences of the family and the atrocities that they were subjected to, and at the same time they indirectly tell us how Kurdish and Alevi identities and histories have been eradicated and remain absent in the ‘official’ accounts on what constitutes

national history. In other words, these representations of the past in both films are not only records of traumatic experiences of the ‘undesired components’ in Turkey, they are also a means of indicating how existing versions of the past obscure others and render them absent. However, and perhaps more significantly, these films also imply that the absent stories on which they centre also mask other stories. In this way, they illustrate the complex ways of knowing and not knowing that are intrinsic to any representation of the past.

The ending scene in *Waiting for the Clouds* reflects on the process by which individuals and collectives produce narratives and histories based on the concepts of absence and presence. Earlier in the film, after Selma’s death, Ayşe/Eleni finds family photographs of her Turkish family in the attic and Mehmet, standing beside her, asks about each of the people in the pictures. One by one, Ayşe/Eleni goes through the old photographs and explains that the people in the photographs are her mother, her father, her sister and her brother-in-law. As she points to each person and explains who they are, we see the photographs in close up and realise that Ayşe/Eleni is not in any of them. The film then cuts to a medium shot of Mehmet and Ayşe/Eleni, and as Ayşe moves on to the next photograph, she suddenly pauses, and fixes her gaze on a photograph that we cannot see. Mehmet asks, ‘Who are these strange people?’ Even though the spectators are unable to see the photograph that makes Ayşe/Eleni so uneasy, her absence in the previous photographs and then her sudden unease raise questions. Later in the film we understand that what triggers Ayşe/Eleni’s traumatic memories is a photograph of her Pontic Greek family which includes herself, her father, Niko and their baby sister who froze to death during their march into exile.

Towards the end of the film, Ayşe/Eleni goes to Thessaloniki to find Niko, and after she finds him, she tells him that she is his sister, Eleni, who he had not seen for 50 years. Niko, however, disowns her, and he tells her and his wife that he lost all his family members when they were forced to march in snowy mountains. In the final scene which takes place at Niko’s home, we see a table piled up with black and white family photographs and photo albums, and Niko is going through them. Then Ayşe/Eleni arrives and Niko asks her to sit next to him. When Ayşe/Eleni sits down, Niko selects a few photographs and in chronological order he explains the story behind each one. He starts by showing his childhood photographs that were taken at an orphanage in Greece after his deportation from

Turkey and when he started school; then he shows her photographs that were taken when he started working at his first job and more when he was serving in the army on the Albanian front. He then shows her photographs of his wife when she was eighteen years old, as well as pictures of the christening of his son and of his in-laws.

We see each photograph in close up as Niko, just as Ayşe/Eleni had done, places his finger on them and describes each person. Then he tells Ayşe/Eleni, 'These photographs represent my life. You are not in any of them. You tell me that you are my sister and ask for my forgiveness. If you were my sister, you would have been in these photographs'. When Niko says this, Ayşe/Eleni pauses and then reaches into her pocket to take out the photograph she found in the attic. She hands it to Niko and then, in close up, we see Niko holding the photograph; over his family photographs, we see that faded black and white photograph of Eleni, her father, Niko and their baby sister. The photograph dissolves into the archival footage we saw at the beginning of the film, an image of a young girl with a baby on her lap, and the film ends.

Niko creates a narrative, a history of his life, based on those photographs which, for him, represent his life. And he disowns Ayşe/Eleni as her sister on the grounds of her absence in them. However, Ayşe/Eleni is also absent in the photographs of her Turkish family. Thus, all the pictures that represent Niko's life and Ayşe/Eleni's Turkish family are simultaneously records of her absence and her traumatizing experience. In this sense, the photograph of her Pontic Greek family, the picture that she hands to Niko, dismantles Niko's neatly constructed narrative of his life by pointing out the absences and gaps in his familial history, the moments he brushes aside and disavows because they are not preserved and represented. This scene also marks the absences in national history in Turkey, stories that have not been preserved or widely disseminated, those that have been excluded from the national narrative, such as the displacement of Pontic Greeks and various other horrific practices of 'Turkification'. In this regard, the photograph that Ayşe/Eleni produces, as much as it represents the presence of these disavowed and denied events and moments of the past, also suggests that any representation of the past, any narrative or history, is rife with the absent stories that they mask. However, the photograph of the Pontic Greek family does not 'complete' the familial history of Niko by filling in the gaps and reinserting

the 'missing piece' of his life into his neatly and linearly constructed narrative; rather, it dismantles the pre-existing and present histories not in an attempt to render absent stories present but to point out that the past can never be fully known because every representation innately veils others.

This is also the case with Mehmet's search in *Voice of My Father* for a means to construct a narrative, a familial history of his past. He realizes that all the sources to which he appeals are masks that conceal other stories. In the scene in which he looks for the tapes in Base's basement, Mehmet finds old newspapers that are peculiarly packaged and placed in a suitcase along with other items from the past. Then, as an insert, we hear the voices of Base and Hasan on the sound track, voices from the recordings, as the camera glides through the basement, which resembles an archive because it is filled with meticulously packaged and arranged items from the past, and we see assorted books, newspapers, clothes and so on.

