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Mourning, Melancholia and the Collapse of Language: *Motherland Hotel*

Yas, Melankoli ve Dilin Çöküşü: *Anayurt Oteli*



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Abstract

This study aims to interpret the cinematic representation of melancholy and the melancholic subject within the framework of the new cinematic language that began to develop in Turkish cinema in the 1980s and to examine the function of melancholy within film narratives. In this context, *Motherland Hotel* (*Anayurt Oteli*, 1987), which focuses on the inner world of the individual and whose main character exhibits traits specific to melancholy, was selected as a sample, and analyses were conducted within the framework of psychoanalytic film theory. The theoretical framework for the analysis was based on Sigmund Freud's theory of mourning and melancholy, Jacques Lacan's theory of lack and desire, and Julia Kristeva's views on the collapse of language and the disruption of meaning production. Based on this theoretical foundation, the character analysis focused on Zebercet's pathological attachment to his lost objects, his inability to participate in the symbolic order, and his difficulty in expressing his desires. Zebercet's failure to undergo the mourning process prevents him from establishing a coherent sense of self, thereby trapping him in melancholy. According to Lacan's theory, which defines desire through lack, Zebercet, unable to tolerate the absence of the woman as the object of desire, can neither regain her nor establish her representation in the symbolic order. According to Kristeva, Zebercet's gradual silence, his fixation on repetitive routines, and the replacement of speech with silence indicate a disruption in his internal coherence. In this context, *Motherland Hotel* provides a concrete example of how loss is represented cinematically, allowing the identification of narrative and esthetic codes related to melancholy and the melancholic subject in Turkish cinema. The film demonstrates the thematic and narrative codes of the cinematic representation of melancholy, shows how the theme is depicted in narratives addressing the psychological depth of the individual, and illustrates how this representation contributes to the shaping of narrative structures.

Öz

Bu çalışmada, 1980'li yıllarda Türk sinemasında gelişmeye başlayan yeni sinema dili çerçevesinde melankolinin ve melankolik öznenin sinemasal temsilini anlamlandırmak ve film anlatısında melankolinin nasıl bir işlev kazandığını ortaya koymak amaçlanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda sinematografik yapısı itibarıyla bireyin içsel dünyasına odaklanan ve ana karakterin melankoliye özgü özellikleri barındırdığı belirlenen *Anayurt Oteli* (1987) örneklem olarak belirlenmiş, psikanalitik film kuramı bağlamında çözümlenmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çözümlemede Sigmund Freud'un yas ve melankoli kuramı, Jacques Lacan'ın eksiklik ve arzu teorisi, Julia Kristeva'nın dilin çöküşü ve anlam üretiminin sekteye uğramasına ilişkin görüşleri teorik çerçeve olarak benimsenmiştir. Bu kuramsal zemin üzerinden gerçekleştirilen karakter analizinde, ana karakter Zebercet'in kayıp nesnelere kurduğu patolojik bağa, simgesel düzene katılamayışına ve arzularını ifade edemeyişine odaklanılmıştır. Zebercet'in yas sürecine girememesi, onun kimlik bütünlüğünü kurmasını engellemekte ve onu melankoliye hapsedmektedir. Jacques Lacan'ın arzuyu eksiklik üzerinden tanımlayan teorisine göre, arzu nesnesi konumundaki kadının yokluğunu tolere edemeyen Zebercet ne onu yeniden elde edebilmekte ne de simgesel evrende temsilini kurabilmektedir. Julia Kristeva'nın yaklaşımına göre ise Zebercet'in giderek sessizleşmesi, tekrarlayan rutinlere saplanması ve söylemin yerini suskunluğa bırakması, öznenin içsel bütünlüğünde bir sarsıntıya işaret etmektedir. Bu bağlamda Türk sinemasında melankolinin ve melankolik bireyin anlatı ve estetik kodlarının tanımlanmasını sağlayan *Anayurt Oteli* sinematografik temsil yoluyla kaybın inşasına dair somut bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Filmin, melankolinin sinemasal temsiline dair tematik ve anlatı kodlarını



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ortaya koyduğu, Türk sinemasında bireyin psikolojik derinliğini ele alan anlatılarda melankoli temasının sinematografik olarak işlendiği ve bu temsilin anlatıların biçimlenmesine katkı sağladığı tespit edilmiştir.

Keywords mourning · melancholia · lost object · desire and lack · black sun

Anahtar Kelimeler yas · melankoli · kayıp nesne · arzu ve eksik · kara güneş

Mourning, Melancholia and the Collapse of Language: *Motherland Hotel*

Melancholy, with origins extending back to Antiquity, is a concept that has been imbued with varying meanings throughout history, undergoing transformation according to cultural and historical contexts. As a significant component of the human experience at both individual and societal levels, and having been addressed by diverse disciplines across history, the contemplation of melancholy can also be considered an observation aimed at shedding light on the human inner world, and by extension, on society and its afflictions. While melancholy possessed a positive connotation in Antiquity (Lieburg, 1990), it was viewed as a mental illness during the Middle Ages, moreover being associated with conditions such as Saturn, acedia, and supernatural forces, thus acquiring malignant meanings (Teber, 1997; Prigent, 2009; Starobinski, 2007a; Starobinski, 2007b; Burton, 2020). During the Renaissance, this concept was seen as a wellspring of creative power (Demiralp, 2007). In the modern era, however, it took on a new meaning, becoming a way to understand an individual's inner conflicts and their troubled relationship with society (Teber, 1997). Over time, melancholy became a central topic in psychoanalytic thought, understood as a pathological bond to a lost object (Freud, 1917; Kristeva, 2020; Lacan, 1966; Klein, 2012; Butler, 2018). Cinema and other visual narratives have since taken up this theme, exploring it in depth to give audiences a profound emotional experience.

Starting from the cinematographic image (Kristeva, 2020), which corresponds to an uncontrollable abundance of associations—a semantic and emotional richness or poverty—within the viewer's perspective, it is possible to assert that every film enters into a shared process of meaning-making with its creator and its audience. In expressing the poignancy of loss and absence, cinema derives its power from its ability to evoke or recall that very absence, thereby reproducing the traces of the past (Arslan, 2010). Consequently, it is impossible to consider cinema—which possesses the power to reproduce its own language, interpretative choices, and focuses within the social experience (Akbal Süalp et al., 2008)—as separate from the social life in which it is situated. At this juncture, examining a film's atmosphere, narrative, and most importantly, the characters



upon which the story is built from psychological, sociological, and societal perspectives, and analyzing their behaviors in response to unfolding events, also allows for the interpretation of the country in which it was created in social, political, and cultural terms.

