Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies. 2026. No 1 | ISSN: 2658-7734
Cinema Studies | https://doi.org/10.46539/gmd.v8i1.631

Sibel: A Female Character Who Quietly Writes a Feminist Manifesto

Berceste Gülçin Özdemir

İstanbul University. İstanbul, Turkey. Email: gulcin.ozdemir[at]istanbul.edu.tr
ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3742-2739

Received: 9 April 2025 | Revised: 4 May 2025 | Accepted: 12 May 2025

Abstract

In film narratives, the concept of silence is sometimes conveyed to the viewer in a metaphorical context, and sometimes silence is presented visibly. In this film analysis, while examining sound as a concept on the basis of the content of the film, attention is drawn to the female character's inability to speak. In the study, how the issue of voice and inability to speak, which is important in psychoanalytic film theory research, can be made sense of from a feminist perspective is considered in detail. From this point of view, Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988), one of the feminist film theorists, draws the framework of the film analysis. Within the framework of the study, the concepts of identification and emasculation, along with the issues of inability to speak and voice, are opened to questioning through the female character. In this respect, Annette Kuhn's *Women's Picture* (1982), Part: III *Rereading Dominant Cinema: Feminism and Film Theory*, the importance of the representation of female characters with their states of existence and lack in films in which they are focused on silence is hinted at, and it is reminded again that the 'invisible of the visible' emerges as a central issue in feminist film analysis. The 'invisibility of the visible' makes the female character more visible in her representation associated with silence or inability to speak. The 'language' that mediates Sibel's speech also causes people to perceive her existence as dangerous. With the questions arising from this study, how Sibel is presented as a mute character in the film from a feminist perspective and the importance of the representation of female characters who cannot speak in terms of feminist film practice are opened to discussion.

Keywords

Silence; Feminist Film Theory; Psychoanalytic Film Theory; Representation; Female Character

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons "Attribution" 4.0 International License

Galactica Media: Journal of Media Studies. 2026. No 1 | ISSN: 2658-7734
Исследования кинематографа | https://doi.org/10.46539/gmd.v8i1.631

Сибель: женщина, тихо пишущая феминистский манифест

Гюльчин Оздемир Берджесте

Стамбульский университет. Стамбул, Турция. Email: gulcin.ozdemir[at]istanbul.edu.tr
ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3742-2739

Рукопись получена: 9 апреля 2025 | Пересмотрена: 4 мая 2025 | Принята: 12 мая 2025

Аннотация

В нарративах кино молчание может быть представлено как метафора или выражено визуально. В данном фильмоведческом анализе, сосредоточенном на звуке как концепте, особое внимание уделяется неспособности женского персонажа говорить. Исследование детально рассматривает, как проблема голоса и немоты, центральная для психоаналитической теории кино, может быть осмыслена с феминистских позиций. Теоретическую рамку задаёт работа Кайи Силверман *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988), где анализируются механизмы репрезентации женского голоса и молчания.

В исследовании через образ женского персонажа подвергаются критическому рассмотрению концепты идентификации и эмансипации, а также проблематика голоса и его отсутствия. Особое значение имеет обращение к Аннет Кун (*Women's Pictures*, 1982, часть III: *Rereading Dominant Cinema: Feminism and Film Theory*), где подчёркивается важность репрезентации женских персонажей через их состояния присутствия и отсутствия в фильмах, сосредоточенных на теме молчания. Отмечается, что «невидимое видимого» выступает ключевым понятием феминистского киноведческого анализа: оно усиливает видимость женского персонажа через его связь с молчанием или неспособностью говорить.

«Язык», опосредующий речь Сибель, становится также источником восприятия её существования как опасного. Вопросы, поднятые в рамках данного исследования, касаются репрезентации Сибель как немого персонажа с феминистской точки зрения и значимости образов женщин, лишённых голоса, для феминистской кинопрактики.

Ключевые слова

молчание; феминистская теория кино; психоаналитическая теория кино; репрезентация; женский персонаж

Это произведение доступно по лицензии Creative Commons “Attribution” («Атрибуция») 4.0

Introduction

Silence has been an important concept that has been questioned since the beginning of cinema history. This context paves the way for the voices that exist to be imagined and allows the viewer to embark on a philosophical journey. In the patriarchal world order, it has always been the man who speaks, shouts, calls, dominates, raises his voice while dominating, and declares his domination while raising his voice, while women have been the representative of silence. Feminist film theories attach importance to the concept of voice in this context, and voice plays an important role in the representation of female characters. In addition to the cinematic analysis of the voice in the film narrative in the context of the film's form, the use of the concept of voice in the content of the film requires different narrative strategies. In this important distinction, the point to be considered when analyzing the film is the approach and the context in which the voice in the film should be viewed.