In the recording, we hear that Base is secretly recording Hasan's voice because he is resentful that his father is absent and refuses to talk to him. As soon as Hasan realises that Base is recording him speak, he asks, 'Why isn't my father here?' Through a cut the film returns to the basement and we see Mehmet sitting next to the suitcase full of newspapers. Base enters the basement, and when she sees what he's doing, she gathers up the newspapers and puts them back into the suitcase. Mehmet stops her, however, and takes the newspapers out again and throws them on the ground, asking his mother 'Why are you keeping these newspapers?' Base then tells Mehmet that one day she went out and her neighbours warned her about the mob that was raiding Alevi houses with the aim of killing the people living there. Base says that she then ran back home and told Mustafa that the mob was chanting 'Turkey is Muslim', and she told him that they needed to flee. But she says that Mustafa refused to run away and took out his gun. Then seven or eight men knocked on their door, and when Base opened the door, the men said that Base and Mustafa were Alevis, and so it was a service in the name of Allah to kill them. Mustafa then brought out a Quran, and recited prayers to convince them that he and his family were Muslim, whereupon the men told Mustafa that if he was a Muslim, he would have to join them to kill Alevis. Base relates that Mustafa left with the men and did not return for a few hours. On his return, they escaped and hid in their house in the village and were safe there.

In the meantime, however, the mob killed hundreds of Alevis by stabbing them and butchering them with cleavers. Mustafa warned Base to never mention the incident to their children, and she says that's why she never brought it up until that day. She adds that she was glad Mehmet never knew about that event, because if he had known, he may have gone off to join the guerrillas like Hasan.

As Base talks about those traumatic experiences, in a medium shot we see Base and Mehmet sitting next to each other with the suitcase between them. When she finishes describing the terrifying events, the film cuts to a full screen close up of a newspaper with a news story about a family that was massacred in Maraş in 1978; the headline of the story is 'Massacre in the name of Islam', and we see pictures of corpses, including those of children and infants, and also a photograph from the scene that shows the windows of the house with the words 'War for Allah' painted on them. The story said that 'forces' – a word that epitomises prevalent discourses in Turkey on the imaginary 'internal' and 'external' enemies that are regarded as constantly trying to 'tear apart' the 'unity' of Turkey, as I discussed in the previous chapters – were attempting to destroy the unity of the country by shamelessly invoking the name of Allah during the horrendous acts they carried out.

In this scene, we have two stories about the same event: Base's traumatic experience and the story in the newspaper that reiterates the 'official' discourses of the state on the Maraş Massacre, namely the narratives and histories that have an entrenched presence in Turkey. In this respect, this scene in *Voice of My Father* indicates how pasts are re-shaped by dominant discourses as narratives and representations that deny and dispel the presence of particular events and experiences, such as the experience of Base and Mustafa, and render them absent in the national narrative. Here again, as in *Waiting for the Clouds*, although Base's recounting of the massacre dismantles dominant versions of the event, as it is reflected in the newspaper, it does not aim to tell a 'complete' story about the massacre by filling the gaps and the 'missing pieces' in the 'official' history so that we can 'make sense' of it and further comprehend what happened. It does, however, point out that all stories and narratives are marked by absent stories that cannot be fully known. This is because in the same way the story of the newspaper conceals the story of Base and Mustafa, as Base speaks about what she remembers about the Maraş Massacre and her traumatic experience, she also talks

about that which we can never know; that is, what happened to Mustafa during the few hours he was out with the mob on the streets. Thus, Hasan's question about why his father was absent at the beginning of this sequence can never be fully answered, neither in 'official' histories, nor in Base's story or in the tapes Mustafa recorded.

As I mentioned earlier, Marks argues that in the framework of intercultural films, once dominant ideologies and 'official' histories are dismantled by films, no single truth is revealed because such films are not interested in finding a 'truth' but rather seek to interrogate the ways that narratives and histories are formed (2000: 25). On this issue, Marks suggests:

There is a moment of suspicion that occurs in these works after the official discourse has been (if only momentarily) dismantled and before the emerging discourse finds its voice. This is a moment of silence, an act of mourning for the terrible fact that the histories that are lost are lost for good. Yet this moment is also enormously suggestive and productive. (2000: 25-26)

Marks maintains that this moment occurs when films begin to call upon other forms of cultural knowledge. I argue that this moment is powerfully suggestive and productive in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* because that is the moment when, instead of insisting on an idea that 'truer' versions of the past can be narrated in films and histories, both films dismantle, to its very core, the notion that the past can be retrieved by employing tools that 'can' extract the 'truth' about it. This is the moment that these films bring to the notion that every representation of the past, every image, narrative and history, bear with them vestiges of the past and at the same time the masks that shroud others.

This idea is reflected in the use of onscreen and off-screen space in both films, as well as in the way sound is employed. At this point I will return to Doane's analysis of the use of sound in cinema that I explored in the previous chapters regarding her suggestion that the utilization of the voice-off, the voice of a character that is not visible within the frame, carries with it the potential for exposing the material heterogeneity of the medium of film. Doane argues that this is because the voice-off detaches the voice from its source/body and then fragments it while allowing the viewer to realise the disparity between the image track and sound track (1980: 37- 40). For Doane, the voice-off also suggests that

there is more to the diegesis than what we see in the visible space of the screen, because the voice that emanates from the off screen space points to the limitations of the frame itself. She then goes on to contend that the utilization of the voice-off can induce a critical engagement with the means of cinematic representation by indicating that the depicted space in the film, in other words the on-screen space, screens out other images. However, Doane points out that in traditional uses of the voice-off the film reveals the source/body of the voice in a following shot and reunites the image and soundtrack so that it affirms the homogeneity of the space that is depicted and reassures spectators that nothing remains concealed (1980: 38). And in this way, traditional uses of the voice-off deny the frame of the screen as a limit and preclude the possibility of critical engagement with the film.

