

Every Family Has a Secret: My Father's Voice

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Abstract

The plot of the film, *My Father's Voice* (2012) is based on the tension between witnesses of a massacre and their children the second generation, who want to learn about their past (Orhan Eskiköy, Zeynel Doğan). *My Father's Voice* tells the story of Mehmet (Zeynel Doğan) who tries to refresh his memories about his Father who died when he was a child and his mother Base (Base Doğan) who prefers to remain silent. The story doesn't focus on bloody reflections of ethnic and sectarian discrimination; it is based on the survivor's fears and loneliness after the massacre. At the same time, the movie prefers to describe "what happened after the massacre?" instead of re-creating "What happened during the massacre?" through cinematic language. In this study, I examine how *Babamın Sesi* uses non traditional narrative forms to explore the relation between the viewer's own memory with the collective memory as well as Turkey's recent history.

Keywords: Turkish Cinema, Alevis, Sound in Cinema

Everybody has a history

And a language

What does loneliness tell you?

It tells me about myself.

What does death tell you?

It tells me about my mournful mother.

Kemal Kahraman (Neyzi, 2004, 169)

In a deserted land, underneath a single tree, a man's silhouette is seen from the distance. He is alone; he does not want to approach us, only stands there listening to the sound of the wind, as if he is waiting for something. However, in the next scene, we hear an approaching car's engine. A van appears from the right and stops sputtering at the end of the road. An old, white haired woman holding a bag gets out; she looks tired and goes her own way quietly. She arrives at the village house, which obviously has not been used for long. She looks at the land lying in front of her in the howling wind. The land is as lonely as the woman is. She firstly climbs a small hill and fixes the stones which are arranged on top of each other. We understand that these are tomb stones. While the woman looks at the previous spot she had been looking at, while standing in front of the nameless tomb stones of those who have died a long time ago from a higher place, a man's voice is heard. "Based," says the man, "do not talk about anything in front of the children; do not let them feel remorse, let them have good relationships with everybody". The word the man utters with his 'accented Turkish' makes us curious. Who will make who feel remorse?

*My Father's Voice*¹, directed by Orhan Eskiköy and Zeynel Doğan in 2012, seemingly narrates the relationship between a mother and her son, but it mainly narrates a trauma a family goes through and how they deal with this for long years and thus brings the viewers in confrontation with Turkey's recent history. In the film, the story of a Father² who goes to a 'foreign land' to work after the Maraş Massacre³; a mother who takes on the responsibility of keeping the massacre a secret, while raising her two children on her own and two children who almost do not know their Father at all are narrated. Through the younger brother Mehmet's (Zeynel Doğan) search for a history he realizes he has forgotten and the questions he asks his mother during this search, allows the viewer to reach deep down their memory from 1978 where the massacre had taken place until the present time and start thinking "Who were we not supposed to be enemies with?"

I have started my research especially in the 2010's where there is no direct accusation in the Turkish Cinema, where the present discourses are depicted over a historical feeling and thus a new narrative is created where history is confronted and because I thought *My Father's Voice* fits this narrative. I will try to approach *My Father's Voice*, which I think narrates itself through themes such as nostalgia, belonging, loss, desire and memory, depicts itself through a 'Cinematic language' (Naficy, 2001, p.121), primarily through Hamid Naficy's description of accented cinema. Naficy states that, accented cinema is an aesthetical reaction, which is a result of the experience of not having boundaries and changing places (Naficy, 2001, p.21). For this reason, I will try to probe through which narration techniques *My Father's Voice* uses to depict the characters being placeless, who have been relegated from their homes and land as a result of the Maraş Massacre. I am planning on depicting how Mehmet, who is one of the main characters in the film, tries to form a connection with a past he does not know about

¹ *My Father's Voice* has received the Best Film, Best Script awards in the 19th Altın Koza Film Festival; Best Script award in the 31st İstanbul Film Festival.

² In my study, the name of the Father who is one of the leading characters despite his visual absence, is not mentioned. Since he has great importance in the film, I have chosen to write the word Father with a capital letter.