The study focuses on the story of *Sibel* (Çağla Zencirci and Guillaume Giovanetti, 2019), a character who has a voice, a whistle and cannot realize the act of speech. Janet McCabe, *Feminist Film Studies: Writing The Woman Into Cinema* (1983), under the title of *Difficulties in Speaking*, she mentions that feminist film theory falls into a dilemma while trying to explain women in the context of the 'other'. Psychoanalysis, semiotics, and conceptual models become important in this context to understand the unconscious ideology of the patriarchy. According to McCabe, psychoanalysis attempts to analyze the distinction between signs and language, as well as the texts that ideology brings about the spectator and identification (McCabe, 2005, p. 116). In this film analysis, how the issue of voice and inability to speak, which is important in psychoanalytic research, can be made sense of from a feminist perspective has been considered in detail. From this point of view, Kaja Silverman's The *Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (1988), one of the feminist film theorists, draws the framework of the film analysis. Within the framework of this study, the concepts of inability to speak, voice, identification and emasculation are opened to questioning through the female character. With the questionings that emerge from this study, how Sibel is presented as a mute character in the film and the importance of the representation of female characters who cannot speak in terms of feminist film practice are discussed.

Sound is one of the elements that determine human existence as a reflection of the music that comes from within life, but it is also a concept that confronts us in the issue of non-existence and turns the ontological structure upside down. The digital native of the postmodern world still seeks silence. Apart from the cinematic analysis of the voice in the film narrative in the context of the film's form, the use of the concept of voice in the content of the film is different. In this important distinction, the point to be considered while analyzing the film is how to look

at the voice in the cinematographic context. In this film analysis, sound as a concept is analyzed on the basis of the content of the film, while attention is drawn to the female character's inability to speak. The focus is on the story of a character who has a voice, a whistle, but cannot realize the act of speaking.

With regard to the influence of sound in cinema, it is important to remember that the sound track can make clear, contradict or obscure visual events. Therefore, the sound track is in in active relationship with the image track (Bordwell & Thompson, 2011, p. 270). Likewise, according to Michel Chion, image and sound are based on cultural and aesthetic codes as well as psycho-physiological factors (Chion, 1994, p. 21). With the importance attributed to the voice in cinema, the feminist approach underlying the presentation strategy of hearing the woman's voice in the representation of the female character also shows what a silent character can convey to the viewer and what it can make them think.

Methodology

The discourses of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, who contributed to the development of psychoanalytic film theory, have brought along many debates. The questioning of Freudian and post-Freudian thought in the context of films has been discussed controversially since the 1960s. Journals such as *Cahiers du Cinema*, *Screen*, *Camera Obscura* published film articles with different methodologies in the 1960s and 70s. Cahiers critics Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva developed their ideas based on the ideas of Jacques Derrida. In the 1980s, Christian Metz subjected Jacques Lacan to a post-Freudian reading (Gabbard & Gabbard, 2009, p. 302).

Lacan placed language at the center of psychoanalysis. Language is seen by Lacan as the reading of the unconscious. Therefore, the unconscious is subjected to a linguistic reading. Apart from the theorists mentioned above, many theorists have tried to analyze films in a psychoanalytic context with different methods and in the context of different ideologies. Since the films analyzed based on Freud and Lacan are interconnected with various film theories, it is possible to analyze the films from many perspectives. Hugo Mauerhofer, in his work *The Psychology of Cinematic Experience* (1949), argues that the so-called cinema shares many things with the dream state. For Mauerhofer, it is important that passivity, comfort and withdrawal from reality can be experienced in both states. Susan Langer (1953) is one of those who argue that cinema exists in a dream state (Stam, 2014, p. 176).

David Bordwell, as cited by Glen O. and Krin Gabbard, argues that a more traditional formalist analysis based on fewer theories should be applied. Bordwell also explains that he finds the grand theories of the so-called SLAB discourse (Saussure, Lacan, Althusser, Barthes) insufficient (Gabbard & Gabbard, 2009, p. 313). Theorists who can reverse Bordwell's thoughts and make a significant contribution to film theories with their discourses are feminist film theorists. The reason is, feminist film theories contribute to many film theories with the issues they are

based on and the concepts they question, and they can offer important implications to different disciplines. At a time when feminist film theories were intensely debated, B. Ruby Rich (1998) categorized films made by women: affirming films (films that legitimize women's movements, e. g. *Union Maids* 1976, Jim Klein, Miles Mogulescu, Julia Reichert), corresponding films (films that incorporate the auteur into the film, e. g. *Film About a Woman Who* 1974, Yvonne Rainer), medusa-vian films (praising the potential of feminist texts to blow up the law, such as *A Very Curious Girl* 1969, Nelly Kaplan), corrective realism films (films that incorporate feminist features and target a wide viewer, such as *The Second Awakening of Christa Klages* 1978, Margarethe von Trotta) (Stam, 2014, p. 187). While different examples of these film genres have been proliferating over the years, feminist film theorists have continued to broaden their topics. Both the proliferation of film examples and the diversification of feminist film theorists' discourses mediate the transformation of the existing indicators of women. In this study, the film is analyzed from a Lacanian perspective within the framework of psychoanalytic film theory and questions are produced from a feminist perspective.

Film Plot

The film tells the story of Sibel, a mute character who cannot speak, and focuses on her life in the village. Sibel, who became mute at the age of 5 as a result of a febrile illness, communicates with everyone by whistling. Since everyone in Kuşköy knows the whistling language, it is not difficult to communicate with Sibel. In the film where a mute female character communicates with a whistle, the silence of the female character is not entirely attributed to her. While the difficulties of not being able to speak are made sense of through the element of sound, the representation of the female character by identifying her with silence allows for questioning in the context of feminist film practice.

