Cinema Has Split the Girl's Soul Into Pieces:
Scrutinizing Representations of Women in Films From Turkey

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The 1980s in Turkey were marked by the emergence of new cinematic forms, including films dealing with issues regarding female subjectivity. This article argues that within the scope of an extensive body of films produced about women in the 1980s, *Her Name Is Vasfiye*, *Aaahh Belinda!*, *How to Save Asiye*, *Ten Women,* and *My Dreams, My Love and You* opened up a significant space for discussions about ideological constructions concerning images of women in cinema. By deploying reflexive and fragmented structures, laying bare the ideological operations of voice-over and dubbing, and deploying the screen personas Türkan Şoray and Müjde Ar as cinematic tools, these films offer up a critique of representations of women onscreen, including the trend of "women's films."

Keywords: women's films, Turkish cinema, Müjde Ar, Türkan Şoray, dubbing, voice-over, Yeşilçam

Influenced by the transformations that took place in the political and cultural climate brought about by a coup d'état and an ongoing crisis in the domestic film industry and a growing women's movement, the Turkish film scene in the 1980s witnessed the production of films that engaged with issues regarding female subjectivity and identity. By focusing on stories about women's search for independence within patriarchal structures, these films were considered one of the most influential cinematic trends in Turkey at the time, not only because issues of female agency and subjectivity had become prominent, but also because a profound change had taken place in terms of how women were represented onscreen. As opposed to stereotypical depictions that reduced women to strictly defined categories of "good" and "evil," which was common in popular cinema between the 1950s and late 1970s (also known as "Yeşilçam"), there has been a consensus among film scholars and filmmakers that during the 1980s, unconventional female characters entered the scene, and depictions of women shifted from being one-dimensional and superficial to "authentic" and "realistic" (Akbal-Süalp, 2006; Atakav, 2013; Büker, 2002; Dönmez-Colin, 2010; Esen, 2000; Kırel, 2005; Özgüç, 2008; Şoray, 2012; Uluyağcı, 2002; Yalur, 2013).

Identified as "woman's films" (Dönmez-Colin, 2010), "films about woman (or woman films)" (Arslan, 2011, p. 223), "women's films" (Atakav, 2013; Suner, 2010; Yalur, 2013) and *kadın filmleri* in Turkish (Akbal-Süalp, 2006; Büker, 2002; Esen, 2000; Kırel, 2005; Özgüç, 2008; Şoray, 2012; Uluyağcı,

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2002), the films that were part of this trend encompassed an extensive body of productions that came out between the early 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.

Rather than as a genre with a distinctive setting, style, and iconography, "women's films"[1] can be classified as a new cinematic tendency in the field of Turkish film studies, given that a clear description of what constitutes them has not been made. However, in the majority of studies on the subject, narrative themes such as women's struggle in a patriarchal society, rape, female sexuality, violence, and depictions of female characters that challenge previous representations, as well as the narration of stories from female protagonists' point of view, have been designated as the main traits that distinguish this cinematic trend from other films about women. Some scholars argue, however, that the most salient feature of "women's films" was how they introduced "real women" into cinematic representations. In fact, the female characters in those films have been described as "human woman" (Atakav, 2013; Esen, 2000) and "woman with flesh and blood" (Akbal-Süalp, 2006), and the films themselves have been held up as realist dramas about gender and sexuality (Arslan, 2011).

In line with these films' portrayals of "real woman," prominent film stars from the Yeşilçam tradition, such as Türkan Şoray, felt a need to move beyond the limits of their already established screen personas, and they sought to portray realistic characters to keep up with the cinematic trends of the time. Between the mid-1940s and the 1980s, films were shot without sound and later dubbed by actors who were part of a tradition of the City Theatre in Istanbul. Those dubbing artists spoke in what is known as an "Istanbul accent," and as such, the majority of the characters spoke "proper" Istanbul Turkish (Arslan, 2011). But as attempts were made to break ties with earlier cinematic traditions and offer up portrayals of "authentic women," for the first time, prominent film stars started to use their own voices for their characters.

Within that cinematic context, this article argues that *Her Name Is Vasfiye* (Atıf Yılmaz; Ergun, Kavur, & Yılmaz, 1985), *Aaahh Belinda!* (Atıf Yılmaz; Ergun & Yılmaz, 1986a), *How to Save Asiye* (Atıf Yılmaz; Ergun & Yılmaz, 1986b), *Ten Women* (Şerif Gören, 1987), and *My Dreams, My Love and You* (Atıf Yılmaz; Ergun & Yılmaz, 1987) differed from all the other films from that era regarding questions concerning the representation of female subjectivity. Rather than proposing that those films undertook the mission of representing "realistic women," I claim that those five films desist from realism. And I posit that, by adopting reflexive formal structures, they were engaged with issues about how women are represented onscreen both before and during the era of "women's films." They all position their female protagonists as actors within the narrative and trace their journeys as they perform various female roles. In fact, the films do not represent complex and authentic characters. On the contrary, as with traditional Yeşilçam melodramas, the parts performed by the women in these films are all superficial and stereotypical. But at the same time, none of the films reveals the "real" identity of their female protagonists who perform the various stereotypes presented. In this way, all five films layer representations of women and make it almost impossible for viewers to name and define the women who are at the center of the stories.