³ The characters in *My Father's Voice* are the remaining members of a Kurdish Alawite family who have experienced the Maraş Massacre. In my study, although I mention the Kurdish identities of the characters, I preferred to handle their Alawite identities as a hypernym. The reason for this is that, the target of the Maraş Massacre which causes the family in the film to live a trauma, were the Alawite community due to the Alawite and Sunni sect conflict. On the other hand, it is important for me that many researchers who conduct researches in this area, such as David Shankland, Irene Melikoff, Krisztine Kehl-Bodrogi, Martin Van Bruinessen have also used Alawism as a hypernym despite all the ethnic differences in the Alawite community (Sinclair-Webb, 2003, pages. 215-217).

through what is told to him both in Kurdish and Turkish, through the idea that accented cinema feeds from multilingualism and multi culturedness. Thus, I will try to analyze the unique narration in the film, which the oral tradition takes as its basis especially in the countryside.⁴

Homelessness, Being Lost and Silence

While Hamid Naficy, in his work titled “An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking” defines the concept of “accented film makes” as the global figures of exile and diaspora cinema, he also states that these film makers are artists, who experience conflicts and tensions between their home countries and where they currently live. The film makers, who display the conflicts and tensions in question to their films generally have no choice but to work as independent film makers, who are outside the studio system or mainstream film industries. While a majority of accented film makers participate in film making processes such as script writing, directing photography, montage and acting, we also see that they actively participate in before and after processes of film making, such as production, distribution and promotion. According to Naficy, accented film makers who do get a chance to criticize those dominant production methods, especially Hollywood in the film industry, are able to produce “marginal” and “different” works due to the effects of production (Naficy, 2001, s. 4). Elena Di Giovanni defines those films with a different narration which she thinks directs the viewer to get to know, interpret and understand different cultures as films “which do translations within cultures” and thus use a revolutionary language (Di Giovanni, 2011, p.4). While Naficy explains what “accented narration” is, which targets alternative film production for dominant production and narration methods, he also talks about the effect of the mother tongue on the foreign language the people speak besides their mother tongue, apart from the different accents spoken in different areas. This accent is like a symbol which gives voice to the “alienage” of the people in question (Naficy, 2001, p.23). In contrary to the “mainstream” and “standard” films which follow a systematic approach, just like the accents perceived in the “foreign language” they speak, their chance to use more than one representation, language and culture, creating a different film making method, brings the “accented films” they produce closer to each other in terms of narration and themes (Doloughan, 2004, p 42).

Hamid Naficy places accented films into three categories: Diaspora, ethnic and exile. Diaspora films begin with dissociation and fracture. Diasporic film makers directs their point of view to the host country and other diasporic communities, instead of solely having a relationship with their mother land; this collective memory significantly defines the identities of the characters of the film in their new countries. Postcolonial ethnic identity film makers concentrate on the present life and necessities of the country, identity change and transformation. In the exile films which bear similarities with diaspora films, a retrospective

⁴ On 19 December, 1978, a voices bomb was thrown in the theater where a film known to be a nationalistic film titled *Güneş Ne zaman Doğacak* (When Will the Sun Rise) was being shown. After the bombing, the events which took shape by the attacks of a extreme rightists to the Republican People's Party city building, the Post Office and All Teachers' Unity and Support Foundation along with slogans such as “Muslim Turkey” and “Even if we bleed, the Victory Belongs to Islam” and extending their attacks to Alawite neighborhoods, continued with the murder of two leftist teachers named Hacı Çolak and Mustafa Yüzbaşıoğlu. When the extreme rightist group attacked the funeral of the two teachers, the chaos immediately expanded since the intervention of the law enforcement officers remained insufficient. Between 19-26 December, 1978, in the Maraş events that took place, 111 people were killed according to official sources and 500 people were killed according to unofficial sources, a majority of whom were Alawite women and children and 552 homes and 289 offices were damaged. As a result of this event in question, a large group of Alawites had to emigrate from the city. The Prime Minister at that time, Bülent Ecevit stated that the events were started by the counter guerillas to force him into the martial law, which he had been resisting for a long time (Jongerden, 2003, s.83-84).

approach which is a result of exile and forceful deterritorialization. The characters harbor a strong desire to go back to their home country and feed, envisage and fetishize this desire through films. A majority of accented films share these three characteristics up to a certain amount (Naficy, 2001, p. 11-15).