In the post-1980 era of Turkish cinema, filmmakers began creating narratives that not only reflected societal changes but also turned inward to explore the individual's inner world. Within this context, the identity crises and social alienation that emerged during modernization increasingly came to be portrayed as expressions of personal loneliness and psychological unraveling (Esen, 2000). Ömer Kavur's 1987 film, *Motherland Hotel (Anayurt Oteli)*, occupies a unique and important place in this tradition, standing out both historically and cinematographically as a powerful example of how the melancholic individual is shaped and represented in Turkish cinema. The film's protagonist, Zebercet, emerges as a melancholic subject through the relationship he establishes with a lost object, his internal confinement, and his sense of belonginglessness. This study will examine the film using psychoanalytic film theory, with a focus on the cinematographic representation of Zebercet's state of mind and his melancholy. Treating melancholy as a cinematographic representation of the lost object, this work discusses the place of *Motherland Hotel* within the narratives of the melancholic individual in Turkish cinema, based on the construction of the melancholic character within the film.

A Brief Look at the Historical Origins of Melancholy

Melancholy, which has found its place in various works of art as well as in the medical and psychological sciences since Antiquity, was first encountered in the Hippocratic writing *On the Nature of Man* between 430–410 BCE; however, there is no definitive information regarding its precise origin (Teber, 1997). The term is defined in dictionaries as “a state of mind characterized by symptoms such as avoiding people, neglecting one's own desires, and deep sorrow” (Püsküllüoğlu, 2004), or “a type of illness, black bile, beginning as a complete severance of all interest in one's surroundings without a specific cause, leading to physical and mental collapse” (Sâmi, 1986). In Hippocratic writings, it is described as an immanent physical disorder of health, buried within the chest (Teber, 1997).

The earliest examples concerning the melancholic human temperament date back to the epics of Homer. The phrases used for melancholy in these epics reveal words such as “darkening,” “anger,” and “middle part of the body,” which, when examined in their interrelation, express a psychosomatic unity, denying the possibility that melancholy resides only in the soul or only in the body. The middle part of the body is presented as the center of physical-spiritual gravity, influ-

enced by experiences in daily life. Furthermore, it is described as the place where the relationship between the world and the human body is established. Darkening occurs when an individual who cannot outwardly express their emotions suppresses them, leading to the swelling and darkening of the soul, body, and internal organs in the middle region, while anger is the emotional state that causes this reaction. The darkening of the middle part is not so much an illness of the organs as it is a condition that manifests as a result of life events, leading to behavioral disorders or physical ailments (Teber, 1997).

Aristotle opens the 30th chapter of *Problemata Physica* with the following question: “Why is it that all men who have attained to eminence in philosophy, or in politics, or poetry, or the arts, are evidently melancholic?” (Aristotle, 2007), which is highly significant in demonstrating the positive attitude toward melancholy in Antiquity. Indeed, melancholy, or in other words, black bile, was considered a superior characteristic observed in extraordinary men (Teber, 1997). Rufus, conversely, suggested that sensitive individuals with superior comprehension abilities, as well as those who are foresighted and highly imaginative, could succumb to melancholy. He argued that these—deep thought and sorrow—were the real causes of melancholy, replacing the highly talented melancholics mentioned in *Problemata Physica* (Aristotle, 2007) (Binkert, 1995). In the Middle Ages, where the treatment of mental illnesses was conducted by priests in monasteries, the attribution of demonic conditions as the cause of melancholy indicates the resurgence of a negative perspective toward it (Geçtan, 2017). During this period, when work was seen as proof of one’s faith in God, melancholy was equated with *acedia*¹; melancholics were associated with supernatural, secret powers, leading to their arrest, torture, and death (Teber, 1997; Prigent, 2009; Starobinski, 2007).

During the Enlightenment, melancholy gained a positive image once more, leading to the development of an intellectual/spiritual stance termed “Renaissance melancholy.” This development emerged from the questioning of existing notions regarding the purposeful unity and order of the universe that had been previously accepted (Demiralp, 2007). However, in the Age of Enlightenment, where trust in reason replaced faith in God, the rejection of the medieval understanding did not prevent melancholics from being stripped of the label “irrational madmen”; consequently, they were arrested in droves and confined to clinics. In the intellectual progression extending from Kant to Hegel, thinkers sought the cause of melancholy not in the individual or in celestial influences, but rather in the oppressive nature of prevailing societal norm systems. By the 19th century, it was

¹Acedia, fundamentally a spiritual state that is not inherently problematic, is generally used to describe sad, melancholic individuals who are unable to earn a living and fail to perform their social and religious duties.

proposed that the cause of melancholy lay in social conditions and that an individual's withdrawal from others was a result of this melancholy (Teber, 1997).

A review of the psychoanalytic literature reveals that Abraham's analyses of manic-depressive patients are among the initial foundational studies in this field (Klein, 2021). While explicating mourning and melancholia, Abraham defined neurotic depression as a result of unconscious motivation and repression, emphasizing that in neurotic depression, the individual tends to deny life (Abraham, 2018). Subsequently, Freud established a conceptually clearer framework by comparing mourning and melancholia; in this seminal work—which holds a significant place in defining the psychoanalytic meaning of melancholia and mourning—he described melancholia as a state related to a lost object, thereby elevating it beyond being merely a state of imbalance (1917). Lacan linked melancholia with desire, lack, and the inherent human sensation of incompleteness (Lacan, 2019); Klein, however, developed her perspective through the depressive position, which she posited as a state where the individual confronts losses and destructive emotions, and the inner sense of security is weakened (Klein, 2012; 2021). Kristeva, arguing that melancholia is fundamentally rooted in the loss of the maternal “thing,” stated that this loss is an object loss that occurs prior to the acquisition of language (Kristeva, 2020). Meanwhile, Butler asserted that post-loss mourning is socially determined in a discriminatory manner, producing a normative understanding of whose loss should be mourned, and addressed her theory through the lens of gender's impact on melancholia (Butler, 2018; 2007). On the other hand, while the differences between depression and melancholia remained quite ambiguous until recently, it is now possible to state that a clear distinction can be made between the two states: depression is generally characterized by profound sadness, anhedonia, and hopelessness, whereas melancholia is associated with a loss and deep internal conflicts, representing a state that involves a loss with which the individual has identified.

The State of Turkish Cinema in the 1980s and Ömer Kavur's Place During This Era

The decline of Yeşilçam in the mid-1980s created a need for a new cinematic language in Turkish cinema. This period also marked a time when American films dominated the Turkish market, with only five to ten Turkish films produced each year—many of which, hampered by low technical standards, struggled to compete with Hollywood productions (Onaran and Vardar, 2005). Alongside this decline, a broader cultural, social, and esthetic exhaustion became clear (Gökçe, 2004). As a result, both the quantity and nature of film production changed. Sex films gave way to arabesque and singer-centered productions, while narratives began to shift focus from societal issues toward more personal, individual concerns. During this period, driven by commercial interests, arabesque music and singers began to introduce new genres in cinema. Concurrently, films featuring multi-

faceted characters that delved into the psychological depths of individuals began to come to the fore, replacing Yeşilçam's traditional schematic characterizations. These films aimed to take a deeper approach to the human aspects and psychological states of the characters (Esen, 2000; Eşli, 2012).