Inside the Inability to Speak is the Ability to Utter the Most Precious Sentences. On Sibel's Inability to Speak

The film opens with an illuminated image of the head of a skeletal X-ray and the accompanying whistle. A close-up of large, worried eyes leads to Sibel. Sibel, alone in the forest, shoots with a rifle in her hand and then starts running fast. With her green shirt, her kerchief around her neck, her rifle in her hand, her confident movements and quick actions, Sibel is like a soldier protecting her own space. She jumps into a deeply dug earthen pit and drops the intestines from her bag into the soil. She cleans her hands by rubbing them on the soil and then runs with fast movements into a hut hidden in the forest, where she removes her shoes from under a board and replaces them with the ones on her feet. For the first four minutes of the film, we watch Sibel with a subjective and moving camera. No dialog is heard until this time. For the first four minutes, the viewer only hears the sounds

of Sibel's movements and the sounds of nature. We see Sibel again when we switch to women collecting tea in the mountainous area among the greenery. Sibel goes to a teenage girl and is rebuffed by the girl, saying "go away, you jinx, my children will be like you". While none of the women present react to this situation, Sibel sadly walks away from the girl. In its first minutes, the film conveys to the viewer that Sibel cannot speak and that she is ostracized in her neighborhood because of this situation. Using the conventions of contemporary narrative cinema, the film gives the viewer a clue about its cinematography with elements of this narrative structure in the first minutes. In the first chapter of *The Acoustic Mirror*, in *Lost Object* and *Mistaken Subjects*, Silverman begins to explain her ideas by stating that classical narrative cinema reactivates the trauma of symbolic castration (Silverman, 1988, p. 1).[1] Radically deconstructing Silverman's idea, Sibel signals at the beginning of the film how the conventions of classical narrative cinema will be dislodged.

Sibel, who lives with her sister and father, is not only responsible for household chores but also undertakes many tasks outside the home. In addition to collecting tea, hunting in the forest, chopping wood, lighting fires and other such tasks, Sibel also undertakes all the work in the private sphere. Although she is not a formal employee of the public sphere, she is the expert of a vast heterotopia such as the forest and she is a free traveler in this area. Sibel communicates with the people in the village and her family through whistling, and everyone understands and responds to her communication. Sibel is not actually the silent one, she is the one who has a voice but cannot speak. This point is important in terms of the representation of the female character. Because it is one thing for a female character to be represented by silence and another for her to express herself through a communication channel other than speech. However, the character's inability to speak like individuals who can communicate in a healthy way pushes her to the marginalized side of society, where she has no voice. Silverman emphasizes the importance of the representation of the female voice in the presentation of male subjectivity to the viewer in Hollywood. According to her, the female body, like the female voice, is also the signifier of incompleteness, as it shows the man all the information he knows about castration (Silverman, 1988, p. 39). Sibel is unable to speak, but in her whistling communication she is able to utter more important sentences than most people who can speak. Kuhn in *Women's Picture* (1982), Part III *Rereading Dominant Cinema: Feminism and Film Theory*, discusses the importance of films in which the female characters are focused with silence for feminist discourses. According to her the states of existence and lack are important in representation in this context, and the "invisible of the visible" emerges as a central issue in feminist film analysis (Kuhn, 1994, p. 71). The "invisibility of the visible" actually makes the female character more visible in relation to the inability to speak in the representation of her character. The viewer finds a way to internalize Sibel's

1 Castration: surgical removal of the testes (see orchiectomy); less commonly, it can indicate removal of the ovaries (see ovariectomy) (*Castration*, 2018).

happiness, sadness and troubles through her inability to speak, and these become embedded in the skin of the film.

The only person in the village with whom Sibel can communicate sincerely is Narin, who is known as the village madman. Sibel goes to Narin from time to time, helps her, listens to her and takes what she says seriously. Taking this mentally unstable character seriously is not a wise thing to do, but Sibel believes, or perhaps wants to believe, in her reality and truthfulness, because Narin is the only person in the village who treats Sibel the best and tries to communicate with her sincerely. From the opening of the film to Sibel's dialog with Narin, the viewer goes through a process of making sense of Sibel and her life. The answers to many questions such as how Sibel lives in the village, what she does, with whom she communicates, what she shares with her family, where she goes, how she knows the village, how she acts, how she communicates with the people in the village, how the village views Sibel become clear at the beginning of the film, in the introduction.

The plot of the film continues with Sibel's encounter with a wounded man (Ali) while she is waiting for her prey in the forest. Sibel and Ali briefly engage in a physical struggle. Ali pounces on Sibel like a lion, the king of the jungle, and with saliva dripping from his mouth, he turns into an animal that has found its prey. Weakened by the open wound on his body, he falls to the ground without harming Sibel. Sibel drags Ali to her cabin in the forest and treats his open wound with herbs. She forces the medicine and water into Ali's mouth and makes him drink it. Ali is a man wanted in the village as a deserter. Sibel sees the gendarmerie but says nothing to them. In fact, on another day in the forest, Sibel tries to stitch Ali's open wound with a needle she burns in a flame. The anxiety, difficulty and struggle in Sibel's eyes during the act of stitching the open wound are shown in close-up. Sibel is almost tangling Ali.