Naficy in this book defines accented cinema as “exile cinema, cinema in exile” and states that this particular cinema’s critical structure is directly related to deterritorialization. According to Asuman Suner, who states that Naficy, who tries to explain accented cinema through the stories, narration, structure and political position which we come across in the films of those film makers who have the identities stated above, also defines this “deterritorialization” as a movement from the Third World toward the West and prefers to use accented cinema as a type of cinema and to give meaning to the films of those film makers who live in Turkey, are Turkish, but cannot exactly be defined as deterritorialized (Suner, 2006, s.263). However, although it is related to accented film production and narrative style, *My Father’s Voice* may be also be said to narrate the stories of deterritorialized and exiled characters, although not necessarily to the First World, or other geographies. While Naficy defines the term “accented cinema”, he emphasizes the importance of the home country which “exists in the deepest places” in films produced especially by exiled producers⁵. “The return journey to the mother land” which is defined as the most common point of those films, where home, journey, settlement and placelessness are intertwined (Naficy, 2001, p. 229), also appears in many different ways in *My Father’s Voice* as well. Mehmet, who can be given as an example to Naficy’s characters who begin a journey of search and get lost, who take on this journey from their new country where they are isolated to their mother land to find their past (Naficy, 2001, p. 33), Marks the beginning point of the story when he returns to his mother’s home, the village where he spent his childhood from his new home Diyarbakır. Meanwhile, in the story which begins with Base’s (Base Doğan) reaching her home in the village, we understand that the Father whose only voice is heard is away. The Father’s existence which can only be identified with his voice coming from years back and the elder brother Hasan’s absence, silence and ambiguity, produce a great contrast. Hasan, in opposition to his Father who makes his family feel his existence by only his voice which is heard from afar, gains existence through the silent phone calls to the home and with the absence of this image; thus, he gains a character and the film produces a subject through a ghost to put it shortly. After he finds out that his wife is pregnant, Mehmet feels empty and lonely. In this period where he wants to rebuild his life, in order to be able to remember those events which have left a mark in this consciousness, he attempts to refresh his memory. In the journey he begins to visit his mother, he actually beings an inwards journey towards his past and realizes that he is starting to forget his Father, the things told to him about his past are not true and is scared of the leakage of his personal history. Meanwhile, Base goes back to her village to remember the past and to mourn fro her losses, because she believes that what is

⁵ As mentioned before, the story of a family who had to leave their home and city due to the Maraş Massacre in *My Father’s Voice*. Sırrı Süreyya Önder, in his article titled “Maraş Pepper”, published in *Radikal 2* newspaper, on 26 December, 2011, states that the main reason for the Maraş Massacre should be regarded as economical and class differences, rather than Alawite and Sunni conflict. Önder who believes that the underlying reason for massacre is “the transfer of riches” and “ownership conflicts”, states that since the Alawites until the massacre benefited from the period during which Maraş prospered as a result of the 1970’s state policy to support agricultural policies and were the group who possessed the economical activities within the city, experienced violence. Since the Alawite families who survived the massacre did not have life security, they speedily sold their real assets for cheap prices and emigrated to other places (Önder, “Maraş Pepper”, 26.12.2011). Due to the fact that an emigration became mandatory and the emigrating families could not go back to their home cities, *My Father’s Voice* with its narrative directed at reminding the events which took place years ago, may be accepted as being closer to “exile films” in accordance with Naficy’s definition.

remembers cannot ever die. What causes Mehmet to go on this journey is the hope that he might find certain clues about his Father in his adulthood, when he is also a Father. The clue in question here are the voice recordings they have sent each other.