The Cinema Law, adopted in 1986, triggered this renewal in Turkish cinema and increased film production. However, cinema continued to be perceived as merely an entertainment tool for governments; therefore, it was not possible for it to be perceived as a profound cultural asset. Nevertheless, the Cinema Law can be considered a promising step for the development of Turkish cinema. Generally, while old cinematic theories and practices began to lose validity in the 1980s, the new cinema advanced with representations dominated by characters experiencing internal conflicts, questioning their identities, and undergoing existential crises. Due to the character and narrative structures, which deviated from the classic archetypes to which viewers were accustomed, it must be said that a contradiction arose between the audience and the artists, and new directors struggled to get their content and style adopted by viewers. Therefore, despite the formation of a new cinematic understanding that sought to break traditional cinema molds during this period, a cinema that fully connected with its audience cannot be discussed due to these mutual problems (Scognamillo, 2003)

During this period, Ömer Kavur began to craft a cinematic language whereby he rejected the classic narrative structure and popular genres of Yeşilçam. Instead, he focused on individual and existential matters, featuring characters struggling with their past or initiating an internal journey of discovery. In this respect, the director moved away from the traditional structure of Turkish cinema between 1980 and 1990, curating a language that explored individual and existential themes. With this narrative style, he became one of the most original and distinctive directors in the history of Turkish cinema. His cinematography is characterized by a minimalist structure that features a slow pace and symbolic narration, where visuals and atmosphere take precedence over dialogue, and space and time are used as metaphors reflecting the character's inner world. Consequently, Ömer Kavur's cinema can be said to have laid the foundation for narratives focusing on the psychological world of the individual in post-1980 Turkish cinema (Esen, 2015).

Purpose and Method of the Research

This study, which does not consider the elements that constitute a film to be independent of society, aims to understand the representation of melancholy and the melancholic individual in cinema, based on the new cinematic language that began to develop in Turkish cinema in the

1980s, and to reveal the function of melancholy in film narrative. In this way, by focusing on narratives that focus on the inner world of the individual in Turkish cinema, it aims to provide original contributions to both cinema literature and psychoanalytic literature by demonstrating how psychoanalytic film theory offers a functional tool for interpretation in cinema analysis. The most important factor in selecting the 1987 film *Motherland Hotel*, directed by Ömer Kavur and adapted from Yusuf Atılgan's novel of the same name, as an example is the identification of elements in the film's main character Zebercet (played by Macit Koper)—his introversion, loneliness, lack of communication, losses, and perception of time—that correspond to melancholy in the classical sense. This study examines how psychopathological concepts are represented within cultural production processes, offering an important perspective on the reshaping of these concepts on the visual and esthetic plane. In particular, it reveals how psychoanalytic themes such as the dysfunction of language, the loss of the integrity of the self, and the pathological bond formed with the lost object are woven into the cinematic narrative, demonstrating how theoretical psychoanalysis can intersect with artistic forms. In this respect, the study offers an interdisciplinary approach for both the art of cinema and psychoanalytic theory; it is significant in that it shows how themes of individual collapse are transformed into visual language through cinema.

Building on these points, the psychoanalytic film theory employed in the analysis aims to uncover latent meanings by tracing the traces of the director's or collective unconscious beyond the explicit content of films. Thus, all elements within a film are considered psychoanalytic data. This approach allows films to be examined not only as conscious creations but also as reflections of the unconscious (Akbulut, n.d.). The method gains momentum from the mid-20th-century structural reinterpretation of Sigmund Freud's classical psychoanalysis theories by French thinker Jacques Lacan. This analytical approach, which examines film texts in line with the theories of psychoanalytic theorists such as Freud, Lacan, and Kristeva, addresses a film's characters, narrative structure, and visual and auditory elements through the lens of unconscious desires, repressed traumas, and identity formations. The reason for selecting psychoanalytic film theory for this analysis is its strength in interpreting the inner world of characters and decoding the unconscious meanings of films, particularly as the main character Zebercet's unconscious, repressed desires, losses, and resulting melancholia are directly related to psychoanalysis. In psychologically deep films such as *Motherland Hotel*, psychoanalytic film theories serve as a valuable tool for better understanding characters' traumas, identity crises, and conflicts with social norms. In this context, the analysis will be conducted through Sigmund Freud's concepts of melancholia and mourning, the character's silence, and the collapse of language; Julia Kristeva's notions of melancholia, the symbolic order, and the pre-symbolic realm; and Lacan's ideas of lack and desire. This study will provide a compre-

hensive analysis of melancholia, the melancholic character, and its cinematographic reflections, offering significant frameworks from the perspectives of cinema and psychoanalysis for the theme of melancholia in Turkish cinema.

The Psychoanalytic Film Theory Reading of Melancholia and the Melancholic Individual in *Motherland Hotel*

To briefly touch upon the film's subject matter: the life of the main character, Zebercet, who works as the clerk of *Motherland Hotel*, inherited as a family legacy, follows a monotonous course. The character's relationships and communication with his surroundings and the people around him are extremely limited. A turning point in his life occurs one day when a female customer, arriving on the delayed Ankara train, stops at the hotel. After the woman, who stays for one night, states upon leaving that she will return, Zebercet enters a period of waiting, attempting to break the routine he has been accustomed to for years, yet this waiting ends with an unexpected conclusion.

When examined within the context of the melancholia theories of Abraham, Freud, Lacan, and Kristeva, the main character Zebercet emerges as a melancholic subject whose identity formation is incomplete or unfulfilled, who is unable to express his desire, and who remains fixated on his lost object(s). Proceeding from this, the points to be focused on in this section to better understand Zebercet's character structure and psychological collapse are as follows: identity formation and the repressed self, the lost object, the mechanism of desire, and the collapse of desire and language. However, it is observed that Zebercet's identity resolution, his dynamics of desire, and his position as a melancholic subject also find correspondences in the film's cinematographic structure. At this juncture, it is important to evaluate the parallels the narrative establishes with its esthetic structure within the context of psychoanalytic film theory, through the cinematographic structure of the film and the visual construction of its melancholic atmosphere.

Cinematographic Structure of *Motherland Hotel* and Visual Construction of the Melancholic Atmosphere

Motherland Hotel possesses a cinematographic language that establishes melancholy even on a formal level. This is because Ömer Kavur's camera, besides being a tool for observing Zebercet's inner world, transforms into a narrative apparatus that dictates the rhythm of his psychological dissolution. The prevalent use of static camera work and long sequence shots throughout the film almost freezes the flow of time, thereby visualizing the character's mental inertia. In particular, the

camera moving through the hotel corridors with fixed shots externalizes the individual's internal stasis. This formal choice can be interpreted as the cinematographic equivalent of the "state of stationary self" noted by Freud in his distinction between mourning and melancholy.