According to Susan Hayward, the stitching system connects the viewer to the filmic text. Lacan uses this term in the context of the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious, where the troubled fusion between the imaginary and symbolic orders takes place (Hayward, 2012, p. 121).[1] In the bond between Ali and Sibel, in the interpretation of the conscious and unconscious, the viewer becomes increasingly attached to the filmic text (in Sibel's act of sewing Ali up), while the characters experience a chaotic relationship between the imaginary and symbolic orders in which love and violence exist. This intense and striking form of relationship with a man she has never met offers a foretaste of what Sibel, the focal point of the film, will experience emotionally. Silverman states that stitching theorists draw attention to what is missing in classical narrative cinema. Explaining

1 Imaginary and Symbolic: The Imaginary is that state of being in which the infant has no sense of being a subject distinct from other people or the external world and no sense of their place in human culture. After the infant's entry into the Symbolic (the world of language, culture, and morality), they can return to the wholeness of the Imaginary only in fantasy. The achievement of symbolization marks the beginning of ego differentiation and is associated with the infant's entrance into the world of language, culture, law, and morality (*Imaginary*, 2018, *Symbolic*, 2018).

the phallus as the speaking subject, Silverman adds that it is the unseen narrator, referring to a transcendent imagining, hearing and speaking (Silverman, 1988, p. 30). In this context, while Ali's phallus is being watched by Sibel, she is also prevented from being a speaking subject. Silverman's concern about what is 'missing' in film theory is also related to male subjectivity. In this respect, she draws attention to the importance of discussing sexual differences and representation through suture theory (Silverman, 1988, p. 2). One of the most important things that give subjects their subjectivity is the reality of what, with whom and how the subject establishes a form of relationship. In this context, Sibel is the one who cannot speak but becomes a speaking subject through her actions. One of the functional conditions for her to become a speaking subject is that she has lines of escape that she creates herself.

The forest is Sibel's escape from life and people. She is the owner of the forest, and her father, when describing Sibel to the gendarmerie, says, "Sibel is the one who knows these places best". When she urinates in the forest, she catches the eye of Ali who is watching her, but she does not hide anywhere, she does not run away, she continues to urinate. Because Sibel is the guardian of the forest. Therefore, she does not mind being spied on. In Hollywood narratives and classical narrative structure conventions, it is the woman who is spied upon and who is looked at and enjoyed while being spied upon. In cases where the male viewer's gaze is active, it is the man who both enjoys and desires. However, Sibel's confident stance towards the observer and her gaze without averting her eyes deconstruct the gaze of the beholder. In this context, the gazed is not the pleasured. The beholder becomes castrated by the beholder. Silverman associates castration with the lost object (Silverman, 1988, p. 10). The object lost when Ali is castrated by Sibel is his masculinity. Masculinity reinforces the position of the man as the bearer of power in classical narrative cinema. The fact that Ali's masculinity is presented concretely, nakedly, defenselessly, hinders his power. It is also important to consider the position of the female viewer at this point, since the female viewer looks at Ali from Sibel's point of view. Silverman, who explains identification with the concepts of voyeurism, exhibitionism and narcissism, states that the female subject acts as a mirror reflection on the male subject. In this context, the female subject causes the mirror reflection effect by playing an active role in the male subject's not only castration but also exhibitionism, narcissism and reflectivity (Silverman, 1988, p. 27). On the basis of Silverman's ideas, when we re-analyze the moments in which the viewer and Sibel establish identification, it can be said that the male subject is castrated.

Sibel is a character who can tell people many things with her eyes without speaking even though she is paralyzed. When she sees Ali bathing naked in the forest, she does not hesitate to look at him. While Ali is bathing with his back turned, he is unaware that Sibel is spying on him. She hides behind a tree and spies on Ali. In this film narrative, it is the male character who is looked at and spied upon.

The fact that it is the male character whose naked body is presented on the film screen is a challenge to classical narrative conventions; because, in classical narrative cinema, it is the woman whose naked body is presented. The woman's body is the signifier and the object of spectacle. The perspective that woman can only be an object of desire is tried to be internalized in classical narrative cinema. Sibel, who does not want to take her eyes off Ali, has a desirous feeling towards Ali. In the film, the conventions of the classical narrative cinema structure regarding the representation of the body, desire, the gazer and the observer are inverted, and the female character is the one who looks, observes and desires to be observed.

According to Allan Casebier, the first stage of feminist film theory was concerned with how the image of women in a particular film reflected or distorted the reality of the situation of women in the society in which the film was made. There was an assumption that stereotypical images of women contributed to women's acceptance of their fate. The second phase of feminist film theory was inspired by poststructuralism. The first stage of feminist film theory was partly rejected in the second stage of feminist film theory, because the first stage was thought to ask questions that reflected naivety. Christine Gledhill writes about the slight shift from the first to the second stage,

> "on the grounds that we cannot understand or replace sexist images of women with progressive ones without considering how narrative, genre, lighting, and mise-en-scène operate, the focus on characters and stereotypes has given way to a semiotic/structuralist concern with textural production. Try to construct such images and their meanings" (Casebier, 2009, pp. 120–121).