In this regard, *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* utilise sound, along with off-screen and onscreen space, in both traditional and unconventional manners. However, both traditional and untraditional uses of voice-off work to emphasise that what we see in the frame is a fragment of the diegesis that screens out other images and stories. In *Waiting for the Clouds*, while we often see Ayşe/Eleni on the image track, we hear sounds and voices that come from the off-screen space, sometimes with a sound-bridge, and these drown out the sounds of the onscreen space. These sounds/voices include the *ezan*, gunshots, the recitation of Islamic prayers, sounds of street demonstrations and clashes, and the oaths to Turkish prosperity that children recite every day at school, which is as follows: ‘I am a Turk. I am honest.... My existence shall be dedicated to the existence of Turkey’. This is the case with Tanasis as well; most of the time when he appears in the film, we hear the sounds of political uprising in the 1970s coming from the off-screen space. This occurs particularly when he visits his childhood home which is in ruins and we hear the *ezan*, again coming from the off-screen space. In *Voice of My Father* we hear the Prime Minister making statements about the Turkish community in Germany and their right to speak and be educated in their native language, and in the film we hear in the recordings about how Hasan, Base and Mehmet struggled to learn Turkish.

Doane writes that although the voice-off marks the absence of a source/body in the visible space of the screen, films traditionally establish their presence in the diegesis by means of contextual determinants and previous shots which imply that the source/body of the voices are ‘just over there’, ‘just beyond

the frame line' in a space which 'exists' but which the camera simply does not show (1980: 37). The use of voice-off in the instances I mentioned above coheres with Doane's analysis, as both films, sometimes via parallel editing and a previous or following shot and, at other times, solely by alluding to the contextual determinants without showing the source/body of the sounds, establish the presence of the source/body of those voices and sounds that emanate from the off-screen space; they come from televisions, from the school of the village, from the mosque, and so on. Regardless of this, however, these voices/sounds disturb the spectator in the sense that they are not visible within the frame, as with the *ezan*, Muslim prayers, oaths to Turkish prosperity and the prime minister's statements, but they drown out the voices of the characters, rendering them silent. Here, both films point out the context, the entrenched presence of the 'official' discourses and dominant ideologies, which leaves aside the stories of Ayşe/Eleni and Tanasis, Mehmet and Base, as well as the experiences of their communities, thus excluding them from the 'official' narratives and seeking to erase and silence them so that their presence can be denied.

The use of the voice-off also points to the stories the films screen out, in other words, the perpetuation of traumas in Turkey via other incidents that occur as a result of those entrenched dominant discourses and ideologies. Those are the cases of political turmoil in Turkey in the 1970s and the 'workings of the guardians of the state' that seek to oppress and annihilate dissident voices as heard on the soundtrack in *Waiting for the Clouds* but never seen in the onscreen space. In *Voice of My Father*, the current discourses in Turkey are addressed as regards the use of one's native language as a human rights issue in the context of Germany, while the issue of the Kurdish language, particularly its application in education, remains unresolved in Turkey. Similarly, here the voice of the Prime Minister giving a speech about native language as a human rights issue is heard on the soundtrack, but we never see him in the onscreen space of the film. The deployment of the voice-off thus implies that the traumatic experiences that *Voice of My Father* and *Waiting for the Clouds* centre on are not rare or exceptional moments from the past in Turkey, but rather they are the products of the dominant ideologies and 'official' histories that work to erase and deny histories of 'unwanted components' through which trauma becomes perpetual.

More significantly, *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* also include sounds and voices that are detached from their sources, as their sources/bodies are rendered ambiguous in the film and are never revealed or implied. These sounds/voices belong to the past, but they suffuse the on-screen space and the present-day of the film and come out of nowhere. Their appearance in the film is never acutely naturalized as a part of a character's psyche, a sound flashback, the recalling of a memory, or the voice-over of an unseen narrator. Whether they are diegetic or non-diegetic is also ambiguous because we never know from where these sounds emanate.

In *Waiting for the Clouds*, after Ayşe/Eleni finds the picture of her Pontic Greek family and is overtaken by her traumatic memories, she repeatedly goes to hilltops and sits staring out over the empty plateau for hours. In these scenes, as she stares at the mountains, on the image track we see extreme long shots of immense mountains and plateaus topped by clouds. Over these images, on the sound track we hear faint hymns, sounds of people moaning, shouting, the footsteps of crowds, and people calling out names that echo in the mountains. The film never reveals the source of these sounds and voices, nor does it clearly show that they are part of Ayşe/Eleni's subjective depth. Nonetheless, we can infer to a certain extent that those sounds/voices belong to the past, to the displaced Pontic Greek people and their forced march and destruction.

In a similar, yet more intricate manner, throughout *Voice of My Father* we repeatedly hear recordings of Hasan, Base, Mehmet and Mustafa on the soundtrack over the images of the present-day of the film. Those voices, as in *Waiting for the Clouds*, belong to the past, to the tapes that Mehmet wants to find. They suffuse the onscreen space of the film, the present-day, and echo in Base's house, at the school at the village, and on the fields in Kurdistan. When we hear those voices in the film, the camera either dollies out from an old photograph of the family, which shows Base and Mustafa when they were young and Hasan and Mehmet as kids, or in a tracking shot, it glides through the rooms, the basement, the school and the fields of Kurdistan in the present-day. As the camera dollies out and glides through these spaces as if seeking to find the source/body of those voices, we expect to see it reveal a tape recorder or Base and Mehmet listening to the tapes in the present-day of the film or see a flashback of them in the past, recording or listening to the tapes; this, however, does not happen.