Considering the use of light and color, which play a decisive role in establishing the melancholic atmosphere, it can be stated that the film's pale yellow and gray tones reinforce a sense of time trapped in the past while also reflecting Zebercet's inner emptiness, which is synonymous with loneliness. The constant semi-darkness of the hotel and its lack of natural light is a spatial projection of the repressed unconscious. The space here transforms into an unconscious realm, which aligns with Kristeva's concept of the "field of prelinguistic silence."

The use of time also deviates from the classical narrative structure, not progressing linearly. The repetitive daily routines, camera movements repeated from the same angles, and Zebercet's monotonous behavior construct a psychoanalytic circularity of time. This situation shows parallels with Kristeva's view that in melancholy, temporality is frozen, and the subject remains fixated on past losses. The slow pace of the editing and the dominance of silences direct the viewer toward emotion rather than narrative; thus, the viewing experience evokes the feeling of a "psychoanalytic session."

In this sense, Ömer Kavur's cinematographic choices directly relate to the tension that Zebercet establishes with his unconscious. The cinematographic structure in the film also references the subject's process of identity formation. Zebercet's movements within the hotel, his relationships with the space, and moments of silence can be read as expressions of the repressed self. These visual choices carry clues about the identity conflict that is continuously present within the character's inner world. Therefore, a direct parallel can be drawn between the formal structure of the film and the psychoanalytic analysis. From this point on, focusing on how Zebercet's identity formation and repressed desires are shaped in a psychoanalytic context will enable a complementary reading of the melancholic subject in the film.

Identity Formation and the Repressed Self

According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the individual's conscious mind is shaped during childhood through repressed desires, traumas, and relationships with their parents (Freud, 2021). For Zebercet, who takes over the hotel management after his father's death, this change in position does not facilitate the formation of a subjective identity. Although his father's presence no longer continues physically, Zebercet is unable to construct an identity that would allow him to realize his own desire. The film offers the audience no information regarding the death of his mother or

his relationship with her. However, it is conveyed through certain scenes that he grew up under the shadow of an authoritarian father figure. When the audience is shown a close-up of his father's photograph, hung prominently at the top of the wall in his room, they see a man with a mustache who appears quite imposing.

The first scene where the audience meets Zebercet shows him talking to himself in Room Number 1. In this scene, the mustachioed character introduces himself in the empty hotel room as if someone were in front of him (Kavur, 1987):

My name is Zebercet. Zebercet. I am the manager of this hotel. I was born on November 28, 1950. A seven-month-old baby. My mother was 44 then. Older than my father. She had four miscarriages before me. She died the summer I was circumcised, in 1960. I was in the third grade of primary school. I dropped out in the second year of middle school. I wandered around aimlessly for a while. Then, military service. I was discharged in '71. My father died a few years ago. I've been managing the hotel since 1980. It's a job that requires responsibility. My name is Zebercet. But I don't know yours. You arrived three days ago on the delayed Ankara train. I couldn't register you. You didn't tell me your name. I know you will return from the village you went to.

It is evident that the character defines himself through points of loss. First, he emphasizes the prematurity of his arrival into the world: he was a seven-month-old baby, an early, unexpected arrival. He then conveys that he lost his mother at the age of ten and his father at thirty, and that he had taken on the important and responsible job of hotel manager at the time of the narration. To make Zebercet's situation more comprehensible—having lost his mother at the young age of ten and now taking over his father's role—it is necessary to touch upon the Oedipus complex and the castration anxiety in Lacan and Freud. In the Oedipal complex, the male child desires his mother for himself and thus sees his father as a rival. However, out of fear of his father's power, he is forced to renounce this desire. This fear leads to an unconscious anxiety, which Freud called castration anxiety: the concern that the father might punish him by cutting off his male organ (the phallus), meaning he would be castrated (Freud, 2020). Lacan, however, regards castration as a symbolic lack rather than the actual loss of an organ. Lacan (1966) states that castration implies that the individual cannot perceive themselves within an absolute totality and will always approach the object of desire with a feeling of lack. In line with this, the fact that Zebercet emphasizes his birth at seven months suggests that he has internalized the idea of being incomplete from the very beginning of his existence; his premature birth can be identified with a kind of persistent feeling of incompleteness.



Zebercet's entire life is interwoven with his repressed self, shaped by his past, childhood traumas, and societal norms; his childhood traumas and his relationships with his parents stand out as factors preventing the completion of his identity formation. At this juncture, the views of Abraham—who states that an individual's forms of mourning are derivatives of melancholia and places ambivalence at its foundation—are also significant. Abraham argues that the losses a person encounters later in life reactivate those experienced in childhood. This situation inevitably leads the individual back to their ambivalent relationship with the mother. Indeed, self-reproach is directed toward the mother, the “first object” of ambivalent feelings. While the child's love and hatred for the mother may override each other, they face failure when attempting to feel absolute love or absolute hatred. In the impossibility of this absolute emotional state, depressive conditions are observed in both adults and children, and the underlying reason for most is a deeply felt state of absolute hopelessness. In this loss, which is experienced as “an unconscious anal expulsion process,” the desire following the initial wish is the oral desire to incorporate what is absent. In this context, all bodily functions related to intake and expulsion can be used to process the loss. In these situations, where internalizations and expulsions are separated into different dimensions, the melancholic individual, whose desire for revenge is directed toward the self, continues to torment the object of love until it is removed from the danger of destruction (Abraham, 2018; Leader, 2018).

In the scene following the one where he describes himself as if someone were standing opposite him, Zebercet wakes up in bed and sees that he has no mustache when he looks in the mirror. This is quite significant in terms of representing his relationship with his father. However, his mustache is far from being a grand and powerful feature like his father's; rather, it is a small form that makes him appear weaker. This inherited feature from his father becomes a repeated mustachioed reflection when he sees himself in the mirror—a state of which even the character himself is mostly unaware. He is shown asking those around him whether he has a mustache, indicating a need for confirmation. Another important point to note is that after the woman arrives on the delayed Ankara train, the first thing Zebercet wishes to remove is his mustache. So much so that even in moments when he has no mustache, he continues to fall into the illusion that it exists.

This point brings to mind Lacan's definition of desire as a dynamic that keeps the subject alive, and the notion that the subject always arises from a lack. This is because the human being sustains identity construction by orienting toward an object that they can never fully attain. When desire fails to find its counterpart in the symbolic order, a process of “collapse” begins for the subject. According to Lacan, who reinterpreted Freud's theory of the unconscious through language and



the symbolic order, the individual constantly attempts to complete themselves due to the desire and sense of lack formed in the unconscious (Lacan, 1966; 2019). The scenes where this situation is most visible are undoubtedly those where Zebercet looks into the mirror. At this point, considering Lacan's mirror stage theory, it is possible to argue that the mirror scenes in the film are moments where Zebercet confronts his own shortcomings and, in a sense, attempts to complete or define himself. Therefore, he stumbles between his father's² presence and his own and frequently repeats his name while looking into the mirror: "My name is Zebercet" (Kavur, 1987). He is also seen repeating this when he enters Room Number 1.