In line with Casebier and Gledhill's ideas, Sibel, who allows for the transformation of the stereotypical female image, presents a character that contributes to feminist representation not only through her presentation but also through her relationship with the male character.

During Sibel's visit to Narin, Narin's statement that 'men can't light that fire, women can is a discourse' that reveals a feminist perspective. In this film, the idea that men are the ones who do, who are the doers, who are the factors is transformed. Although the fact that Sibel's father Emin is the village headman and the gendarmerie moves around the village on law enforcement duty reminds us that the mechanisms of power are concentrated in men, women are shown as the ones with the mighty power. Sibel's being ostracized by the women in the village, not being embraced by her sister, and being belittled by the women of the village by being called "left at home" because she is mute are the subject of discussion in the context of what women do to women. However, what needs to be emphasized here is how the film narrative presents these situations and what it shows to the viewer at the end of the film. It cannot be said that there is no presentation of a feminist point of view for female characters, as the situations pointed out by these controversial situations at the end of the film allow the female characters to be made sense of. According to Vivian Sobchack, writing on behalf of Merleau-Ponty's

philosophy, the existential phenomenological nature of cinema is strongly related in one way or another to (a) the cinematographic image. Its perceptual and psychological reality; (b) the shooting phase of filmmaking; (c) the image itself, (d) the cinematographically presented space; (e) the mise-en-scene with its camera image and movement (which Sobchack equates with cinematic "becoming" as his primary existential phenomenological concern, "language" identified with cinematic editing), and finally (f) the proposed dual experiential presence of a film as not only a visible object but also as a perceiving ("watching") subject. This last-mentioned presence does not include the viewer's experience of the filmmaker's artistic expression, subjectivity, personality or style as conveyed by a film, nor the accompanying aesthetic realities as traditionally theorized, which are completely excluded from the phenomenological equation (Yacavone, 2016, pp. 171–172). In terms of feminist film phenomenology, when the presentation of the female characters in the film is considered again, the viewer's encounter with the reality of the existing masculine codes as well as the power of the signs that deconstruct the codes, which lie in the ontology of cinematography, to influence each other.

The night Sibel goes to the henna night with her sister Fatma is an important break in the film narrative in the context of the transformations of Sibel experiences. The moment when Sibel will experience another turning point coincides with a night of traditional customs and rules. Sibel, who goes to the henna night with her exaggerated make-up, is humiliated and dismissed by Fatma in front of everyone. At that moment, Fatma insults Sibel so loudly that her shouting interrupts the song 'they shouldn't build houses on high, high hills'. Both the rules of social order and the sound flowing in a rhythmic tempo are interrupted. The interruption of the song is caused by the existence of Sibel, who questions traditional customs and traditions. Sibel is as disturbing as she is disruptive. The question of why the presence of a woman who harms no one is so disturbing can be discussed in this context. In fact, it is not Sibel who is disturbing, it is the people of the village who are disturbed because the realities of social judgements are reflected to the society through Sibel's existence. The hypocrisy of the village people, the humiliation of those who do not think like them, the otherisation of those with disabilities remind them of their own realities and shame every time they see Sibel. She functions both as a mirror and as an anti-hero in their eyes. She is the one who cannot speak but expresses with her actions what needs to be spoken and said. While overcoming the obstacles, courage and self-confidence that life offers her, she is also the one who exposes the unwritten rules of the order.

The subjective camera angles follows Sibel as she runs to the forest, her heterotopia of peace, crying because she is humiliated in public. In the darkness and uncanny of the night, the viewer moves towards the depths of the forest from Sibel's point of view. The use of the camera with this technique is important for the identification between the viewer and Sibel. The viewer, like Sibel, can have the feeling of running away from people's malicious feelings, lack of understanding

and cruelty. According to Silverman, in male-dominated narrative cinema, the male subject who cannot speak is the one who hides (Silverman, 1988, pp. 38). The film Sibel, with its use of the structure of contemporary narrative cinema and its content that tells the story of women from the female point of view, does not hide the female character who cannot speak, but openly focuses its story on the basis of this character.

On the night when Sibel is humiliated by Fatma, she hugs and gets close to Ali, who, like her, is questioning life and whom she feels close to, in her cabin in the forest. Sibel is a character who experiences her body without questioning. This state of hers brings to mind the free-spirited female characters in Agnes Varda's films. Like the female characters of Varda, one of the most important feminist directors of the French New Wave, Sibel listens to her own soul. Sibel reminds us of *Mona*, the protagonist of *Vagabond* (1985), with her 'own hut', 'own forest' and 'own body'. For her, the judgements of the social order are impure. Despite her inability to speak, what Sibel thinks about society and the patriarchal order is mentally concretised by the viewer in screen time. In this context, even the question of how necessary speech is in life becomes debatable. In a world where male domination continues, people talk, but which violence against women or attacks against women can they find solutions to? People talk, but can they create a universe where women's existence is respected? The film narrative not only shows Sibel's life to the viewer, but also makes it possible for the viewer to continue questioning beyond the filmic time.