On the contrary, the camera moves in tracking shots to reveal that we are still in the present day and the source of the voices is not in the frame. And while the camera moves via tracking shots and dolly outs in a manner that gradually renders the off-screen space visible, it also reveals that the source/body of these voices is not in the off-screen space. Hence, in *Voice of My Father*, the camera and sound operate in a way that they defy Doane's description of the conventional use of the voice-off, the implication that the source/body of these voices is 'just over there' 'beyond the frame'. The movement of the camera works to show otherwise, namely that the source/body of these voices is not in the depicted space of the diegesis, and it is also absent in the off-screen space. Yet, regardless of the *absence* of a body and a source, those voices haunt the onscreen images of the present-day with their *presence*. It should be noted here that, as with *Waiting for the Clouds*, those voices of the past are not depicted as being part of Base's or Mehmet's subjective depth, or as sound flashbacks or voice-overs. They suddenly and repetitively occur during the film, coming out of nowhere and suffusing the images of the present-day we see on the screen.

With their unconventional use of sound, *Waiting for the Clouds* and particularly *Voice of My Father* break the conventional codes of cinematic representation in relation to the ways that sound and the voice-off establish a temporal and spatial unity by creating an impression of the homogenous spatiality and temporality of the depicted space. The voices and sounds that come from outside the frame do not belong to the spaces and temporalities that *Voice of My Father* and *Waiting for the Clouds* portray. They are voices that come from the past, a temporality that is regarded to be absent in the present day, from a space that is absent in the off-screen space of the diegesis and cannot be revealed by a move of the camera or a shot/counter shot. In this way, both films reflect on their *indirect* engagement with the past and undermine how the stories they tell block our access to others.

As the repetitive occurrence of the voices calls attention to the existence of the traumatic experiences of those voices, of the Pontic Greek people and the Kurdish and Alevi communities, in an external space and temporality the films do not show, it also instigates a desire in spectators to see the bodies and sources of these voices, in other words, to see the past. This desire responds to a will to history, to 'witness' and make sense of the past, and then incorporate it into a

narrative through which we can straightforwardly comprehend these traumatic episodes of the national past. The movement of the camera that renders the off-screen space onscreen, however, demonstrates that there is nothing in the off-screen that can fulfil our desire to know and see these experiences by assigning them a source or a body. Thus, both films struggle against the will to history, against the idea that the past can be easily represented and known. In terms of this struggle, both films also reveal that the present images we see on the screen conceal the images of the voices we hear, the images of their traumatic experiences, images of the past.

This could be seen as being a mere choice made by the filmmakers in terms of a preference to focus on present-day images, not the images of the past. But I argue that, more than revealing their choice, this struggle against the will to history in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* calls attention to the formal structures these films deploy in their engagement with the past, the ways they seek out to interrogate the accessibility of past experiences and to what extent we can know anything about them. Although the presence of those traumas in each frame of *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* is powerfully felt through the voices that suddenly are heard, both films point out that those voices come from a space and a temporality they do not, and more profoundly, *cannot* directly access and represent. The past, for both films, can only be communicated indirectly through other images and stories, the present day images we see on the screen.

In this respect, *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* leave us with an absence of a 'complete', comprehensive and thus fully known narrative, and the presence of the vestiges of the past and the awareness that the past can never be fully accessed or fully known.

The Presence of the Past

In the last scene of *Voice of My Father*, in an extreme long shot of hills and fields we see a construction truck which falls into a massive hole. Then we hear the voice of a man shouting 'Mustafa had an accident'. Then the camera starts to pan right slowly and reveals more of the barren hills and fields. After a while we see a tree and Mehmet standing underneath it and the camera stops and zooms in on Mehmet. Over this image we hear Mehmet's voice on the sound

track, a recording of his voice, arising yet again from nowhere and we realise that it is a tape that Mehmet recorded for his father following the days he spent with Base at her home. In the recording, Mehmet tells his father that he dreamt about him for the first time on the night he found out that his wife was pregnant. He tells his father that he had been angry with him for being away and that it was hard to understand not knowing what Mustafa had been through and what he had resigned himself to. He also tells Mustafa about Hasan, saying that Hasan has not turned out to be the person Mustafa wanted him to become but is chasing his dreams. Lastly, Mehmet tells his father that he and his wife have a daughter, and that Base lives with the voices of Mustafa.

This final scene of *Voice of My Father* challenges conventional understandings of the past as a temporality that is completed and finished, and it also diminishes the commonly accepted distance between the past, present and future. Within the context of the story of the film, we understand that the accident happened in the past and that Mustafa died, and this all occurs long before Mehmet starts to search for the tapes. And Mehmet's recording of the tape for his father is made after he himself becomes a father. All of these seemingly disparate times are entwined in this scene, in the sense that the scene starts with an accident that took place in the past, and as the camera pans right without any cuts or special effects, it transcends time and also space, showing Mehmet, seemingly in the present-day, along with a voice that comes from another temporality. The movement of the camera, with no fragmenting cuts or visual effects that would divide these temporalities as different time frames, entwines the past with the present and the present with the future. It inter-fuses all disparate time frames on the same plane and renders each frame of the film temporarily heterogeneous. Hence, as the past becomes inter-fused with the present and the future, instead of being 'distant', it becomes immediate and ubiquitous in different temporalities.