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[1] Throughout this article, I use this translation of *kadın filmleri* to refer to films that address the issues of female agency and subjectivity.

By making use of fragmented structures and innovative use of voice-over narration and dubbing, these films also foreground how conventional cinematic practices divide/split/detach women's bodies from their voices and let others speak on their behalf. In so doing, they foreground how sound and dubbing was used as means of control in dominant forms of cinematic representation. The films make use of the screen personas of two prominent stars who were cast as protagonists—Türkan Şoray and Müjde Ar—as cinematic tools for scrutinizing ideological constructions of women in cinema as stereotypes. They also lay bare the conditions of filmmaking in Turkey and how the economic and social structures of the film industry played a significant role in producing fixed meanings about women by shaping their images for the screen.

I contend that by referencing the new trends of the period and addressing the concurrent changes that were taking place in the domestic film industry, the five films I examine deconstruct discourses about "representations of real women" in cinema and situate the "new independent women" of "women's films" as another stereotypical category. For this reason, they can be seen as providing a platform for engagement with questions concerning female subjectivity not only in Turkish cinema, but also in broader cinematic contexts.

Ideological Constructions of Women in Dominant Forms of Cinematic Representation

Conceivable as a response to theoretical discussions in the field of feminist film studies, *Aaahh Belinda!*, *Her Name Is Vasfiye*, *Ten Women*, *How to Save Asiye*, and *My Dreams, My Love and You* reflect on how cinema constructs images of women and fixes meanings about them, while also problematizing the idea that a "real image" of women can be represented. Both issues have been central topics addressed by feminist film criticism from the earliest studies to present day. Earlier studies directed criticism toward representations of women in recurring roles that distorted their experiences and constructed them as stereotypes (Haskell, 2016; Rosen, 1973), and critics argued that more "authentic representations" of women were needed. Later scholars were critical of such an approach, however, claiming that films themselves cannot simply be considered as reflections of reality, but systems in which meanings are constructed. As a result, feminist film criticism shifted the focus from contemplating modes of "authenticity" to highlighting the ideological constructions that produce and communicate meanings about women (Gledhill, 2000; Hollinger, 2010; Johnston, 1973; Kuhn, 1994; Mulvey, 1989; Smelik, 1998).

Accordingly, it has been argued that the key point is

to analyze not what a film means in terms of its image of women measured against some supposedly objective reality . . . but rather those mediations which produce and place that image within the total fictional structure of the film with particular ideological effects. (Gledhill, 2000, pp. 68–69)

In other words, the films themselves were considered to be part of the operation of fixing "values" about women (Cowie, 2000). In addition to the visual regime, the sound regime of dominant cinema operates ideologically: "The female voice is as relentlessly held to normative representations and functions as the female body" (Silverman, 1988, p. viii). For this reason, an examination of the means of cinematic

representation should also take into account the soundtrack and how female voice is also "naturalized" in relation to the image track.

Here, the concept of "naturalization" is based on the contention that classic film narratives are steeped in the presumption that cinema can represent the realities of the world as they are. To create this illusion, mainstream cinema renders invisible its means of production, which concurrently veils its ideological construction. That is why an interrogation of the tools and techniques used in cinematic narration was thought to be essential to demystify their ideological operations (Johnston, 1973). Kuhn (1994) argues that the traits particular to the production, distribution, and exhibition of the film industry should also be taken into account because they also play important role in the ideological construction of women. This is because filmic texts do not function independently of their conditions of existence: "Texts are part of the cinematic apparatus and the cinematic apparatus is also constituted by the contexts within which film texts are received" (Kuhn, 1994, p. 41).

In my analyses of the five films mentioned earlier, I build on these theoretical deliberations and assert that their critical approach to representations of women in cinema can be construed not only by conducting close narrative and formal analysis. Indeed, the context—in other words, the cinematic scene and current trends—should also be taken into careful consideration so that the means by which those films challenged preexisting and new traditions in cinematic representation can be more clearly brought into focus.

Constructing the Images and Voices of Women in Yeşilçam

The economic and social structure of the film industry in Turkey had an intimate relationship with the ideological construction of images of women onscreen. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, regional distributors dominated the era. Those distributors gathered information from theater owners and informed production companies about audience demand regarding films, including genres, themes, and stars. Based on that information, distributors would determine the films they would distribute in subsequent seasons. The production of Yeşilçam films, then, first started with decisions regarding the stars to be cast, followed by a search for a story that would be "suitable" for them (Kırel, 2005). If a star became popular through a certain role, subsequent films followed similar patterns; in this way, formulas for particular stars were drawn up as a means of guaranteeing box office success.