When it is time for Ali, whose wounds have healed, to leave, he asks Sibel to do him one last favour and asks her to bring him a birth certificate. Sibel steals a birth certificate from the documents belonging to her father at home and fulfils Ali's last request. In this way, Sibel not only violates the prohibitions on the rules attributed to women by the social order, but also disregards the official rules and commits a legal offence and becomes a partner in Ali's crime. The rumour that Sibel meets a man in the forest gradually spreads in the village. The women of the village march on Sibel during a tea-gathering moment. With discourses such as 'Who is the man you are secretly seeing in the forest?', 'Your mother would be ashamed', they press Sibel on the one hand, and on the other hand they come towards her and do violence to her. The moment when Sibel is mute and cannot speak is almost forgotten. Sibel is not in a position to explain herself even with a whistle. In the face of harsh sentences and violence that humiliate, denigrate and denounce her, Sibel represents a subaltern who is not only unable to speak but also is not allowed to speak. All the wheels of social judgements operate through Sibel and begin to turn at an endless speed. She is judged and punished without even being asked why she lived in the forest, what she encountered, what she experienced. This moment is one of the greatest violence that people show her. She starts to run with difficulty, her face covered in bruises, and again she goes to the forest where she feels safe, to Ali. Now in that heterotopia there is also the man she is in love

with. However, she cannot find Ali in the hut, she goes to Narin and learns from her that Ali is gone. This time the feeling of insecurity hits Sibel in a different place. The man she helped has left without informing her. Now, it is time for Sibel to scream. She sits there crying, the forest echoes with her silent screams. Freud, following in the footsteps of Friedrich W. Joseph Schelling, calls the uncanny 'something that is revealed when it should have remained hidden and concealed'. One is ashamed to use one's voice because it reveals to the other a hidden intimacy, a shame not of psychology but of structure. Likewise, Joan Copjec calls this shame 'ontological shame' (Dolar, 2013, p. 83). According to Mladen Dolar, the voice is at the indeterminable point that is simultaneously inside and outside the law, therefore it is always an emergency threat (Dolar, 2013, p. 169). And Sibel's scream is actually the ontological scream of the social order's oppression of Sibel. What needs to be thought about shame is which approach underlies the state of domination that makes the individual feel ashamed. This train of thought marks patriarchal discourses and ongoing silent codes.

In the cinematic context, seeing Sibel's crying in silence brings us closer to her inner screams. This cinematographic perspective of the director paves the way for a different identification between Sibel and the viewer. How can a scream be silent, how can one cry in silence, what does that silence signify? Perhaps that silent scene, which lasts for a short time but is long in the context of screen time, gives us the moment when the viewer's questioning reaches its peak. The psychological, mental and physical violence people use against Sibel is one of the most important moments in which the viewer identifies with Sibel. In the articles about how Edward Munch paint *The Scream* (1893), it is explained how he lived a chaotic life and in what kind of a state of mind he painted this. When we look at the *The Scream*, what we see are actually traces of Munch's experiences and feelings. The pains of that incomprehensible mind have been put into complex colours in a it. In the moments when Sibel cries out but we cannot hear her voice, it becomes possible to look at the pain behind that moment. The film narrative gives the oscillation of the most intense feelings of voice, inability to speak and identification in the scene where Sibel cries without a voice.

How will Sibel's father, whom she trusts the most and who supports her the most, treat Sibel after the rumours in the village? After this reality is revealed, the question of how the father's law will work comes to the fore. Emin is Sibel's biggest support and trusted person in life. He protects her even in front of her sister, does not let her say anything and allows her to do many things, until her sister Fatma tells their father that Sibel has been meeting and seeing a man in the forest. At first, Emin does not want to believe this reality, but when the people of the village gossip about it among themselves, he decides to take a stand against his daughter and refuses to let her go to the forest. Although we do not see the father's law visibly and emphatically in the film, the presence of the father is revealed at some points. Sibel, who is determined to go to the forest despite her

father's opposition, breaks the father's law. Sibel encounters the gendarmerie again and reiterates through her father that she did not see anyone in the forest. The gendarmerie tries to make Sibel confess the truth by saying 'how can you harbour terrorists'. However, Sibel is determined not to talk, and her father is sure that Sibel is hiding something. According to Lacan, the law of the father is the law of language, the entry into the symbolic order. Sibel, as the one who violates the symbolic order, becomes the one who opposes the father's law. Silverman, who presents Kristeva's thoughts in her study, explains that the father signifies the symbolic with her discourses. In the relationship between desire and the compulsory power of the symbolic, Kristeva says that tears are passed from mother to daughter, and suggests that this situation depends on the law of the father (Silverman, 1988, p. 110). Fantasia, which Kristeva explains as 'choral fantasia', is related to the speaking subject. According to Kristeva, referenced in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), it is the woman-as-speaking-subject who occupies the position of the man (Silverman, 1988, p. 113). In the context of Kristeva's ideas, we can say that Sibel, by opposing her father and the bearers of power, occupies the domination of men with her nonspeaking, non-speaking subjectivity. However, this occupation is disturbing in the face of the judgements of the village people and the internalisation of Fatma by the village people develops in relation to Sibel. After a while, the attitude towards Sibel starts to be reflected on Sibel's sister.