In those ways, *Voice of My Father* does not represent the past as a temporality that is 'finished' and 'completed'. This is also shown in the film via the repeated portrayal of the broken clock in Base's house; in other words, time is not *passing* but standing still. No matter how many times Mehmet tries to fix the broken clock by replacing its batteries and working on its mechanism, he never manages to make it run again, and ultimately he gives up trying to repair it. Thus,

it is implied that, for Base and Mehmet, time stands still and at the same time the past co-exists with the present and the future.

As I discussed earlier, although *Waiting for the Clouds* takes place in the past, in 1975, apart from the title that appears at the beginning of the film informing us about the time frame in which the film is set, nothing in the film points to the ‘completeness’ of the past. Conversely, the film emphasises the presence of the past in other temporalities with sounds that emanate from the past and haunt the mountains and plateaus of the Black Sea in the present. Also, by showing us these landscapes of empty, immense mountains and the plateaus and villages of the Black Sea, the film engenders a feeling of timelessness as none of the scenes have a ‘look of the past’, even to the extent that the film could be seen as being set in 2014. In this way, *Waiting for the Clouds* challenges the illusion of continuity and the linear progress of time in conventional representations in which the past is constructed as leading to the present and the future emerges from the present. The past in *Waiting for the Clouds* is brought to a standstill and ubiquitously coexists with various other temporalities.

Such an unconventional portrayal of temporality in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* correspond to the conceptualizations of temporality in relation to traumatic memory; as we saw in the previous chapter, in the face of trauma, linear chronologies collapse, and time becomes fragmented and uncontrollable as it seizes consciousness (Hirsch 2004). Also, Caruth’s suggestion which I explored in the previous chapter, which states that ‘to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or an event’ (1995: 5), points to the *presentness* of the past in trauma, a state in which the traumatizing event is not given any particular meaning or integrated into a narrative as a past experience, and hence it possesses and arrests the present day, preventing the survivor from moving on.

However, neither *Waiting for the Clouds* nor *Voice of My Father* condense the stillness and ‘ubiquitousness’ of the past, and its co-existence with other temporalities, into the realm of traumatic memory. They extend it to all the routes through which we try to find a way to represent the past by their portrayals of the presence of the past via the statements of politicians, photographs, history lessons that are taught at schools, songs, recordings, historical texts, stories, the narration of personal experiences, testimonies, myths and films. For them, the past is

ubiquitous in all these ways we seek out to represent it because we constantly mould stories, narratives and histories out of it; in other words, we re-shape, re-appropriate and re-narrativize it in the present day to make sense of it and give meaning to the future.

In brief, in this chapter I argued that following the mid-1990s in Turkey, through films like *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* a new historical film form has emerged that engages with the national past in an unconventional way and results in unconventional histories. The unconventional histories that new historical films bring forward stem from the films' deployment of cinematic devices and their forms that resist conventional codes of representation and challenge the traditional ways that we engage with the past. The new historical film form, with its hybrid form, preoccupation with the concepts of absence and presence, and the way it defies our understandings of the past as a temporality that is 'finished', opens up new possibilities for rethinking and critically engaging with representations of the past. At the same time, it stimulates us to re-think just what history means.

The new historical film form also introduces the notion that conventional histories that posit themselves as open windows onto the past and deny and exclude other versions cannot be dismantled by deploying the tools with which they claim to have established an 'authority' to speak about the past. They underline that employing the tools of traditional historiography and their discourses on 'authentic' and 'objective' representation can only lead to the production of equally conventional histories, even if the stories of the films contest 'official' historical narratives. In this sense, the new historical film form indicates that 'official' historical narratives and the 'authority' of traditional historiography can only be shaken through the use of a new *form* that resists conventional modes of representation and set the terms anew for the production of unconventional histories. Thus, the new, unconventional form that emerges from such films as *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* can be best explained in Audre Lorde's terms when she suggests that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change' (2007: 112).

CONCLUSION

The idea for this thesis emerged as a response to the drastic increase in the number of films produced in Turkey since the mid-1990s that seem to be obsessed with re-shaping national history. All these films have taken up the narration of different pasts. To varying degrees, they challenge 'official' versions of the national narrative and identity that have been disseminated through dominant historical texts, including historical films. As I have argued, this desire to re-shape and represent the national past attests to a need to come to terms with the dark moments of the nation-building process and the traumas of the nation that spanned the years following the founding of the republic. In the last two decades, there has been an increased interest in the events of those times, and this interest has come to dominate the cultural and political sphere of Turkey.