Another striking aspect regarding his identity is that whenever he has to introduce himself to anyone outside the hotel, he never states his real name or identity. To the young man he meets at the cockfight and later goes to the cinema with, he gives the name Ahmet—which is, in fact, his father's name. When he goes to the barber, he says he is a stranger in the city, and to the old man he speaks with in the cemetery, he claims to be from the Keçecizadeler family. This emphasizes Zebercet's inability to assert himself anywhere outside the hotel. At times placing himself in his father's position, and at others assuming another identity through his mother's side, he constantly strives to construct his self through another. At this point, as Teber expresses, what emerges is a melancholic personality that cannot relate to the society he lives in or the people around him, that cannot adapt to the norms of the outside world, and instead retreats into its own shell — in other words, one trapped in an existential void and unable to socialize (Teber, 1997). Indeed, throughout the film, Zebercet is portrayed as a hotel manager whose identity remains undefined and who cannot establish a connection with the outside world.

Kristeva and the Collapse of Language: Zebercet's Silence

Kristeva associates melancholia with the early severance of the bond established with the mother. Weaning leads to the loss of the mother–breast object, and this loss generates mourning. However, at this point, mourning is also directed toward a self that has not been symbolized along with the object. This is because, whatever the object may be, it represents an undifferentiated and unsymbolized element in the early stage of the infant's conceptual development. Thus, the resulting melancholia points both to the loss of the mother and to the loss of an undefined self (Radden, 2000).

²In Lacan's mirror stage (*le stade du miroir*), which he defines as the phase during which the individual's identity is formed, the child enters a process of identification upon encountering their own reflection in the mirror. However, according to Lacan, the position of the child who recognizes their image in the mirror as a coherent self and identifies, or in other words, integrates, with this image is an illusion. This is because the child's motor skills, during this stage believed to occur between six and eighteen months, are not yet fully developed, and it is impossible for them to feel as whole as the image in the mirror. Therefore, the self is constructed based on an external image (Lacan, 1966; Neill, 2024).



In her work *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, Kristeva links melancholia with the collapse of the linguistic and symbolic order, arguing that the melancholic individual loses the capacity for language because they cannot express themselves, which leads to the severing of their connection with the world. At this point, according to Kristeva, who treats melancholia not merely as an emotional state but as a fundamental deterioration of the individual's connection with the world, the melancholic individual's inability to articulate the lost object actually stems from the loss being unable to fully settle within the symbolic order. From this perspective, the most defining characteristics of the melancholic are the collapse of language, silence, and introversion. For the melancholic, whose language is defined as inadequate, insufficient, and fragmented, mourning the loss is impossible because this loss has been so deeply internalized in the unconscious that it cannot be transformed into an expressible object. Thus, the melancholic cannot produce meaning through language and becomes isolated from the external world (Kristeva, 2020). Zebercet's minimal speaking throughout the film, and when he does speak, his verbal communication—consisting mostly of short sentences and fragmented expressions—occurs with a mechanical and monotonous tone, clearly indicating his linguistic collapse. This form of communication, which never progresses beyond short, soulless dialogues with hotel guests, does not improve even while he awaits the return of the female guest. The dialogues he conducts throughout the film convey that he is an individual who attempts only practical communication, unable to expose his emotional world. Zebercet's persistent silence and lack of communication throughout the film support the idea of the melancholic subject's problem with language within the context of Kristeva's theory. He cannot articulate his feelings; he cannot even directly express his desire for the woman.

Alternatively, the long silences in the film function to reflect the problem of the melancholic state being linguistically untranslatable. Zebercet, who wanders inside the hotel, looks at himself in the mirror, and lives with the traces of the past, is described more by the meaning carried by the space and his body than by words. Seen as stuck in a loss that cannot be represented in language and condemned to an insoluble silence as a result (Kristeva, 2020), Zebercet's silence and his inability to communicate—interpreted in the film as a classic symptom of a melancholic subject—is also made visible in his perception of time and his relationship with space.

According to Kristeva (2020), who defines melancholia as the loss of language and the language of silence, the melancholic subject is pushed outside of language and the symbolic order. Therefore, by retreating inward without being able to express their pain in words, their silence signifies a return to a prelinguistic state. Language is, in fact, a tool for making sense of loss, and because the

melancholic cannot complete this process, they fall silent without turning to language. Therefore, Zebercet's situation is a cinematic reflection of the inability to speak as defined by Kristeva. Based on Kristeva's concepts related to the limits of language and the symbolic order, which suggest that when the melancholic cannot express their loss in words, they may try to communicate in other ways, the film shows Zebercet's inner world being reflected through space, time, and body movements rather than words. In the scenes where he looks in the mirror, his inability to engage in any dialogue with his own image symbolizes the character's introversion. The silence that prevails in the scenes where he wanders aimlessly around the hotel, his touching the woman's belongings and lying down on her bed in room number 1, reveal his inner emptiness. However, despite these physical contacts, neither emotion nor thought is expressed; thus, it is felt that Zebercet tries to make sense of his existence through bodily and spatial experiences beyond language.

His ritualized daily routines also hold a significant place in this regard. He wakes up at the same time every day, closes the hotel doors at the same time, and keeps the guest registration slips up to date. Even the reasons and days he goes out are fixed. Such rituals are an indication of the melancholic's attempt to produce meaning (Kristeva, 2020). His living in a cycle where every day repeats the previous one can be seen as an attempt to express what language cannot, through the stillness of time. All these are cinematic indicators confirming Kristeva's view that the melancholic subject cannot communicate and that language is insufficient for them. In the context of Kristeva's theory of language and melancholia, Zebercet is a character who cannot express himself, cannot make sense of the world, and continues his life in silence. His melancholia stems from a loss internalized in the unconscious, as defined by Freud (1917), but the loss cannot be put into words. Therefore, Zebercet's melancholic structure is directly connected to the collapse of language and meaning. The melancholic subject remains attached to the lost object, having failed to substitute a new object in its place. His prolonged state of mere waiting—not accepting the loss yet not actively trying to reach the object—is also significant. As the character remains in an indefinite state of waiting, his connection to reality begins to sever. Consequently, the woman acts as a catalyst, accelerating his mental collapse, functioning as an object that Zebercet both desires and has lost.

The Lost Object: The Woman Who Arrives on the Delayed Ankara Train

In one of his metapsychological essays, *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud approaches melancholia from the perspective of the lost object, defining it not merely as a state of imbalance and despair but as a condition arising from the loss of something (object loss). In melancholia, which corresponds to a process in which the loss cannot be accepted, the individual internalizes their feelings toward the lost object in the unconscious and directs this loss toward themselves.