Leyla Neyzi in her work titled *Who Am I? Oral History, Identity and Subjectivity in Turkey?* explains the settlement of the Alewites of Kurdish origin to big cities, or to foreign countries and not being able to return to their homes not as “emigration”, but as I have also tried to express above, as “exile” (Neyzi, 2004, p.178). The definition of “being sent to exile” for the characters of *My Father’s Voice* displays differences. After the Father survives the massacre, which he was subject to due to this ethnic origin and sect, finds a job in Saudi Arabia to provide a better life for his family. In fact, he makes himself believe that this “state of exile” is temporary and suggests to his wife Base that he intends to go back after he has earned a sufficient amount of money. However, due to a work accident, he does not get a chance to see his family ever again. The Father is a character who is “exiled” not only by social and political prejudices, but also by economical conditions. His younger son Mehmet’s situation is not very different from his as he finds work in Diyarbakır and builds himself a new life there. However, what takes him to the search that forms the main text of the film is the fact that “As the person who is after certain things which are not exiled, or will not be exiled, he is in a constant state of limbo and is at the center of temporal and spatial ambiguity” (Özdüzen) and that he is lastly after his lost past in this world, where he will take root as “a Father”. Hasan, who is expected throughout the film, but is not even known whether he is alive or not, chooses a path exactly the opposite of his Father and prefers to get lost and blend in with the society; thus, he prefers not to make his identity visible, but completely remove his trace and by going to the mountains, he makes it impossible to return to the place where he was born. Base, on the other hand, is completely lonely in her home and dreams about the time before the exile, of the life in the past that belongs to another time. What she dreams of are those memories which belong to a time where her family was complete ; however, the past is the past and there is no way Base can go back either. The village house and the voice recordings her husband sends are the fetishized symbols of this past for Base. She not only does not get the house repaired, she also keeps the cassettes with the voice recordings and despite Mehmet’s insistence, does not give him the cassettes and refuses to speak for a long time.

Naficy once again states that the directors of accented exile films aim at depicting the unity and conflict of a culture belonging to another and the present time through sound, words and feelings and that they have created “hybrid identities” for this cause and adds that the viewer is made to feel suspicion about the identity of the speaker through the external voice and narration used in these films (Naficy, 2001, 12-13-122). In this respect, we may say that the most interesting character is the Father due to his complicated identity in *My Father’s Voice*. Base’s, Mehmet’s and Hasan’s struggle not to lose their identities and to hold on to them through the methods they have chosen, the Father constantly tells his wife Base in the cassettes he sends from Saudi Arabia, where he forms correct sentences in Turkish, but a vague accent is felt: “Speak in Turkish with the children, do not be stubborn, let them learn Turkish, do not let them get used to Kurdish”. The Father’s insistence for Turkish, who wishes to preserve his and his family’s belonging and identity, shows his great fear, besides his reflection of transitional identity peculiar to emigrants. His wish to speak Turkish and hide his family’s differences related to their sect, may be attributed to the fact that this family which is Kurdish and Alewite is designated as “the other” in the Republic of Turkey.

One of the results Neyzi has come up with in his above mentioned study is that, a majority of the Alewite community before the 1990’s has preferred to live as Sunnis in the society (Neyzi, 2004, 155). Between 17-25 October, 2012, 1952 Alewite citizens were interwoven and in the “Alewite Report” prepared by Republican people’s Party representative

Sabahat Akkiraz and her brother Hasan Akkiraz, it has been determined that this hiding in question has by time resulted in the assimilation of the Alewite identity within the Sunni identity even today. In the report which states that half of the Alewite population has been assimilated in the last century, it is also stated that the Alewites are still not allowed to live with their own identity in any of the public sphere and that especially Alawism is displayed as a fear factor in mass communication devices (Kaya, 15.12. 2012, s.17).⁶ In the light of date in question, the Father's insistence to speak Turkish and to hide their Alewite identity may be said to be a result of the wish for acceptance from the majority of the society and thus to make his family live.