That situation led to the construction of rigid star personas that strictly adhered to audience tastes. The roles written for women in Yeşilçam, in this respect, can grouped into two categories: those that the patriarchal order approved of—namely, "innocent" women who submit to the traditional roles assigned to them—and others, primarily "wicked" women who challenge patriarchal discourses and pay for their "sins" in the end (Abisel, 1994). These categorical and stereotypical depictions of women reached a point where even the appearance of the actors communicated their status in relation to the patriarchal ideology. Women's hairstyles and outfits all indicated their roles; "bad" were represented as blondes who smoke, drink, and have casual sex, whereas brunettes were virtuous women who were loyal, self-sacrificing, and, in many cases, asexual (Akbulut, 2008).

It was during these years that Türkan Şoray became one of the most prominent stars. And for the sake of adhering to audience expectations, which imagined her as the "innocent girl," in the late 1960s, she laid down certain parameters that came to be known as the "Şoray laws." Although there is a tendency to reduce these laws to the one stating that she would not appear in nude scenes or kiss onscreen, they in fact consist of 18 items concerning working conditions, as well as her involvement in the entire production process; this involvement included confirmation of changes regarding the script, male stars, dubbing artists, and directors. The laws further consolidated her persona, and, in that way, Şoray contributed to the promulgation of categorical roles for women through her intervention in the production of films.

The late 1970s witnessed the collapse of the Yeşilçam film industry, which resulted from a number of factors, including the fragile system of production and distribution in the film industry, and the political unrest in the country. The crisis in the domestic film industry also initiated the emergence of new trends in cinema, including women's films. Atakav (2013) links this emergence to the systematically enforced depoliticization that was introduced after the coup; a result of this was that feminism flourished precisely because it was not perceived as being political or politically significant.

Through her transgressive roles in women's films, Müjde Ar became a leading star in those times, and an image of the new independent woman came to be associated with her (Uluyağcı, 2002). As Şoray started losing parts to Ar and had to contend with changes in the social and artistic climate, she abandoned her laws in 1981, adopting a new image as a star. She started using her own voice on film soundtracks and featured in films that went against the grain of her earlier star persona.

A Twist in Representations of Women Onscreen

Her Name Is Vasfiye, *Aaahh Belinda!*, *How to Save Asiye*, *Ten Women,* and *My Dreams, My Love and You* highlight the troubles encountered in the construction of female figures in cinema and reveal the discourses that were attached to their representation. Those five films mark a twist in cinematic trends in Turkey because they embarked on an interrogation of the roles written for women, the images of stars, and the characters they embodied. By using traditional codes of cinematic representation, they depicted women categorically as "good" and "bad" mothers, prostitutes, wives, and feminists. However, they dismantle and disrupt conventional narrational strategies by bringing to the fore the divisions between the image and soundtrack and employing fragmented forms that challenge the illusion of a unity of classic cinematic texts; as such, rather than relying on realism, they call attention to themselves as constructs.

The posters of the films are indicative of an intention to undermine the illusion of unity, as demonstrated by the fact that none of them depicts women as a whole—they are fragmented, cut off, concealed. In the poster for *My Dreams, My Love and You*, they appear as actors on a stage holding masks up to their faces. The poster for *Aaahh Belinda!* consists of a small family photograph superimposed over an image of the same woman in bed with another man, and the woman appearing on the poster for *How to Save Asiye* is fragmented by bands of color. Türkan Şoray's face is broken into square blocks in the poster for *Ten Women*, and Müjde Ar's face appears only partially in the poster for *Her Name Is Vasfiye* (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Posters of Ten Women; My Dreams, My Love and You; Her Name Is Vasfiye;
How to Save Asiye; and Aaahh Belinda!

Such a strategy of representing women in fragments is echoed in the narrative structures of the films and their use of narratological devices. The five films feature one actor playing multiple central roles, divide female characters into categories, and signal their designated meanings by making use of the appearance of the women. In parallel with such approaches, protagonists in these films either have no name, or they use/are given so many different names that we can never be sure who they "really" are. The films also never reveal the "real" stories of these women; they are either told by male narrators who speak on their behalf, as in *Her Name Is Vasfiye*, *Aaahh Belinda!,* and *How to Save Asiye*, or their bodies are voiced by so many different dubbing artists that their association with traditional cinema is invoked, as in *Ten Women* and *My Dreams*, *My Love and You*.

Splitting the Body and Voice:
Türkan Şoray in *Ten Women* and *My Dreams, My Love and You*

Ten Women narrates the stories of nine women, all played by Şoray. The film is divided into nine episodes, each of which is titled according to the woman depicted: a bride, feminist, prostitute, mother, journalist, gypsy, mother/daughter, an activist named Deniz, and a peasant. The episodes present aspects of the daily lives of these various women and relate how they struggle to survive in a patriarchal society as they contend with rape, violence, harassment, sexism, and misogyny. They are all punished by the system in divergent ways for their "misdeeds," such as attacking their rapists, staying in a hotel room with a man to whom they are not married, being activists, and offering safe housing to women despite the protestations of their violent husbands. Because those acts are deemed to be "disturbances" in the patriarchal social order, each episode ends with mugshots of the women holding up letter boards, or the episodes narrate how they try to go on with their lives after getting out of prison.