I have argued that the need to come to terms with the dark moments of the national past and challenge established 'official' versions of history and national identity was sparked by considerable shifts in the cultural, political and economic scene in Turkey following the 1980s and gained significant momentum in the 2000s. The military coup of 1980 left an indelible mark on imaginings of the nation and national identity, as did changes in the political, economic and cultural sphere such as the opening up of Turkey's economy to the world market, the return of political Islam and the war in Kurdistan. All of these transformations resulted in a dissolution of the promises of the dominant republican ideology and its take on the national past solely as a set of 'glorious' moments and the configuration of the nation and national identity as nothing but 'unified', 'singular' and 'homogenous' entity. And in the 2000s, the discourses of the current government, a revival of the Ottoman legacy, and the return of Islam in the political, social and cultural scene, which has been seen as a 'threat' by some, and an as 'adherence' to 'roots' by others, have all combined to fuel this interest in re-evaluating the past. Other factors have been at work as well, including the European integration talks, controversial court cases that divulged the systematic annihilation of groups that did not fit into 'official' formulations of national identity, and 'democratic initiatives' that aimed at embracing the multicultural

character of the country have added momentum to a process in which the ‘grand narrative’ of the Turks has begun to be dismantled.

In light of these changes, different memories and different pasts have emerged as people tell stories so that their histories can be remembered and heard. In these negotiations over what national history *is*, I have argued that films have been utilized as a means to contest and attempt to re-write national history. Since the mid-1990s there has been a substantial increase in Turkey in filmic representations that represent both unremittingly accounted ‘glorious’ histories and previously unaccounted traumatic moments. However, I argued that merely dividing historical films into two categories, one being ‘conventional histories’ that reiterate discourses on the ‘gloriousness’ of the national past with a focus on victories and triumphs, and the other being ‘unconventional histories’ that examine traumatizing events, would be misleading. This is because those ‘glorious’ histories have also been transformed in this process and, even if unintentionally, they have underlined the impossibility of reinstating histories that narrate the national past as a set of ‘glorious’ moments.

In the limited number of scholarly works that examine representations of the past in films produced in Turkey since the mid-1990s, there are a few common themes. First, the films that I selected for analysis in the third chapter, which centre on ‘glorious’ moments, are regarded as being a reiteration of ‘official’ discourses on national history, and in this regard, are argued as representing an extension of earlier Yeşilçam historical films (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012; Günerbüyük 2012). Second, the films *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* are unquestioningly considered to be constituents of the historical film genre. Film scholars, however, have been reluctant to regard films that deal with traumatizing events as historical and thus they have sought to ferret out other genres with which to take them up as objects of study. These include ‘memory cinema’ (Duruel-Erkılıç 2012), ‘nostalgic cinema’ (Suner 2009) ‘minority films’ (Mersin 2010; Yüksel 2012) and ‘political cinema’ (Suner 2009; Suner 2010). The point of reference for making such a distinction between films, to a large extent has been a presumption that there is an acute dichotomy between ‘memory’ and ‘history’ based on the notions of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’. Third, in studies on *Waiting for the Clouds*, *The Breath*, *Pains of Autumn* and *Voice of My Father*, there has been a tendency to compare these films with ‘historical reality’, and some of these films have been

labelled as ‘good’ films based on their ‘faithfulness’ to ‘historical facts’ while others have been denigrated as ‘poor’ films for ‘distorting’ or omitting ‘historical reality’ and end up reiterating the official takes of the state on the events these films represent (Güven 2009; Mersin 2010; Duruel Kılıç 2012; Yüksel 2012). Alternatively, these films have been separated into the categories of ‘nostalgic films’ and ‘new political films’, with the former being perceived as mere ‘frivolous’ routes for engaging with the past because they recall the past in a nostalgic mode. In contrast, ‘new political films’ were privileged since it has been argued that they engage with the past in a ‘serious’ way because they show how the lives of individuals were brought to ruin by the tumultuous political climate of the past (Suner 2009; Suner 2010).

I have argued that the focus of analysis in all these studies has been the subject-matter and themes of historical films. And, apart from a few articles and book chapters, scholars who delve into the topic of cinematic representations of the past in films produced in Turkey since the mid-1990s have not devoted special attention to the *form* historical films deploy. Such an approach, I have argued has led film scholars in Turkey to overlook theoretical debates in the larger context in the fields of film studies, trauma theory, memory studies and history, in which memory and history, and also cinematic representation, have been theorized not as antithetical, oppositional or dichotomous terms but rather conceptualized as intimate and intricate modes of engaging with the past. Also, in all these fields, instead of discussing how modes and methods can extract ‘truer’ accounts about the past, historical representation itself has been problematized. And the main thrust of these discussions has been a particular and extensive interest in the *form* of historical narratives.

Taking up these issues, I have proposed that there has been widespread neglect in focusing on form in film scholarship in Turkey and that historical films have largely been discussed strictly within the national context without attending to the on-going debates in the larger context. And as a result, I contend that this neglect on attending to the form of films precludes a critical engagement with historical films and with the disparate ways they bolster or undermine the traditional historical narratives and discourses that are attached to them. Based on this position, I have argued that rather than their subject-matter and themes, it is

the *form* these films deploy that strengthens and dismantles ‘official’ histories and traditional historiography, including historical film.