On the other hand, another reason why the Father gives such importance to language and speaking may be associated to his coming from a background where Alewite leaders transmitted religious, moral and cultural conventions orally and his preference to use voice and words to most accurately transmit his own thoughts (Kehl-Bodrogi, 2000, 23). If we take into consideration the fact that the former understanding of language, knowledge and identity cannot easily be removed from people's lives and that voice and words are also a part of the culture and identity in question, then we may say that this "remnant verbalization" changes the form and thematic system of the film and makes the meaning of the film more meaningful as well. Naficy states that, especially those directors who live the state of exile in their exile films narrate the resistance they display against "the state of exile" by turning into it films (Naficy, 2001, p. 11). We may say that we see this resistance the most in *My Father's Voice* in terms of the use of language, because the usage of certain languages together may cause to have a look at certain realities which belong to history from a different perspective. *My Father's Voice* underlines the otherness caused by a long historical process through the use of Kurdish and Turkish together. In the film, the mother and her son speak in Kurdish despite the Father's insistence. On the other hand, although Mehmet speaks in Kurdish in most of his conversation with his wife, he cannot refrain from using Turkish word at times. In the same

⁶ A dominant Sunni Muslim culture has existed in Anatolia ever since the Ottoman Empire, despite the fact that it was a multilingual, multi cultured and multi national empire. While the Republic of Turkey anticipated that the peoples living in Anatolia were not different from each other in terms of language, race and culture during its proclamation, it also attempted to define all of its citizens under the republic's "Turkishness" identity. This uniform ethnical identity also became evident in the area of religion (Shankland, 2003, pages. 14-15). However, the Alawites who thought that they would have equal rights before the laws depending on the secularism principle of the republic and gave support in this light to the founder of the Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and founding party Republican People's Party, experienced a great disappointment when the republic adopted the Sunni Muslim understanding as the basis. However, since the first years of the republic, Islam has been bureaucratized, controlled by the state and therefore, an effort has been spent to "Turkicize" the Sunni Muslim belief. Especially the directorate of Religious Affairs founded in 1928 within the scope of the state, which claimed that it represented "the real Islam understanding" is even criticized today on the basis that the state does not accept the Alawite belief (Tarhanlı, 1993: 147-175). Therefore, Alawites have always been considered as being a part of the Leftist movement beginning from the 1960's, as a result of representing the opposite culture against the Sunni majority, besides having a syncretic, heterodox belief system, which takes its roots from other beliefs which existed prior to Islam. As a result of all these, in the 70's, they have become the target of many massacres organized by the youth group of Nationalist Movement Party, which followed a rightist policy based on Turkish ethnicity. 4 September, 1978 Sivas, 23-24 December, 1978 Kahramanmaraş and 2-7 June, 1980 Çorum massacres have been written to history as events, during which the Alawite citizens regardless of being Kurdish or not were subject to violence (Jongerden, 2003, pages.83-84). The Madımak Hotel incident which took place on 2 July, 1993, in Sivas, where 33 Alawite intellectuals who had come to participate in the Pir Sultan Abdal Festival were burned to death and the Gazi Neighborhood events, which started as a result of the police opening fire on the crowds after coffee house where Alawites generally visited were opened fire on 12-14 March, 1995 should take place among the other events against the Alawites (Gölbaşı, 2008, pages. 52-56).

manner, although the Father in his letter-recording advises Base to “speak Turkish”, in some cases, he does not find Turkish adequate and speaks to his family in his mother tongue Kurdish to express his thoughts. Therefore, in a way he intends to say more than a language can express. This hybridity in *My Father's Voice* tells us that, the characters still preserve their exiled identities especially through language, but they are also influenced by the other dominant identity. This conflict the characters live in language as well, tells us that they cannot find ways of expressing the state of exile (Chambers, 2005, p.40). If we take into consideration that telling and listening have equal importance in the oral tradition which maintains its importance in the country side, *My Father's Voice* is the story of Base and Mehmet's remembering the events they have lived and confronting these by speaking about their exile.

Journey to the Foreign Land and the Coming Back

At the beginning of *My Father's Voice*, it is not told why the Father is working abroad and why the younger brother Mehmet lives in Diyarbakır; in fact, we do not get to learn that the elder brother Hasan lives in the mountains. However, the state of “unhomeliness” of defined by Bhabba caused by a shattered family, poverty, loneliness, alienation and being away from the birth place (Bhabba, narrated from 1994 by Neyzi, 2004, p.154), makes itself felt even from the beginning of the film. For this reason, the two members of the family to “come back home” is a necessity. Base and Mehmet can only voice their troubles related to their past after they arrive at their home. The mother and son being to question why they have left their homeland and why they feel the urge to come back in a manner as if they wish the viewer to participate in the remembering process as well.