Melancholia is defined as a deep state of pain, sorrow, hopelessness, and pessimism, involving a loss of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and an expectation of delusional punishment — a loss of self-respect. The reactions of the individual to the loss simultaneously point to the elements that separate melancholia from mourning. For Freud, who speaks of the balance between inner and outer harmony, mourning is necessary because the individual can only recover from the crisis after an object's loss through mourning. In the mourning process, the individual accepts the loss and confronts it, whereas in melancholia, this loss can never be completed, and the individual turns toward self-destruction. The way out is to face the pain. In mourning, when the bereaved reflects on the significance of what has been lost and finally accepts it, severing all ties to the object, the lost object thereby turns into a memory without a future. Only in this way can the individual heal. On the other hand, melancholia, unlike mourning, can arise not only from the loss of a loved object but also from the loss of something loved as an object, even if it has not truly died (Freud, 1917). For Zebercet, both situations apply. The film begins with the female guest who arrives on the delayed Ankara train asking for a room at the hotel. In the next scene, Zebercet is seen standing at the entrance of Room No. 1, where the woman — who has long since left the hotel — had stayed, introducing himself. This shows that Zebercet denies the woman's departure and the reality that she will not return, thereby entering an uncertain state of waiting. This corresponds to his most recent known loss after the deaths of his mother and father.

Freud's concept of libido is not limited to sexuality; it is also defined as an energy that enables an individual to survive, form attachments, engage in creative activity, and develop social relationships (Freud, 2020). In the melancholic subject who has made an object-choice in the past, libido becomes attached to a particular object. This relationship with the object is shaken due to a circumstance originating from the loved one. Under normal conditions, with the successful work of mourning, libido withdraws from this object and transfers it elsewhere. However, unlike mourning, in melancholia, libido does not transfer to another object, and instead the object is introjected. In this case, libido withdraws into the ego, helping it identify with the abandoned object. Thus, while object loss causes a loss of ego, the identification resulting from the conflict between the ego and the loved object transforms the ego into a fissure (Freud, 1917; Volkan & Zintl, 2010).

According to Freud (1917), who states that in melancholy, loss is unconsciously internalized, a male child who fails to establish a healthy bond with his mother in childhood is likely to have problems in his future relationships with women (Freud, 2020). Zebercet's obsessive interest in the female guest who arrives on the delayed Ankara train stems, in a way, from this deficient rela-



tionship. After the woman leaves the hotel, she becomes an unconscious lost object for Zebercet. He unconsciously identifies the woman, who stayed only one night at *Motherland Hotel* but told him she would return with his mother upon leaving. In fact, this is the trigger for his unexpressed grief. The nameless woman is a reflection of the loss of the mother, which Zebercet cannot define at the conscious level but still exerts its influence in the unconscious. According to Kristeva, the melancholic cannot consciously externalize the lost object and mourn it; instead, the loss is internalized and integrated into the individual's self. By losing this woman, with whom he unconsciously identifies his mother, Zebercet in fact relives the experience of loss and is confronted with its destructive impact. In this context, the woman's arrival and subsequent abandonment of him recreate a repetition of the moment he lost his mother. However, because this loss cannot be articulated or made meaningful at a conscious level, it accelerates Zebercet's withdrawal into himself and the collapse of his ego. As Kristeva describes, here the loss of the object turns into a loss of self (2020). Because Zebercet identifies with the lost object and is unable to articulate this loss, he is dragged into an existential void and collapses. The woman upon whom he constructed his entire mental world can be interpreted not only as an unattainable object of desire but also as a fantasy object through which he could complete the construction of his identity.

To better understand Zebercet's psychological state and his inner collapse—as someone who cannot fully conform to social norms, struggles to express his desires, and exists with a sense of lack—it is important to refer to Lacan's concepts of "lack" (*manque*) and "desire" (*désir*). According to Lacan, the subject is constructed through language (the symbolic order), and every subject finds itself in a state of desire as a "lacking" being. In other words, desire arises from the subject's lack, and this lack can never be fully filled because desire has a structure that is constantly deferred and can never be fully satisfied (Lacan, 1966; 2019). Zebercet's desire for the unnamed female passenger corresponds to a process in which his hope for completion is accompanied by the reproduction of his lack. For his tragedy lies in the fact that his desires are always delayed and his lack can never be completed. Thus, *Motherland Hotel* can be interpreted not only as an individual drama but also as a narrative of melancholy arising from desire, lack, and exclusion from the symbolic order within a psychoanalytic context.

According to Lacan, the subject attains identity only upon entering the symbolic order—that is, the realm of language, society, and cultural norms. However, melancholic and neurotic individuals, being unable to fully integrate into this order, exhibit their sense of lack more distinctly (Lacan, 1966). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, when "the Name-of-the-Father" (*Nom-du-Père*)—a fundamental function that enables the child's entry into language and the social law—is absent, the individual



cannot establish a healthy relationship with language and reality (Evans, 2006; Lacan, 2019). In this respect, Zebercet's particular failure to use language effectively signifies his exclusion from the symbolic order. He struggles to communicate with the opposite sex, and even to look at them directly. He struggles to communicate with the opposite sex, even to look at them directly. The lack of a father figure in the life of this extremely introverted character, in other words, the lack of a relationship with authority and law, reinforces his sense of belonginglessness.

Zebercet's inability to fully participate in the symbolic order and his unfulfilled desires find their place in Lacan's division of the individual's unconscious into three fundamental orders: the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real (Evans, 2006). In the imaginary order, Zebercet's imaginary relationship with the female guest corresponds to an idealized reality. In the symbolic order, structured by language and society, Zebercet's silence and inability to communicate with people show that he remains outside this order. The real order, on the other hand, lies beyond language and desire; it is a traumatic area that he cannot directly confront, and Zebercet's collapse stems from his inability to face these realities.

When returning to Zebercet's desire mechanism, we see that, in terms of the film, his desire begins with the delayed arrival of a female guest on the Ankara train and her stay at the hotel, and that Zebercet's inner desires are awakened by her arrival. After the woman leaves the hotel, even though it is clear she will not return, Zebercet continues to establish a mental connection with her, revealing both the impossibility of his desire and the complete dissatisfaction of desire stemming from the woman's absence. During the waiting period, Zebercet's touching the woman's belongings in room number 1, where she stayed, and fetishizing the objects in the room is a sign that reveals his attempt to find satisfaction in her traces when he cannot reach the object of his desire. Ultimately, however, the woman's failure to return to the hotel disrupts Zebercet's "memorized" order. From this point on, Zebercet, whose connection to the symbolic order is completely severed, ceases to be a subject guided by desire and, due to the collapse of desire and the void that exists within the loss, becomes a melancholic being. The source of the process that leads him to melancholy lies in his inability to reach the object of desire and his inability to find another object to replace it. Therefore, the lack experienced by the character, trapped in a cycle of the mechanism of desire, causes him to suffer an erosion of identity. Furthermore, the sexual tension in the film is another sign of the breakdown of the mechanism of desire. Unable to express his interest in the female guest through any verbal or physical action, Zebercet instead directs his desire toward violence and kills the maid Zeynep. However, it should also be noted that Zeynep, having lost her function within the system due to Zebercet's refusal to accept customers at the

hotel, will return to her village the next day. Like the female guest, she too will leave the hotel. Therefore, based on Lacan's argument that desire, when unfulfilled, can sometimes turn into a destructive impulse, it is possible to justify Zebercet's action toward Zeynep with this situation.