The emphasis this thesis place on the formal structures of cinematic representations has been based on theoretical discussions about whether or not, or to what extent, the past can be represented. These discussions have been ongoing in film studies,¹ trauma theory and memory studies,² as well as theories on history.³ I put forward that at the heart of these debates is a conspicuous articulation that there is a need of a new *form* that can provoke critical engagement with the past and stimulate new ideas and a re-thinking about what the past means for us in the present day. This new form that film theorists, historians, and memory and trauma scholars propose should grapple with the question how, or if, the past can be accessed through representations of any kind. Accordingly, they privilege reflexive formal structures as a seminal means for a critical engagement with the past over realist forms. This favouring of reflexivity is based on the notion that it straightforwardly admits its status as representation and lays bare its nature as a *construct*. In so doing, reflexivity resists traditional discourses on historical representation which regard historical narratives as an ‘open window’ onto the past and thus it problematizes claims of ‘authenticity’ and ‘objectivity’ that serve as the basis of traditional historiography. In contrast, realist formal structures are presented as being problematic because they rely on the presumption that the ‘truth’ of the past can be ‘found’, ‘extracted’ and then represented ‘authentically’ and ‘objectively’ in historical narratives and that historical representation can give us ‘full’ access to the past so we can ‘witness’ it seamlessly.

By drawing on these theories, this thesis adopted close formal analysis as a method to examine cinematic representations of the past in films produced in Turkey in roughly the last two decades. In doing so, I have sought to bring to the

¹ See in bibliography Kaes 1989; Williams 1993; Walker 2001; Walker 2004; Walker 2009; Hirsch 2004; Kaplan and Wang 2004; Rosenstone 1995a; Rosenstone 1995b; Rosenstone 1995c; Rosenstone 1996; Marks 2000; Rosenstone 2006; Burgoyne 2008; Burgoyne 2010.

² See in bibliography Caruth 1995; Caruth 1996; Laub 1995; van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995; Sturken 1997a; Sturken 1997b; Kaplan and Wang 2004; Hodgkin and Radstone 2006.

³ See in bibliography Ankersmith 1989; White 1975; White 1985; White 1988; Carr 2001; Eaglestone 2001; Munslow 2006; Domanska 2008; Jenkins 2010; Connerton 2011.

surface the similar and disparate forms the films in this study deploy and examine the discourses they bring about in their communication with the past and the histories they tell via the medium of film. And in my analysis, I privileged reflexivity *only* when it was employed to interrogate the process of the production of historical narratives and problematize representation as a ‘straightforward’ and ‘direct’ means of access to the past.

Through my close formal analysis of the films in this thesis, I identified three tendencies in engaging with the past. The first tendency, as seen in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*, attempts to re-write national history by re-shaping and re-appropriating the past in line with the present-day need to come to terms with traumatizing events and the oppression of diverse communities. I argued that these films have been received in Turkey as representatives of opposing ideologies: *Farewell* was associated with fears over the dissolution of republican ideals as a film that strives to re-consecrate the nation-building process, and *Conquest 1453* was perceived to be a celebration of the Ottoman legacy, which has been revived by the discourses of the current government. These films were either regarded as being an extension of the discourses of Yeşilçam films with their emphasis on the ‘supremacy’ of the Turks or argued to represent the pinnacle of national cinema in Turkey because they ‘finally’ produced imagery in line with Hollywood and European historical productions. However, a close examination of the formal structures of both films revealed that, rather than being in opposition, these films indeed mirror each other. Furthermore, instead of solely ‘glorifying’ the national past, I contended that these films also illustrate the impossibility of reiterating entrenched discourses on the national past. They do so as their formal structures operate to diminish the ‘omnipotence’ of those who were once represented as ‘invincible’ leaders, soldiers and heroes and also to underline how victories, conquests and triumphs are also haunted by traumas. I also argued that *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* rely on conventional codes of historical representation, including those employed in films, and their formal structures work to solidify discourses on ‘objective’ and ‘unmediated’ representation. In this way, I proposed that rather than raising questions about the past and opening up a space in which history can be debated, these films suppress questions and treat history and representation as closed fields.

The second tendency arose through my analyses of the formal structures of *Pains of Autumn* and *Voice of My Father* as a desire to turn trauma into history by relying on the presumption that cinema can represent the ‘realities’ of the world as ‘they are’ and also by adopting reflexive structures. Both in reviews and the statements of the cast and crew members, I have noted a recurrent desire to access the ‘truth’ about the past and an assumption that cinema can achieve such task. Accordingly, I argue that the reflexive structures both films deploy do not work to raise questions about the ‘accessibility’ of the past via representations but rather they seek to position spectators as the ‘external’ and ‘omniscient’ observers of the events they narrate. Both films adopt reflexive structures to ensure that through representation we are gaining ‘full’ access to the traumatizing events that are depicted and to secure their claims of truth so that the traumatizing events they narrate can be ‘fixed’, given meaning, and then integrated into the realm of history. I interpreted such a move as an attempt to ‘re-insert’ ‘missing pieces’ of the past so that history can become more ‘solid’ and fortified. Thus, I concluded that instead of challenging traditional historiography, which left these moments aside in the first place and disowned them, *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* rely on traditional discourses on historical representation and work to supply their claims to truth. However, in the case of *The Breath*, even though the film employs all cinematic devices possible in its attempt to represent the ‘reality’ of the war in Kurdistan, it unintentionally undermines these claims, and reflects on the nature of traumatic memory. This is because the film breaks linear chronology and deploys a fragmented structure and a complex temporality that prelude a ‘mastery’ over time and demonstrates how trauma can never be ‘fully’ accessed. This, I argued, can be seen as a result of the on-going trauma of the war and its immediacy.