According to Naficy, as is the case in return of Base and Mehmet to their village, “journeys” are used as a significant them in accented films. Besides the journeys abroad, escaping with the hope of finding a new home, the search journeys and return journeys the characters undertake to find themselves and their past shape the plots of accented films (Naficy, 2001, p.33). Base's return journey from her home in Elbistan to her village house which represents the period before her family was shattered may also be considered as a return journey. In the same manner, Mehmet's journey to the village after his mother, which is the only remaining connection between his past may also be termed as a return journey. This physical journey of the mother and her son, their changing of their location also transforms into a process of remembrance about the exile, about the Maraş Massacre in the village house which preserves the memories of the past. Therefore, we may say that the village house they arrive at is shaped as a reference for the personal history of the family for Base and Mehmet.

The vehicles which carry the characters of accented films, are as important as the “journeys” themselves. Starting with the view point the visuality within the frame can be shaped by movement besides words, sounds and feelings (McIlroy, 2004, 73), we may think that the man who stands all alone in the empty land with a single tree in the distance at the beginning of the film is a also a part of the dream. What brings this memory which is hardly remembered, impossible to keep alive in dreams and seems as if it belongs to another time and space to the present time is the small van which brings Base to the village. It is as if this woman, who is brought by the van to the village carries memories Mehmet wishes to remember, but is scared since he has forgotten them.

Naficy states that in accented films, communication realized through letters, cassettes, phone calls and photographs are as important as face to face communications. Keeping this in mind, *My Father's Voice* through the cassettes which serve as letters, although the Father is not seen in the film at all, we may say that he actually has the “leading role”. On the other hand, if we take into consideration that the usage of voice and his words in a meaningful

manner complete the lack of visuality cannot fill, through the cassettes the Father sends, we may say that the film forms a connection between sound and inwardness and identity and sends “accented letters” different from written literary language. Thus, we get to validate Naficy’s definition stating that the letters in accented films do not only bring together what is separated from each other through emigration and exile, but also allows the characters to form a connection with their past (Naficy, 2001, pages. 120, 291) through *My Father’s Voice*. The film attempts to transmit the advice given by the Father who died a long time ago to his sons and wife in the same unity of feeling.

To affirm this judgment, director Orhan Eskiköy in the interview broadcasted on Cem Tv, on 27 September, 2012, states that the film is a mixture of the past and the present time and that while the scenes reflect the present time, the voices reflect the past and thus, the characters are able to settle their scores with their past (Interview with Orhan Eskiköy, Cem Tv Prime Time News, 27.09.2012). Every word the Father utters is in fact like the advice he has given to his family which needs to survive after a traumatic event and until he returns. It is as if he transmits certain precautions he has taken with the hope of returning and with the pain of this trauma, which endangers the possibility of living freely in the land he was born. This is the reason why he says “Hide, act like them; he firstly has to return from Arabia to his family. Later on, he plans and hopes to go back to his mother land Maraş. Meanwhile, Base almost tries to preserve the village house as if it was years ago. Despite Mehmet’s protests, she does not even touch the walls with the cracked plasters. This village house for her husband who was not able to return and son Hasan is frozen in time and has become a base to endure what she has lost and lived. We start thinking that, Base’s home has almost become a holy place.

When the Father Speaks, the Children Keep Silent

Since sound takes up spaces other than visuality, we may say that it reminds us of how we wish to form a relationship with the past through our experiences. In this manner, it may force boundaries, and present us with the soul, tension and point of view of visuality. It may add a new meaning to visuality and remind us of the images left in our memory and revive these. It may widen the relationship between the viewer and visuality, reflect the momentary mood of the viewer, and trigger the changing mood. Therefore, we may think that the sounds and dialogues in the film add desire, feeling and imagination to the film’s visuality (Zelizer, 2004, pages. 161-163). In *My Father’s Voice*, we know that the Father’s “cassette-letters” are directed toward Base throughout the film, however the Father continuously speaks as an external voice from beginning until the end, he makes comments and supports the narration as well. However, Base has hidden the cassettes and does not want to give these to her son. Meanwhile, Mehmet’s sole aim is to find and listen to the cassettes and to remember his Father through them. Hasan on the other hand cannot reach the cassettes, because he is far away. If none of the characters are able to listen to the cassettes throughout the film, then who is the Father exactly addressing to?