Though the film does not present a way out for its characters and depicts the women as victims of patriarchy, it exposes how women have been ideologically constructed in cinema. By naming each episode after a category and often not revealing the characters' names, the film shows how cinema gives shape to female characters as representatives of a category rather than as individuals. Because Şoray contributed to the construction of the "myth of women" in cinema through the fixed and unchanging roles she played, her persona also secures the film's intention to expose categorical depictions of women on screen. And regardless of her interest in adopting a "new image" in 1980s, the film treats Şoray's new persona as another stereotype through her performance of "emancipated women" in the episodes "Journalist" and "Feminist" by splitting apart her new image.

The edges of almost every shot in the film resemble that of a screen, and the women are represented as if they are onstage or projected on a cinema screen. We see characters framed by mirrors, windows, and columns, by means of which their status as cinematic constructions is repeatedly highlighted. Notably, *Ten Women* emphasizes the constructed nature of the characters via the soundtrack as well, by having different dubbing artists voice the various characters played by Şoray. Although Şoray started to use her own voice in 1979 as a means of portraying authentic women, *Ten Women* emerged as one of two films produced in the 1980s—the other being *My Dreams, My Love and You*—in which a dubbing artist was used for her voice.

A close look at the filmographies of the dubbing artists indicates that *Ten Women* relied not only on the star image of Şoray, but also on voice typecasting in Yeşilçam to emphasize the status of characters as constructs. The dubbing artist who voiced the prostitute in *Ten Women* had dubbed "femme fatales" in numerous Yeşilçam films, the mother in the mother–daughter episode was voiced by the dubbing artist who come to be known as the voice of Şoray because she had frequently dubbed her in Şoray's earlier films, and the voice of the journalist is easily identifiable with the image of the new woman because she only dubbed female characters in films in the 1980s. By exposing the split between the image and soundtrack, the film thus challenges the illusion of unity between the body and the voice, and it foregrounds that "women's voices" were also coded as indicators of the fixed roles assigned to them.

Explorations of dubbing as a means of examining popular cinema's ideological workings take a substantial turn in *My Dreams, My Love and You*. The film narrates the story of Coşkun, who is deeply in love with a Yeşilçam star named Derya Altınay, played by Şoray. Coşkun grows up watching her films, and since childhood, he has been obsessed with the superficial characters she has portrayed. In his childhood, two women characters from Altınay's Yeşilçam films—Melek "the prostitute" and Nuran "the suffering mother"—emerge from the screen and live with him as he grows older. Set in the 1980s "women's films" era, the film depicts Coşkun as an aspiring scriptwriter who is highly dissatisfied with the scripts that have been penned for Altınay. His only goal in life is to make a film through which Altınay can release herself from portraying "outdated" characters and play a "real woman" for once.

However, Melek and Nuran, who are also played by Şoray, try everything in their power to prevent Coşkun from writing such a script because if he achieves his goal, they will vanish, and it will be the end of the women of Yeşilçam. As the story unfolds, Coşkun starts to write the part for Altınay in a film he entitles, *A Beyoğlu Dream*, and he is determined to not give a name to the "realistic character" who plays the lead role. Yet, every time he sits at his desk and starts to develop the part, he finds himself writing the role of either Nuran "the innocent and self-sacrificing mother" or Melek "the seductive prostitute." Even when he fantasizes about meeting Altınay in person, his fantasies have two versions. In one, Altınay appears as a femme fatale who tries to lure him into bed, and in the other, she is shy, innocent, and romantic. Regardless of his efforts, when Coşkun finally finishes the script, the split remains. The nameless "realistic woman" character in Coşkun's film, a black-haired, shy, and elegant woman, becomes a blonde femme fatale who cheats on her lover with Coşkun and commits suicide in the end.

My Dreams, My Love and You uses dubbing as a crucial cinematic means of splitting women into categories. The dubbing for Melek, the prostitute in the film, was done by Alev Koral, a dubbing artist whose voice became representative of "the wicked woman" because for almost 40 years, she voiced fallen women in Yeşilçam films. Nuran, the suffering mother, was dubbed by Nevin Akkaya, who became known as the "voice of Türkan Şoray" —which is to say, the "good" woman. So, it should come as no surprise that those same dubbing artists dubbed the prostitute and mother, respectively, in the prostitute and mother–daughter episodes in *Ten Women.*

The film takes an intriguing turn in terms of the dubbing strategy for Derya Altınay. Three different dubbing artists, including Şoray herself, voiced Altınay. Altınay's voice changes according to what is taking place in the film. When Altınay is the star of 1980s women's films, Şoray herself does the voices for the character; in Coşkun's fantasies, if she tries to seduce him, it is Alev Koral, "the wicked woman," who speaks; and when Coşkun imagines her as an "innocent" lady, it is Nevin Akkaya, the "voice of good women," who speaks. In this way, *My Dreams, My Love and You* presents Derya Altınay, "the new woman," as a stereotypical character as well—a character who is created within the patriarchal domain of mainstream cinema.