Through close formal analyses of *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father* and by building on concepts of ‘metahistorical film’ (Burgoyne 2008), ‘postmodern’, ‘experimental’ film as well as ‘history as an experiment’ (Rosenstone 1995a; Rosenstone 1995b; Rosenstone 1995c; Rosenstone 1996) and by drawing on theories of ‘third cinema’ (Gabriel 1988 and 1989; Cham 2000) and Marks’s analysis of intercultural films’ engagement with ‘official’ histories (2000), I argued that the new historical film form dismantles the authority of traditional historiography and sets forth new ideas about what the past and history mean. I have grounded my argument on the formal structures both films deploy

through which they problematize representation as an ‘open window’ onto the past and as a means which can give us ‘direct’ access to past events. In these films, reflexivity functions as a tool to lay bare their existence as constructs, which, rather than giving us ‘full’ access to the past, blocks our access to it by masking other stories and narratives. Also, these films foreground that every historical narrative, or representation and historical record, is hybrid because they are shaped with desires, ideologies, fears and discourses. In this respect, for new historical films the ‘truth’ of the past is not out there to be ‘found’ and ‘extracted’. What one finds in any historical narrative is a hybrid story that inextricably contains vestiges of experiences, desires, fears, ideologies and discourses.

I also propose that new historical films, with their unusual portrayal of historical time, push the limits of our understanding of the past as a time that has ‘passed’ and ‘slipped by’. They do so by diminishing the distance between the past, the present, and the future and rendering various times as intertwined and co-existing within the same frame. In this manner, the past in these films becomes ubiquitous and interfused with other temporalities, and it becomes ever present. In doing so, I argue that new historical films expand the boundaries of pre-existing definitions of historical film and germinate a new historical film form.

My close analysis of the representation of the national past in films produced in Turkey since the mid-1990s reveal that all these films seek out disparate ways to come to terms with the traumas of the national past. In the routes they follow to achieve this goal, some strive to re-write the national narrative by ‘domesticizing’ traumatizing events, as is the case in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453*. Some attempt to turn traumas into history by bolstering traditional discourses on historical representation and solidifying historical narratives, as with *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath*. In contrast, others seek out ways to dismantle the ‘authority’ of traditional histories, including films, by forgoing their desire to represent the past and avoiding the presumption that the past can be ‘fully’ known, as in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father*.

At this point it will be useful to return to Audre Lorde’s notion that I cited in the previous chapter. Lorde suggests that that ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change’ (2007: 112). In this respect, I conclude that the ‘authority’ of traditional historical

representations and dominant histories which is established through discourses on ‘truth’, ‘authenticity’ and ‘objectivity’ and with which they constantly push some pasts ‘out of the frame’ of history, or like in *Farewell* and *Conquest 1453* ‘domesticize’ them according to the needs of the present day, cannot be dismantled by deploying its tools as in *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath*. It can only be dismantled by resisting the desire to utilize the tools of traditional historiography and set the terms anew for the production of histories like in *Waiting for the Clouds* and *Voice of My Father*.

Here it should be noted that an emphasis on form rather than subject matter also implies that a film that centres on ‘glorious’ moments of the past can also become a constituent of the new historical form if it deploys reflexive structures to diminish the authority of traditional historiography. And as *Pains of Autumn* and *The Breath* illustrate, focusing on unaccounted and contested pasts can never be a guarantee for producing unconventional histories. So rather than devoting exclusive attention to the subject-matter and theme of a film, the focus of analysis for historical films should be on *form*. And by form I mean, to recount Cowie’s description, a system of representation through which the ‘content’ of any narrative is constituted (1988: 113).

Moreover, even though the main thrust of this thesis has been a critical engagement with historical representations in Turkey and an examination of them in relation to trauma theory, history, and memory and film studies in a larger context, my analyses and conclusion should not be seen as being a culturally specific or exceptional case for Turkey. These can also be deployed to examine other national contexts in which traumas have occurred as the result of a tumultuous nation-building process and the forging of a ‘homogenous’ national identity and production of an ‘official’ history that promotes certain regimes, ethnicities, cultures and communities over others and involves annihilations, oppression, massacres and genocides. To cite an example, Elia Suleiman’s *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), *Divine Intervention* (2002) and *The Time That Remains* (2009), and Atom Egoyan’s *Ararat* (2002) can be considered to be constituents of the new historical form, while many other films represent such traumatic moments by relying on the tools of traditional historical representation with which they seek to establish an authority to speak about the past.

By drawing on the discussions on representation of the past in the fields of history, memory and trauma studies, and film studies, this thesis makes a contribution both to the area of cinematic representations of the past in Turkey and also studies on historical film in a broader sense with its emphasis on formal analysis as a crucial tool for investigating the ways that historical films provoke or impede a critical engagement with the past, as well as the ways they engage with traditional discourses on historical representation. Its peculiar focus on *form*, rather than subject-matters and themes, and its emphasis on close analyses of films' utilization of cinematic devices as a method to study cinematic representations of history, also paves the way for moving beyond theoretical discussions that perceive 'realist' and 'reflexive' formal structures as strictly oppositional polarities of cinematic narration and antithetical terms. Such an approach, at the same time, places conventional understandings of the politics of these narrational strategies under scrutiny, and rather than designating realist films as 'conventional histories' and defining films that deploy reflexive structures as 'unconventional historical narratives', the focus on form also illustrates how both these formal strategies are deployed in historical films to solidify claims of traditional historical representation or dismantle them. This thesis also contributes to the discipline by expanding upon definitions of the historical film form, and by arguing that films which do not represent and depict the past but engage with questions regarding the past, historiography, memory and historical representation can also be considered to be constituents of historical film form.

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