When the family, who will come to see Fatma, informs Emin that they do not want Fatma, it is understood that there is a thaw towards the end of the film. An apocalypse will break out in the house and all the difficulties and questionings that have been knotted are moving towards being resolved with this event, perhaps towards what can never be resolved. That moment presents the most important tension between the father and Sibel. The father, who has infinite trust in Sibel, shouts at her saying 'you have ruined our honour' and clearly reveals that his trust in her has been shaken. The place of the concept of honour in the social order is revealed through the father's discourse, finding out that the indicators attributed to women are structured under masculine domination.

Although he does not have much dialogue with Sibel, it can be perceived that the father character knows Sibel well and understands her feelings. When her father says 'They beat him to death in front of Narin's eyes!' about Ali who ran away, he actually asks why and how she believed in that man. You believed and trusted, but your trust was shaken, Emin's words are another expression of this, which is why he is angry with Sibel. Because he always made it clear that he also trusted her intelligence. This situation experienced by Sibel has overthrown Emin's sense of trust and positive thoughts towards her. Emin, who does not want Sibel to go to the forest anymore, advises her to go to the field. However, Sibel disobeys her father again. In a moment of stubbornness, her father approaches her violently for the first time, pushing her towards the car and touching her body roughly.

At that moment Sibel puts the pistol she took from her father's trousers to her own head and says, 'Kill me'. Sibel, who is blamed, shouted at, pushed and subjected to violence, reacts to the violence the most and shakes her father's power by pointing his own pistol at her own head. The father is emasculated at this point. The phallic signifier pistol owned by the father is taken by Sibel and made to point at herself in a daring way.[1] Sibel shouts out the discourse of 'I choose and approve even my own death, you don't have the courage but if you are going to kill me, kill me now'. Sibel has neither voice nor sentences. In this scene, she shows a character structure that is confident and courageous enough to choose her death. Again, the viewer questions whether the necessity of speech is within the needs of life.

The violent dialogue with her father causes Sibel to run to the forest where she feels sheltered. She stabs the snake she sees in the forest with a piece of wood and takes all her pain out on the snake. As she kills the snake, she kills the pains, anxieties and questionings about what is inside her. The snake is also a phallic object. In this context, the killing of the snake by Sibel can be read as killing the power of the father. Here, when the viewer who identifies with Sibel is considered from the Lacanian perspective, it even affects the process of questioning the self of the viewer who encounters his/her own self.

In Lacan's painting, which he defines as the 'contained eight', the situation that is assumed to cover the other when one half of the curve is unfolded is explained as identification. Lacan says that the surface folds itself over a point that can be structurally defined according to a certain relation to itself, which must be explained when folded over itself. This fold line symbolises the function of identification (Lacan, 2017, p. 285). The viewer, who identifies with the character, actually folds himself in a self-folding state of being. Therefore, even though Sibel is unable to speak, what she wants to speak is embodied in the mind, soul, and language of the viewer.

After these thaws, Sibel goes home and hugs Fatma and accompanies her to school. The people of the village accuse Sibel of dishonour and shout and complain at her. Her father whistles and tells the village people to shut up and stands by his daughters and supports them. Sibel and her father take Fatma to the school bus in front of the tea-gathering women and take a firm stance in defiance of the village and social judgements. Fatma's getting on the bus with her apron and going to school also points to a very important reference in terms of content. Girls of school age, who have not completed their mental and physical development, are married off in the village. However, the place where they should exist is school. The film ends with Sibel and the young peasant girl, who at the beginning of the film describes Sibel as inauspicious, looking at each other with hope and love. Despite everything, Sibel is the one who resists, smiles

1 Phallus: the penis or an object that resembles the form of the penis. As a symbolic object, the phallus often represents fertility or potency (*Phallus*, 2018). Based on the concept of the phallus, the phallic signifier is used in the sense of a signifier that indicates the phallus.

and stands tall at the end of the film. In terms of feminist film practice, the fact that the female character meets life with hope despite all difficulties presents an important film content to the viewer. In a film that breaks the classical narrative conventions, while the viewer ends the screen time with hope, perhaps it also implies that many things will transform in the village. What is important is the visibility that supports the paving the way for affirmative transformations regarding women.

Conclusion

The film Sibel is the presentation behind the visible. The struggle of a woman character, who cannot speak, with life is presented to the viewer through various events and situations. The viewer has the opportunity to question many things, from the necessity of speaking in communication, to the importance of sound, to the philosophy of silence, outside of filmic time. On the other hand, there is also praise for silence. The most important point that the film narrative presents to the viewer in terms of feminist film theories is the state of overcoming all the difficulties faced by a woman character who cannot speak in an effort to exist. This is such a state that neither the shouting father makes her listen to him, nor the judgements of the society surround her mind, nor the people who humiliate her treat her badly against all they do. Sibel is the most humane, understanding and agile of all the talking people in the village. In films that focus on women's stories, female characters are presented to the viewer with their troubles, sorrows and problems, but traces of their hope, of the origin of their hope, is not a common example of representation in Turkish cinema. In this respect, the film Sibel confronts the viewer with a different example of a female character against the coded female character stereotypes of classical narrative cinema. Within the framework of feminist film practice, this example of a female character is important for the creation of various radical female characters. Silverman's remarks on the female voice were also interpreted by Paula Rabinowitz, who reiterated the idea that women in contemporary narrative cinema can be presented through alternative cinematic strategies in avant-garde films. In the films of directors such as Yvonne Rainer, Chantal Akerman, Bette Gordon and Laura Mulvey, women can speak from outside their bodies. In the presentation of the body and the voice, the representation of the female subject in male-dominated cinema is criticised, and attention is drawn to the existence of a deconstructed or psychoanalytical feminist 'sophisticated' point of view in the films of the directors cited as examples (Rabinowitz, 1990, p. 160). Apart from the works of the directors exemplified by Rabinowitz, it is possible to see the naivety of the female point of view in the representation of the female character and the presentation of the body and voice by many female directors in the world cinema in the 2000s.