The end of the film can be seen as resonating with such an interpretation. Ultimately, Coşkun's script is made into a film titled *Her Name is Lamia*, which does away with his intention of telling the story of an "unnamed" woman. Despite Coşkun's efforts, the film-within-a-film also depicts Altınay in extended sex scenes, and in the final scene, she is murdered by her jealous lover for engaging in adultery. Coşkun storms out of the screening and gets in a heated argument with Altınay about cinema; although she also

does not seem to be happy with the ending, she suggests that she has to keep up with trends to continue making films.

The ending of the film, then, can be taken as an indicator of two issues. First, cinema names and "identifies" women within the limitations of dominant cinematic practices. As a star, Altınay is not "freed" from the binary structures of cinema's depiction of women— neither in Coşkun's fantasies and script, nor in the finished film, *Her Name is Lamia*. Second, by drawing on Şoray's persona, it underscores how images of women and their voices are delivered up as a male fantasy and confined to categories regardless of the new trends in cinematic production in which complex women characters can find room in stories. In this regard, a crucial moment occurs in the film when Altınay, speaking about her journey to stardom and confessing that her real name is not Derya Altınay, tells Coşkun that she no longer knows if cinema is God or the Devil, but she is certain that it has split her soul into pieces. At that moment, we see Altınay's image in a reflection in a mirror split into fragments, just like how *My Dreams, My Love and You* splits her image and her voice.

In relation to sound in cinema, Altman suggests that in cinema, sound is presumed to be subservient to the image, but in fact, the soundtrack is a ventriloquist controlling all the "puppets." It creates the illusion that the words are produced by the image—the body on the screen—whereas the image is actually there to disguise the source of the sound. For Altman (1980), classic narrative cinema works to mask the sound–image split in the service of an ideology seeking to create the illusion of unity. By elaborating on Altman's contentions and exploring practices of dubbing, Erdoğan (2002) argues that in the case of Yeşilçam, the same ventriloquist controls all the puppets, and even though the viewer sees different bodies on the screen, all the voices are "spoken" by Yeşilçam itself.

Erdoğan's (2002) contention is seminal in relation to the process by which dubbing became a standard practice in Turkish cinema, particularly as regards projecting the "desired images" of stars onscreen. As mentioned earlier, stars were dubbed by theater actors who spoke Turkish with a particular accent that is associated with the language reforms and processes of modernization implemented in the years when the country was founded. Although several attempts were made by stars such as Şoray to do the dubbing for their own films before the 1980s, they were boycotted by dubbing artists and producers on the grounds that their young, beautiful, and elegant images did not cohere with their voices in reference to their "inability" to speak Turkish in line with the projections of the dominant ideology ("Boykot!," 1970). However, the claim can be made that it was not just the "accent" that the producers were uneasy about; actors who also worked as dubbing artists before they made films were also voiced by Yeşilçam's codified female voices once they became film stars (Aydıncı, 2019). This means that female characters were positioned on the image track with an appearance that was indicative of a particular role that was assigned them, and they were also positioned in the soundtrack with a voice that secured their confinement to those roles.

In that sense, the splitting of images of women and their voices in both *Ten Women* and in *My Dreams, My Love and You* reveals who spoke on behalf of those women and narrated their stories. Both films lay bare how dubbing also worked as an ideological means, serving the desires and fantasies of dominant cultural forms.

Resisting Narrativization:
Müjde Ar in *Her Name Is Vasfiye*, *Aaahh Belinda!*, and *How to Save Asiye*

Her Name Is Vasfiye, Aaahh Belinda!, and *How to Save Asiye* scrutinize the formulation of female characters as regards male narrators and their voice-over narration. Müjde Ar was cast in these three films in the role of women who perform for the stories that are imagined, written, and told by male narrators. In line with her persona, however, the women Ar plays in these films resist the roles that are foisted upon them. Thus, I suggest that in these three films, Ar's persona operates as a significant cinematic means of disrupting attempts to narrate stories about women and fix their meanings within the limits of patriarchal imagery.

Aaahh Belinda! tells the story of Serap, an actress who agrees to appear in a TV commercial for Belinda Shampoo. In the commercial, Serap is to play the part of Naciye, a happily married woman with two children who works at a bank. Serap, however, despises the script because of the shallow way Naciye is depicted. She also rehearses for a major part in a play, the role of Asiye in *How to Save Asiye*, the film adaptation of which I examine later. The play deploys a play-within-a-play structure and centers on the determined struggle of a woman to survive in a patriarchal society. Serap is depicted in the film as being the perfect fit for the part, and her acting skills are highlighted as being extraordinary in the onstage embodiment of Asiye.

During the shoot of the commercial for Belinda Shampoo, however, no matter how brilliant she is as an actor, Serap has difficulty playing the role of Naciye. After long hours on the set and numerous takes, the director is not satisfied with her performance. He wants Serap to play the role of a woman "who works by day and stays home at night, a woman who is elegant, hard-working, self-sacrificing and domestic as well as well-groomed, beautiful and humble." In fact, those are the instructions he gives to the costume and makeup crew with the aim of visually transforming Serap into Naciye.