The implicit nature of the loss also shapes Zebercet's melancholy. In addition to the physical loss of people, there is also a loss of belonging and a sense of self. The nameless female guest at the hotel appears to be a turning point for him, but she also serves as a trigger that deepens Zebercet's melancholic structure. For as Freud puts it, what is lost is actually still there, but the relationship with it has fundamentally changed (Freud, 1917). When Zebercet realizes the woman will not return, he cannot mourn the loss; instead, he not only withdraws further into himself but also closes the hotel—the only space where he had established his existence—along with himself. In all his loneliness, he elevates his suffering to new heights by further isolating his life, which consists only of Zeynep, the maid who is the only person who can satisfy him, and the hotel's transient customers. Because what was expected did not come. The internalization of loss draws the ego into the battlefield of separation and causes a permanent void within the ego. At this point, the division within the ego not only creates an area where emotional turmoil and hatred are produced; it also becomes an area where the ego attacks itself through identification with the lost object (Ferber, 2016). Continuing to torment himself after his disappointment, Zebercet tries to overcome his growing loneliness on the streets. However, none of these places or people are familiar to him. Zebercet, who is not even accustomed to the guard's whistle, who just stares while everyone opens their hands and joins in the imam's sermon, or who cannot control himself even while trying to watch a cockfight, forces himself to suffer by confronting his inability to belong anywhere outside and his inability to live.

In a way, for melancholics who live alongside the dead, the living are nothing but shadows (Leader, 2018). Indeed, Zebercet's own melancholy, hidden in his loneliness, and the life he could not live among the shadows, have turned him into a living dead. By mechanizing the routines of daily life, he rendered himself completely lifeless, blocking all genuine encounters. Therefore, he is neither dead nor alive, so to speak. The song playing when he enters a taxi while drunk, "Neither dead nor alive," describes his state of mind at that moment. Just like the losses he forces to exist in his memory, half-alive, half-dead, he himself is now in a state of neither living nor dying. After returning to the hotel, he stands in front of his mother and father's photos in the room filled with old belongings and rocks his crib. The melancholic's anguish lies in the distinction between the world he creates in his mind and the world that actually exists. While the minutes that seem like eternity in the real world he lives in become a source of indescribable pain and anxiety,



they can also contain motifs such as the call of the dead (Leader, 2018). In melancholy, whose destructiveness is actually directed not at oneself but at the lost object, the object is internalized and becomes part of the self, so anger again turns back on the individual. The attempt to kill or destroy the other is actually suicide. Because the other is now part of the self. Therefore, killing the self is possible when the subject turns itself into an object (Ferber, 2016). When hostility, which is directed toward a single object and represents the ego's initial reaction to objects in the external world, is turned inward, the resulting act of suicide stems from the ego's defeat by the object in two opposing situations: falling madly in love and killing oneself, albeit in different ways (Freud, 1917). In this context, Zebercet's anger and hatred toward the object of his love also turned toward himself, making defeat inevitable. Although there are still 18 days left until the execution date, the next day, he decides that waiting is meaningless, gives up on postponing it, and begins to prepare as usual. He takes off the new clothes he bought while waiting for the woman, and returns to the Zebercet the audience first encountered. He begins his shave with his mustache. Ultimately, he suspends his body at the end of a rope, much like Faruk Keçecizade, who, at the age of nineteen, fell into an impossible love and later took his own life. After his death, we see the hotel left empty, the woman he killed, the empty cradle, his mother's photo, his childhood photo, and water droplets flowing drop by drop into infinity, as if they were their souls, Zebercet's body hanging from the ceiling, and finally, an infinite white light entering through the hotel door. His act of killing himself attempts to "end" his lack. This also corresponds to a complete severing of the connection with the symbolic order, in Lacan's term.

The scene of Zebercet's death both aligns with the individual melancholy's desire for completion and reveals cinema's capacity to produce psychoanalytic representations. The formal structure of the film proves that the subject's unconscious processes can also be constructed through visual composition, silence, and rhythm. In this sense, *Motherland Hotel* constitutes a remarkable example in terms of making concepts such as the subject, desire, repression, and the death drive, which are fundamental to psychoanalytic film theory, visible through cinematic language. When considering how such representations are positioned in film theory, the following thinkers carry a theoretical parallel with the analyses of this study: Christian Metz's (*The Imaginary Signifier*, 1977) treatment of cinema as a "dream-like order"; Laura Mulvey's (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 1975) concepts of the gaze regime and identification; Slavoj Žižek's (*Looking Awry*, 1991) approach explaining the ideological structuring of desire in film; and Todd McGowan's (*The Real Gaze*, 2007) post-Lacanian film reading. In this context, the cinematographic esthetic of *Motherland Hotel* intersects with the universal debates of psychoanalytic film theory, engaging in a dialogue with international literature on how cinema reproduces images of the unconscious. The

continuation of this study will include an evaluation of the core approaches to this theoretical dialogue between cinema and psychoanalysis.

The Dialogue Between Cinema and Psychoanalysis

This property of cinema—being closely related to the processes of dream, desire, and repression—ensures that its connection with psychoanalysis is visible not only at a thematic level but also at a formal one. Freud’s interpretation of dreams and the concept of the unconscious provide a theoretical ground for cinema’s representation of the unseen through images. Indeed, psychoanalytic film theory treats cinema as a “visual unconscious.” The screen, in turn, transforms into a surface upon which repressed desires, fears, and processes of identification are projected.

Christian Metz, in his work *The Imaginary Signifier* (1977), evaluates cinema as a representational space where unconscious desires are reproduced. According to Metz, the spectator temporarily compensates for their own lack by identifying with the image in the film. This recalls Lacan’s concept of the “mirror stage”: the subject approaches the feeling of completeness throughout the film but never fully achieves it. From this perspective, *Motherland Hotel*, while inviting its audience to witness Zebercet’s loneliness, also directs them toward recognizing their own repressed desires.

Laura Mulvey’s essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) adds a feminist dimension to the psychoanalytic film theory. Mulvey asserts that the patriarchal structure of classical narrative cinema imposes the “male gaze” upon the spectator. *Motherland Hotel*, however, reverses this structure; Zebercet’s gaze at the woman transforms not so much into a desire for possession but into a representation of absence and loss. The lack of a female character in the film emphasizes the unfulfillable nature of desire. This situation can be read as a melancholic variation of Mulvey’s discussion of the gaze regime.

Žižek, who defines cinema as the manifestation field of the ideological unconscious in his works *Looking Awry* (1991) and *The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema* (2006), argues that film reveals what the spectator does not want to see: their own repressed truth. In *Motherland Hotel*, Zebercet’s actions—such as death, repression, and obsession—make visible not only an individual collapse but also the ideological breakdown of the modern subject. The film, in Žižek’s definition, uncovers the “disturbing core of the Real” at the level of the image.