It seems that the Father speaks with the viewer to express what Naficy’s exiled and alienated characters Base and Mehmet cannot express and speak about. The Father’s voice, who cannot emerge with his body and thus gains his independence by remaining outside the boundaries of the scenes, takes the place of dialogues like an inner monologue and starts speaking on his own behalf within the plotline. Robert Bourgoigne in his article titled “The Cinematic Narrator: The Logic and Pragmatics of Impersonal Narration” states that a narrator who reflects his own character to the narration of the film exists in various manners in all films. As different from other characters, this narrator can speak on his own behalf and thus establishes his authority both on the film and the other characters of the film (Bourgoigne, 1990, s.5-9). If we assume that the voice of the Father, who is an external authority, connects

the events to another universe, then we may state that this universe may explain the plot and the mood of the characters of the film to the viewer, without breaking free of the main axis of the plot. Therefore, we may say that, through the external voice in question, the film also breaks free of the limitations of framing (Doane, 1980, s. 47). Although *My Father's Voice* seems to narrate Mehmet's adventure and Base's story, we may say that the Father whom we can position as the narrator of the film gives us information about these three characters and helps the viewer to analyze the characters and support the visual narration of the film, by explaining Base's, Hasan's and Mehmet's past. While it is Base who tells about the events of the Maraş Massacre, the Father, in Orhan Eskiköy's words, tells us about "what happened after the massacre" which is the focal point of the film (Interview with Orhan Eskiköy, Cem Tv Prime Time News, 27.09.2012).

The Father's voice which supports the limitations in the framing and composition creation of the fixed camera with the things he says and narrates, serves as an independent upper unit allowed to enable all the characters of the film to define themselves. Thus, we may say that the Father transforms his personal memory into a cultural memory through the cassettes he sends to his family. If we suggest that the scenes representing the present time in the film and the Father's voice from years back support the present time, then we may say that the Father's voice and the film's scenes belong to the same time. Shortly, the Father's voice is in fact not the past, but the present time and maybe the future time. *My Father's Voice* is structured upon not forgetting, remembering, confronting and to continue down the road with the help of this external voice.

How We Do Not Betray the Past?

We may say that all art forms and the technology used to create these forms create the period which will allow them to live. Cinema which was born in the 19th century has actually created the audio visual world of the 20th century. If we accept that common memory and technology are closely related, then we have to state that the camera has a significant place in transmitting historical material to the public and preserving it. Shortly, cinema is a form of art which works along with the risks of forgetting (Kurasawa, 2004, p.29). In this light, we may say that *My Father's Voice* is born out of the conflict between the wish of the first generation to forget and the wish of the second generation who lived the events to remember.

Maraş Massacre and the aftermath transmit to Mehmet a depressing mood which causes him to question his daily life. In this aspect, *My Father's Voice* may be accepted as a film which portrays what kind of a relationship is created between those who have lived this trauma in history and the new generations. Gerd Bayer states that, although the memory of the second generation which may be defined as a late memory, after memory, or adopted memory⁷ embraces what is left as heritage to them without having to witness a historical event is not equal to the trauma of the first generation contains a serious feeling. While first generations deal with trauma through denial and forgetting, the second generations may choose to reconcile the reaction of the first generation through remembrance and representation. In such cases, we may say that the second generations' late memory portrays an ethical and calm stand towards the historical past, by giving importance to making the first generation remember a large number details in relation the traumas experienced (Bayer, 2010, ss. 116-117). Senem Aytaç and Fırat Yücel state that, *My Father's Voice* has managed to attain a certain amount of objective view as an extension of the directors' documentary cinema pasts in the face of Maraş Massacre and in its aftermath (Aytaç, Yücel, 2012, s.37). In this light, we may say that, Eskiköy and Doğan are able to calmly portray the aftermath of the trauma, by forming an ethical relationship with Base, who is the first hand witness of the