While Serap is playing the role of Naciye, we hear the voice of a man who is part of the crew repeatedly reading the script out loud, almost in the form of a voice-over as he describes Naciye's state of mind. The voice-over says, "Naciye is in her cozy, happy home with her family. She is now the lady of the house." After a few more takes, the film shifts to the point of view of the camera in a close-up of Serap as she washes her hair in Naciye's bathroom. The voice-over continues, this time off-screen, describing Serap's state of mind, and in a close-up shot, Serap closes her eyes for a fraction of second as she loses herself in the part. When she opens her eyes again, she is no longer on the set of the commercial. The set is now the actual bathroom in Naciye's home. Serap storms out of the bathroom, looking for the set and the crew, but there is no one there aside from the actors who play her husband and children. Her "image" thus becomes immersed in the film; now she is trapped in Naciye's body, playing out the role of a self-sacrificing mother and wife.

However, *Aaahh Belinda!* portrays Serap as resisting the role that is assigned to her. She desperately seeks help from psychiatrists, telling them that she is trapped in a character's life, but they lock her up in an asylum on the basis that she has a split personality. Toward the end of the film, despite her tireless endeavors, Serap comes to the conclusion that there is no way out of Naciye's life, and she convinces herself to give into the role scripted for her. Immediately after she submits to that role, she hears the off-

screen director say, "Cut!" She finds herself back on the set of the commercial once again and thus escapes the film and role in which she was caught.

Aaahh Belinda! splits its central female character into separate parts; there is Serap as the independent woman, Asiye in the role of the prostitute, and Naciye as the good mother and wife—all of whom are played by Ar. Yet, rather than naturalizing the splitting of these women onscreen, the film brings to the fore the narrational devices that imprison the female protagonist in a representation. To that end, *Aaahh Belinda!* presents the voice-over and the point view of the camera with a close-up of Serap's face as a means of immersing and confining her in an imaginary woman's life. Regardless of Serap's poor performance as Naciye on camera, it is the voice-over that fixes and secures an image of her as a happy woman acting out the role of the good mother and wife.

Ar's persona, on the other hand, emerges as a means of questioning stereotypical roles. Although the voice-over narration works to immerse her image in the role of Naciye, her performance exposes the character as a construct. The film highlights that point by depicting Serap as an extraordinary actress who performs impeccably in a play that deploys reflexive strategies and questions the ideological representation of women. However, in the commercial, Naciye performs poorly because she is simply not fit for the part. In this way, the story in the film-within-a-film mirrors *Aaahh Belinda!*'s own structure. Because Ar is ideal for the part of Serap and Asiye in relation to her persona, her performance as a stereotypical woman is unsettling.

When Serap hears the director say that Naciye is a woman who "who works by day and stays home at night," she asks him if he is a master in *Karagöz* plays, in reference to traditional Turkish shadow puppet plays in which the entire story is narrated and all the characters are voiced by the same ventriloquist. Asserting that all bodies in Yeşilçam are "spoken" by the Yeşilçam system itself through the use of dubbing, Erdoğan (2002) claims that Karagöz had a major impact on the Turkish film industry. In relation to Serap's question, in this sense, Erdoğan's proposition can be expanded by taking into consideration the use of voice-over narration, and it can thus be argued that not only practices of dubbing, but also voice-overs that claim to tell true stories about women naturalize their construction as stereotypes.

Male narrators and their voice-overs also emerge as predominant techniques in *Her Name Is Vasfiye* and *How to Save Asiye*. As in a detective story, they track down the "real" stories of two women, Asiye and Vasfiye, whose very existence is questionable. *Her Name Is Vasfiye* tells the story of an author suffering from writer's block. As he walks down a street with his friend, he comes across posters of a nightclub singer, Sevim Suna, pasted to a wall. Pointing at the woman in the poster, his friend suggests that Sevim Suna could be a source of inspiration and says, "Poor thing! Who knows what her real name is?" When his friend leaves and the author stands there staring at one of the posters, Emin, a man who later claims to be Vasfiye's first husband, touches the shoulder of the author and says, "Vasfiye. Her real name is Vasfiye." Emin asks if he is interested in finding out about Vasfiye's "real" story.

After this point, the films employs episodic narration, and four men successively approach the narrator with claims of being able to offer him the "truer" version of Vasfiye's experience. Each narrator takes up the narrative from where the previous one left off; as a result, Vasfiye appears in their narration in four different versions. Emin describes her as an "innocent peasant girl" who ran away with him, while

Rüstem says that she is a "seductive adulterer" who cheated on her husband with him. In Hamza's version, she is presented as a "helpless woman" who was cheated on, abused, and stabbed by her husband. In the final episode, Dr. Fuat depicts Vasfiye as an "independent woman" who is complex and bold about her desires. For the most part, Vasfiye emerges through the narrations in the film as "types" of women who have been regularly constructed in mainstream cinema as products of male fantasy.