According to McGowan (2007), who reinterprets the structure of desire through Lacan’s concept of the “Real” in his work *The Real Gaze*, cinema does not satisfy the viewer’s desire; instead, it ensures the reproduction of desire by reminding the viewer of the persistence of lack. In *Mother-*

land Hotel, Zebercet's death is not the termination of desire, but the absolute acceptance of lack. This approach is consistent with McGowan's concept of the "aesthetics of lack."

When these theoretical approaches are considered together, *Motherland Hotel* directly relates to the key debates prominent in the psychoanalytic film literature. The film simultaneously evokes Metz's dynamic of identification, Mulvey's gaze regime, Žižek's ideological reading, and McGowan's analysis of the structure of desire. Thus, despite being a narrative produced in a local context, *Motherland Hotel* is repositioned within the conceptual horizon of universal psychoanalytic film theory. These discussions demonstrate that cinema is not merely a tool for representation; it operates as a mode of thought that makes visible the subject's desires, fears, and repressed aspects. In the case of *Motherland Hotel*, the themes of melancholy, identity, and lack are carried into a new esthetic context through the conceptual tools provided by psychoanalytic theory. The film is thereby evaluated as a visual discourse at the boundaries of both the individual unconscious and social ideology.

Conclusion

This study, through a psychoanalytic film theory analysis of *Motherland Hotel*, has demonstrated that melancholia constitutes a structural element that shapes the narrative form in cinema and has illustrated how the art of film can both convey and reconstruct profound psychological themes such as melancholia. In this respect, *Motherland Hotel* stands out not only as one of the most striking depictions of individual and existential melancholia in Turkish cinema but also as a foundational point for modernist narratives that deeply explore the psychological world of the subject. Within the framework of analyses encompassing Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia, Lacan's theory of desire and lack, and Kristeva's notions of the collapse of language and the loss of the symbolic order, the film has been examined as a melancholic narrative centered on the deepening loss in the inner world of its protagonist, Zebercet. His relationship with the lost object, his deficiency in identity formation, and his inability to fully enter the symbolic order stand out as crucial factors in his positioning as a melancholic subject.

When Zebercet's melancholy is examined in the context of the burden of the past, loneliness, and identity crises, it becomes clear that the fundamental element defining his existence is deficiency. The arrival of the female guest on the delayed Ankara train creates a turning point in his life, while her departure becomes a trigger that accelerates Zebercet's inner collapse. Throughout the film, his expectation that the woman will return reenacts the losses he experienced in the past. The early loss of his mother, his identity shaped under his father's shadow, and his lack of

belonging cause Zebercet to create a new object of loss, which he identifies with the female guest. As Freud pointed out, melancholy, unlike mourning, cannot reach a stage of acceptance; instead, the lost object is internalized into the unconscious and becomes part of the ego. This is explained in his interest in the female guest and his inability to accept her loss explain. His withdrawal, his incompatibility with social norms, and ultimately his ending his own life can be seen as a dramatic reflection of the melancholic individual's weak connection to the world.

Kristeva's theory, which relates melancholia to the collapse of language, explains Zebercet's formation as a character who cannot communicate, cannot produce meaning, and becomes silent. The long silences, incomplete sentences, and unique narrative style visible throughout the film emphasize the impossibility of expressing his melancholia through language. In *Motherland Hotel*, rather than dialogues, looks, the use of space, and silences stand out as cinematographic elements that reveal the character's inner state. Zebercet's relationship with mirrors also aligns with Lacan's mirror stage and the theory of self-formation; for even when he sees himself in the mirror, he cannot fully define who he is, and his existence is continually shaped by a sense of lack.

Ultimately, Zebercet's suicide emerges as the final consequence of loss and deficiency. By killing the other or sacrificing himself to end this deficiency, Zebercet completes his melancholy by losing his own existence. Beyond being a narrative of individual and psychological disintegration, the film also represents individuals who are stuck in the process of modernization and have lost their sense of belonging. The proliferation of melancholic characters and the prominence of existential themes in Turkish cinema after 1980 has led to characters like Zebercet finding increasingly space in cinema. Therefore, it is possible to say that the film itself is a reference point for subsequent films. For example, *Motherland Hotel*, which serves as a pioneering example in determining the narrative and esthetic codes through which melancholy can be employed as a form of expression in cinema, would be insufficiently understood if it were evaluated merely as a portrayal of individual tragedy. The fact that the narrative structure of the film is constructed in a way that reflects the character's psychological state shows that psychoanalytic theories are a powerful tool for understanding not only the individual's inner world but also how this world can be represented on the cinematic plane. In light of the findings, the film reveals how the melancholic individual is constructed narratively and esthetically in Turkish cinema by offering a deep character analysis that encompasses different theoretical dimensions of melancholy and loss through Zebercet's psychological collapse, thus providing a broad perspective on the cinematic treatment of this theme.

The significance of *Motherland Hotel* within the context of Turkish cinema lies in the fact that, for its time, it stands as one of the first strong examples of the narrative and cinematographic construction of the melancholic subject. This makes it an important resource for understanding how Turkish cinema approaches such characters and their inner conflicts. Often seen as paving the way for many films that explore the inner world of individuals, the film's narrative gives melancholia and the portrayal of the melancholic subject a vivid presence on screen.

The study reveals how melancholy is constructed not merely as a thematic element but as a cinematographic esthetic form, where Ömer Kavur's use of the camera, his lighting preferences, spatial organization, and narrative rhythm translate Zebercet's inner stasis, lack, and repressed desires into a visual language. In this context, the film makes the abstract concepts of psychoanalytic film theory visible through a cinematic form, making melancholy a structural element through esthetic choices such as silence, the slow flow of time, and spatial repetition.

Furthermore, *Motherland Hotel* intersects with the core issues discussed in the universal literature on the relationship between psychoanalysis and cinema. Metz's dynamic of identification, Mulvey's theory of the gaze, Žižek's ideological unconscious, and McGowan's interpretations of the structure of desire all establish a direct relationship with the film's esthetic and narrative strategies. In this respect, the film allows for a reconsideration of the universal parameters of psychoanalytic film theory through a text originating in Turkish cinema. Thus, despite being a local film, it is positioned as an authentic example that can be evaluated within the theoretical universe of psychoanalytic film theory.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that cinema goes beyond merely representing psychoanalytic concepts such as melancholy, identity, desire, and lack; the film, rather, establishes its own mode of thought through these concepts. The analysis conducted specifically on *Motherland Hotel* merges both the theoretical and esthetic dimensions of psychoanalytic film theory, interpreting the representation of the melancholic subject in Turkish cinema from a fresh perspective. By doing so, it expands the theoretical dialogue established between cinema and psychoanalysis, offering an original contribution to the literature concerning the cinematic representation of melancholy, subjectification, and identity crises.



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