⁷ Gerd Bayer uses these three definitions to explain the term "post memory" (Bayer, 2010, pages. 116).

events which took place after the massacre, through Zeynel Doğan taking as basis what he remembers from his Father's real voice recordings without being melodramatic. With the objective view in question, the subject *My Father's Voice* handles is in Tül Akbal Süalp's words one of the films "which tries to narrate the story of the most hidden, most forgotten violation of rights which have been buried in the deepest places with shame and feeling of guilt; the story of the most inappropriate political and official, semiofficial murders to be talked about (...) and forming the archeology of those events most wanted to be hidden" (Süalp, 2011, s. 66)⁸. At the same time, taking into consideration that the directors and the viewers may remember a historical event in many different ways, we may say that with the help of the documentary sources it forms a cultural mediation between the witnesses of the massacre and the viewers. Thus, this historical representation, which Marianne Hirsh defines as "the private and public memory recording of the camera, in a way to attribute a mnemonic aesthetic to the future generations", may persuade the viewer that the film approaches the events from an accurate point of view (Hirsch, 2002, s. 9).

In the light that memory can easily be shaped, we may assume that the representations of significant events may cause great changes in people's memory. Again with the same point of view, we may also say that the viewers may firstly watch a film and then reinterpret it depending on their own knowledge and thoughts. In this aspect, in films which place historical events on the basis of their narration, forming a relationship between personal experiences and common social memory, it is important to avoid a "nostalgic"⁹ presentation of history (Taffler, 1999, s.187). In *My Father's Voice*, Mehmet wishes to remember, know, embrace and place the past in his memory through cassettes in the passing present time. Meanwhile, Base pretends as if she has forgotten to keep her promise to the Father. Mehmet forces Base to remember in order to recreate himself a past. He, in a way, seems to wish to write a history free from official history in his own memory by doing this. We may think that, this freely created history makes *My Father's Voice* different from other historical films, which attempt to take the place of the viewers' memory.

In *My Father's Voice*, since a majority of the viewers just like Mehmet are not first hand witnesses of the massacre, we may say that the film does not recreated the scenes of the massacre. Thus, the film is not imprisoned to the scenes that are lost by time and tries to create a feeling for the viewers without "commenting on comments" and by the help of many voices. Mary Ann Doane, states that a film is expression and discourse, rather than an overlapping of scenes which appeal to feelings, voice also facilitates the act of remembering by accelerating memory and perception (Doane, 1980, pages.43- 49).while *My Father's Voice* concentrates on the heritage and daily of the characters, through two characters one of whom is a witness of the massacre, does not victimize the events experienced through visual scenes. In this light, we may say that, the film by not placing the Maraş Massacre at the center, does not recreate pain and trauma. However, the film in this manner does not attribute feeling of hatred or reconciliation to the relationship between the massacre and characters and the viewers by placing a Father who works in a foreign country away from his family, who thinks and worries about them and can concentrate on life despite the massacre. On the other hand,

⁸ Z. Tül Akbal Süalp, in the third of her article series under the title "Periodisation of the Turkish Cinema," published in the New Cinema magazine, places Orhan Eskiköy's joint film with Özgür Doğan, *Two Languages One Luggage* dated 2008 under this definition and states that we should wait for other works to see whether these directors will continue to handle these stories and keep their stance. Personally, Orhan Eskiköy with *My Father's Voice* continues this definition which was made for his first film by Tül Akbal Süalp.

⁹ It is the melodramatic reanimation of historical events as if they are real through a cinematic narrative, which Taffler defines as "a nostalgic representation of history" (Taffler, 1999, s.187).

we may state that *My Father's Voice* communicates with the viewers through the present time, instead of historicizing the past through pain as we generally see, without searching for the roots of reasons and the malignity behind the events. For this reason, only Base's loneliness turns out to be the last dialogue, which the film forms between the viewers and the traumas of history.

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