While Gökçe (2004) propounds that all the "Vasfiyes" presented in the film can be associated with different periods of cinema in Turkey, such as the innocent girl of Yeşilçam, the femme fatales of erotic films, the helpless women of arabesque films, and, finally, the new woman of women's films, Akbal-Süalp (2006) contends that the film is critical in terms of setting forth cinema's storytelling practices as regards how stories about women are narrated within the limits of patriarchal imagery. For Suner (2010), while the approach to the narrativization of stories about women in *Her Name Is Vasfiye* can be regarded as a form of critical self-awareness, the female protagonists' absence in the film and the position of the author, as well as that of Atıf Yılmaz, in pursuing the narration of Vasfiye's story on her behalf, can be interpreted as being complicit with the patriarchal culture that the film critiques. However, I argue that the film takes a completely different turn through its reliance on Ar's performance and her persona; she invalidates the entire story that the film narrates and, in the process, destroys it entirely.

Indeed, apart from the final minutes of the film, images of Vasfiye always appear on the screen only as the result of a trigger in the form of the voice-overs of four male narrators who claim to be telling her authentic story. In other words, her image is always transmitted through the point of view of the people who speak about her. Rather than reflecting on her image and story as "a version" that is constructed by these narrators, *Her Name Is Vasfiye* relies on means of cinematic representation that frame the narrators' recollections as "unmediated windows" onto Vasfiye's "true" story. All the episodes in the film are presented in the form of flashbacks accompanied by the narrators' voice-over, and Vasfiye's appearance and the way she speaks and moves all cohere with the "type" of woman she represents for these men. Through Vasfiye's image, an illusion of unity is achieved; much like a puppet, her body and voice are controlled by the narrators' voice-over descriptions.

Between episodes, however, when there is no narrator and no voice-over narration, the film uses a dreamlike structure and undermines its own use of conventional formal strategies. All four narrators appear suddenly from the off-screen space of the film and strangely disappear as they relate the most exciting parts of the stories they narrate. Moreover, in those gaps in the narration, images of Vasfiye only appear in the posters pasted on walls, and they conflict with the stories the narrators tell; they indicate that her name is Sevim Suna. In addition, the depictions of Sevim Suna in the posters conflict with all the images of Vasfiye that we see in flashbacks through the male narrators' voice-overs.

The first time Vasfiye is seen in the film without the accompaniment of a voice-over narration is toward the end, when the last narrator, Dr. Fuat, leaves, and she is on stage in a nightclub. At that moment, Sevim Suna rejects "Vasfiye" as her name and invalidates all the versions of her "true story" that were presented by the narrators. In that scene, the author approaches Sevim Suna by addressing her as "Vasfiye." A waiter then drags the author off the stage, saying that he shows up every night and has been stalking Sevim Suna, who in turn tells the audience that she is going to sing the next song for the author

and his lover, "Vasfiye." In that way, she disrupts all attempts to construct her as Vasfiye in the film and renders all the stories we hear about her as mere fantasies construed by the author.

Unsatisfied by Sevim Suna's refusal to accept Vasfiye as her "true" identity, the author sneaks into Sevim Suna's backstage room and begs her to tell him her "true story." Without saying a word, the singer hands him a rose and leaves. We see the author's face reflected in a mirror, and there is a cut to a close-up of Sevim Suna's poster—and, as such, the two images mirror each other as representations. We then see the author in front of the posters, as in the beginning of the film; it's as though only a few minutes have passed since his friend left him. His friend approaches again and asks in reference to Vasfiye, "Have you found her?," and the author replies, "Not yet, but I will." The film ends with the author walking down the street and taking the rose, which Sevim Suna had given him, out of his jacket pocket. The frame freezes and then breaks into pieces to the accompaniment of the sound of breaking glass.

Tüzün (2016) argues that "Vasfiye's image" is endlessly multiplied through the film's narrational strategies and is ultimately transformed into a figure that cannot be described, named, or identified. Building on Tüzün's contention, I argue that, in addition to the film's narrative strategies, it is Ar's star persona that undermines the depictions of Vasfiye and resists narrativization because what renders the entire film as a construct of male fantasy is Sevim Suna's rejection of the name Vasfiye and her refusal to tell her story. Mirroring Ar's star image, by means of which she sabotaged all categorical representations throughout her career, Sevim Suna undercuts the author's fantasy and, in the final shot, shatters the entire film.

In a similar manner, *How to Save Asiye* focuses on the process of the construction of Asiye as a character. The film is set in a brothel. Seniye, the head of an "association dedicated to the fight against prostitution," arrives at the brothel and explains that she received a letter from Asiye, a prostitute, and that she came to save her. It turns out, however, that there are no prostitutes named Asiye working at the brothel. But because Seniye wants to save Asiye, the women at the brothel offer to stage a play and, in doing so, ask Seniye to help "Asiye" get out of prostitution through her interventions. Selahattin, the only man who works at the brothel (as a middleman for the prostitutes), is appointed as the narrator of Asiye's story. At the beginning of the film, Selahattin is portrayed as a gay man, but he ends up changing his outfits, removing his makeup, and changing the way he speaks, ultimately adopting a "manly voice" for the occasion.