When important philosophical texts are analysed, the process of making sense of silence in itself is a concept that philosophers attribute value to and that touches many things related to existence. When the reason for Sibel's mute status is inter-

preted as her inability to speak, an even greater value can be attributed to her. She is the one who struggles with her eyes and actually speaks without using the whistle even while communicating at the most striking moments of her life. The sounds of life are on her side. And her inability to speak is the most important source of this struggle.

The fact that Sibel whistles without being able to speak also calls into question the philosophical context of her use of language. Sibel's use of language brings instrumentalist language theory to mind. The message, command or thought transmitted by whistling, the person receiving this message, command or thought... According to Paul Feyerabend, 'Language is a tool. The concepts of language are tools.' These are described by looking at how they function (Feyerabend, 2002, p. 168). The whistle is also an important tool of communication, and the concepts belonging to it are also tools. Sibel, who can tell what she wants to the people around her by whistling, is a woman who can use the communication tool and its concepts well. In his article "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations", in which he explains and comments on Ludwig Wittgenstein, Feyerabend reveals the close connection between language and thought by citing Wittgenstein's reference 'Language is already thought, nothing is hidden' (Feyerabend, 2002, p. 182). Sibel has a language that enables her to speak and express her thoughts, and this language not only explains everything but also causes her to be seen as a dangerous 'other' by the people of the village – because Sibel's language is a structure that transcends thoughts as well as existence and clearly reveals a notable stance towards life. This language, which mediates Sibel's speech, also mediates people's perception of her existence as dangerous. Not being able to speak has never been so dangerous...

References | Список литературы

Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2011). *Film Sanatı: Bir Giriş. [Film Art: An Introduction]* (E. S. Onat & E. Yılmaz, Trans.). De Ki Publishing. (In Turkish).

Casebier, A. (2009). *Film Phenomenology: Toward A Realist Theory Of Cinematic Representation*. Cambridge University Press.

Castration. (2018). APA Dictionary of Psychology. https://dictionary.apa.org/castration

Chion, M. (1994). *Audio-vision: Sound on screen* (C. Gorbman & W. Murch, Trans.). Columbia University Press.

Dolar, M. (2013). *Sahibinin Sesi: Psikanaliz ve Ses. [A Voice and Nothing More]* (B. E. Aksoy, Trans.). Metis Publishing. (In Turkish).

Feyerabend, P. (2002). Wittgenstein'ın Felsefi Araştırmaları [Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations]. In *Wittgenstein: Sessizliğin Grameri [Wittgenstein: The Grammar of Silence]* (Vol. 33, pp. 155–189). Yapı Kredi Publishing. (In Turkish).

Gabbard, O. G., & Gabbard, K. (2009). *Psikiyatri ve Sinema. [Psychiatry and the Cinema]* (Y. Eradam & H. Satılmışoğlu, Trans.). Okuyanus Publishing. (In Turkish).

Hayward, S. (2012). *Sinemanın Temel Kavramları [Cinema studies: The Key Concepts]* (U. Kutay & M. Çavuş, Trans.). Es Publishing. (In Turkish).

Imaginary. (2018). APA Dictionary of Psychology. https://dictionary.apa.org/imaginary

Kuhn, A. (1994). *Women's Picture: Feminism and Cinema*. Verso Publishing.

Lacan, J. (2017). *Psikanalizin Dört Temel Kavramı Seminer 11. Kitap. [The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis Book XI]* (N. Erdem, Trans.). Metis Publishing. (In Turkish).

McCabe, J. (2005). *Feminist Film Studies: Writing the Woman into Cinema*. Columbia University Press.

Phallus. (2018). APA Dictionary of Psychology. https://dictionary.apa.org/phallus

Rabinowitz, P., De Lauretis, T., Doane, M. A., Silverman, K., Gledhill, C., & Modleski, T. (1990). Seeing through the Gendered I: Feminist Film Theory. *Feminist Studies*, 16(1), 151. https://doi.org/10.2307/3177960

Stam, R. (2014). *Sinema Teorisine Giriş. [Film Theory: An Introduction]* (S. Salman & Ç. Asatekin, Trans.). Ayrıntı Publishing. (In Turkish).

Symbolic. (2018). APA Dictionary of Psychology. https://dictionary.apa.org/symbolic

Yacavone, D. (2016). Film and the Phenomenology of Art: Reappraising Merleau-Ponty on Cinema as Form, Medium, and Expression. *New Literary History*, 47(1), 159–185. https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2016.0001

Zencirci, Ç., & Giovanetti, G. (Directors). (2019). *Sibel* [Video recording]. Les Films du Tambour, Riva Filmproduktion, Bidibul Productions, Mars Productions, Reborn Production.