For the role of Asiye, they choose Nazlı, a woman who has just arrived at the brothel and who is played by Ar. The film employs episodic narration to tell Asiye's story, along with Selahattin's voice-over narration and Seniye's suggestions for Asiye's "rescue." As such, we see Nazlı taking on different roles as Asiye. She is first portrayed as a child left by her father. Her mother starts working as a prostitute, and as a teenager, Asiye is condemned for her mother's profession. We then see her depicted as a young woman who is sexually assaulted by her coworkers, and as a woman deceived by a married man who falsely promised her that they would start a family together. In the end, Asiye starts working as a prostitute herself. At the end of each episode, the women in the brothel turn to Seniye and ask what Asiye should do next to ensure her survival. Seniye comes up with various solutions and by the end of the film saves her from prostitution—but Asiye winds up becoming the owner of a brothel and bears an uncanny resemblance to Seniye.

For each episode, while Nazlı and the women at the brothel change how they look, they also change the way they speak depending on the "roles" they are playing, thereby taking on the appearance of the female figures entrenched in the stories told about women in mainstream cinema. Although the film uses a reflexive structure between the episodes and reveals the process by which meanings about Asiye are produced through images of her, whenever Selahattin starts to recount Asiye's story, the film abandons its reflexive strategies and employs a conventional form that obscures the means of its production. When Selahattin takes on the role of narrator, the film cuts to a close shot, leaving Seniye and Selahattin out of the frame—thus transforming Selahattin's narration into a voice-over, by means of which Nazlı becomes immersed in the character of Asiye. Everything Selahattin describes in the voice-over is confirmed by Asiye's actions, and the events unfold in the manner in which Selahattin describes them. Again, Asiye is portrayed in the episodes like a puppet tugged by the strings of the male narrator who claims to be telling her "real" story.

Atakav (2013) argues that the representation of the fallen-woman story in *How to Save Asiye* differs significantly from all previous cinematic treatments of the topic. She describes the film as a critical feminist response, but states that the film also remains within the limitations of patriarchal imaginings by offering Asiye a limited range of choices—namely, those offered by Seniye, the representative of patriarchal ideology. However, I argue that the film challenges both Selahattin's narration and Seniye's contemplations of Asiye's story. Those are the moments in which the boundaries of the framing of the film are pushed and Nazlı refuses to play the parts that are written for Asiye of her own will. For instance, in one scene, Asiye goes into a grocery store after not having eaten anything for days, and the grocer proposes that she have sex with him in lieu of payment; Asiye is portrayed as giving in and letting the grocer touch her. As Seniye and Selahattin contemplate the future of Asiye, Nazlı storms out the grocery store and snaps, "He took the role too seriously." Nazlı, like Serap in *Aaahh Belinda!* and Sevim Suna in *Her Name Is Vasfiye*, resists and manages to break free of those instances that limit her as a character trapped in endlessly repeating stories. And at the end of the film, it is Nazlı who calls off the play and dismisses Selahattin by taking control of the narrative.

Even though *How to Save Asiye* focuses on discovering Asiye's "true" story, the film is unable tell that story within a coherent narrative. By the film's conclusion, even Asiye's existence remains a question mark. It should also be noted that by the end of the film, viewers are left knowing nothing about Nazlı aside from her name. That is also evident in Serap's role in *Aaahh Belinda!* and Sevim Suna's role in *Her Name Is Vasfiye*. Apart from presenting their names and professions as performers, the films reveal nothing about these women's stories. It can be suggested that by mirroring Ar's persona, Serap, Sevim Suna, and Nazlı emerge as female characters that defy identification, description, and ideologies of cinematic representation that confine women within the limits of patriarchal imagery.

At this point, it would be helpful to point out that *Ten Women*, *How to Save Asiye*, *Her Name Is Vasfiye*, *Aaahh Belinda!,* and *My Dreams, My Love and You* were directed by male filmmakers. That is one of the reasons that these films' status as "feminist film texts" has been debated in Turkey. However, I argue that reducing the authorship of these films to their directors would reproduce the patriarchal discourses that imagine the director as the one and only head of the creative process in cinema. Indeed, while taking part in a panel about Atıf Yılmaz, renowned scriptwriter Barış Pirhasan explained that it was thanks to Müjde Ar and her established stardom that they were able to experiment with stories and film forms in the 1980s. While Yılmaz and Pirhasan were writing the films and contemplating the overall process of production, Ar

was convincing producers to invest in the films. It should also come as no surprise that both Ar and renowned feminist and Yılmaz's partner Deniz Türkali intervened in the writing and filming process and made significant changes in the scenes of the films (Ar, Türkali, & Pirhasan, 2017).

Although the contributions of women such as Deniz Türkali, Müjde Ar, and Türkan Şoray remain uncredited, cinema in Turkey between the 1940s and the 1980s demonstrated that through their involvement in the processes of production and the screenplays that were written for them, female film stars were able to bolster and/or undermine the recurring fixed roles and images that had been scripted for them. That is also one of the reasons that, despite her efforts, Türkan Şoray is unable to escape the prescribed roles in *Ten Women* and *My Dreams, My Love and You*, while in *How to Save Asiye*, *Her Name Is Vasfiye*, and *Aaahh Belinda!*, Müjde Ar sabotages the intended aims and saves herself from particular imaginings of female characters.

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