Refusing Into-Nation: An Inquiry about Voice, Politics and Resistance[1]

Entonasyon'u Reddediş: Ses, Politika ve Direniş Üzerine bir İnceleme

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Abstract

This paper is an exercise to understand the correlation between subjects' political inclinations and their aesthetic judgments concerning the voice of a political leader. In this vein, the paper aims to expand on the dynamics behind the negative comments about the aesthetic value of the voice of Turkey's current President. Taking a particular speech of the President from 2014 where his voice cracked as a case study, the paper claims that the choice of listening to his voice or not, or finding it unpleasant can be read as forms of resistance that are in fact related to the issue of belongingness to a particular representation of the nation. The paper also aims to reflect upon the risks and limits of this form of sensory political behavior.

Keywords: Voice, Aesthetics, Resistance, Representation, Political Leader.

Öz

Bu makale politik liderlerin seslerine dair estetik yargılar ile politik eğilimler arasındaki ilişkilenmeleri araştırmaktadır. Makale bu bağlamda Türkiye Cumhurbaşkanı'nın 2014'te sesinin kısıldığı Van konuşmasına verilen tepkileri de göz önünde bulundurarak, sesinin estetik değeri hakkında yapılan olumsuz yorumların arkasındaki dinamikleri anlamlandırmayı hedeflemektedir. Cumhurbaşkanı'nın sesine verilen tepkilerin, -özellikle dinlemek, dinlememek ya da rahatsız edici bulmak gibi- belirli bir ulus temsiliyetine ait olup olmama hissiyatını ele veren direniş biçimleri olduğunu öne süren makale ayrıca bu tarz duyusal politik tepkilerin tehlikelerini ve sınırlarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ses, Estetik, Direniş, Temsiliyet, Politik Lider.

Prior to a mind-broadening sound performance I have attended, I have not paid enough attention to the significance of sounds in my daily encounters. The performance was by two sound artists who did not know each other and played together for the first time in an empty parking lot.[3] What was especially surprising about this performance of two sound artists was my sudden realization between two different acoustic forms during the event: melody and speech. Within the space, even though the melodic vocals of artists effortlessly filled the entire space, I could not understand one word of their welcoming speech. Although the pitches of their speeches and

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[3] The parking lot was then the hub of İstanbul's alternative art scene, operating as an open collective performance space as an extension of Cevdet Erek's work for the İstanbul Biennial 2015, titled *Otopark/A Room of Rhythms.*

melodic chants were akin to each other, they somehow did not have the same diffusion. Listening to the resonating chants was easy, soothing - almost transcendental-, whereas the speeches sounded peculiar and acquired extra attention to register. Unfortunately, against all my efforts I could not make sense of the words within their speech, as they were nothing more than a bundle of atonal noises. That is when I understood; it was the "space" itself that was creating this sensory disparity. The space had an inherent resistance to the dull pronunciation of words, whereas it open-heartedly welcomed and disseminated the melodic vocals. It was an odd feeling to be estranged from the form of communication that I use every day, but in a way, it was also liberating. The acoustics of the parking lot suspended the circulation of sound as language and hindered its semantics references; therefore it enabled a unique phonic perception of my mother tongue just as sound.

This dual existence of the semantic and the phonic in voice is prevalent in every speech. However, research on voice is primarily focused on the features of voice that fall within the territory of semantics. It is almost disappointing that although sounds bear a huge role in communication, their phonic aspect is hardly pondered on. Even in the field of aesthetics, sound holds a lateral position; it is typically "theorized as subsidiary to the image," (Zarzycka, 2013: 43) whereas the visual continues to receive abundant attention. I aim to survey a discussion about the aesthetic and political ramifications of voice by investigating its phonic aspect beyond its relation to the logos of language to provide a minor contribution to the discussion of sound that has somehow been relatively neglected in the field of aesthetics. The aim is to exhibit alternative ways to think about the intricate relationship of aesthetics and politics through conveying an analysis of the voice of the current President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The focal point, however, is not to pursue a linguistic approach, but to understand how the phonicality of his voice is perceived by subjects from different political positions. As Mladen Dolar suggests, "voice is precisely that which cannot be said" (Dolar, 2006: 15). Correspondingly, it is crucial to investigate the things that are unsaid but embedded in his voice and exhibit its perception by subjects; which will then serve to postulate several questions such as: what is indicated through Erdoğan's voice? How does his voice unite and exclude certain masses? What features are attributed to a politician in the distribution of the senses? How are the ears of the masses aesthetically educated? In what ways his voice is admired or despised? What roles does a politician's voice play in the representation of a nation? In this framework, a particular speech of the President where his voice is different than usual becomes fundamental to discuss. The juxtaposition generated by this unusual incident unravels the significance of voice related to the unity of a nation and opens up further questions to think about the implications of sound on both theoretical and empirical levels.

Perhaps the most obvious example that displays the impact of sounds in a nation is the national anthem. The song of the nation sung every Monday morning and Friday afternoon in Turkish schools, -as well as at the special ceremonies and sports matches- help to revive the symbolic unity through the melodies of the nation. This unity, as Cavarero points out, is not generated by the lyrics, "which are usually ridiculous or rhetorical, but rather [through] the fusion of individuals in the song that symbolizes their union" (Cavarero, 2005: 202). The harmony produced by collective singing functions to melt different voices of the citizens to that of the one nation. Alternative to this amalgamation generated by collective singing, I suggest mutual listening also functions to create a sense of togetherness, albeit in a different manner. Different subjects listening to the same voice share the same sonic experience; therefore, they become connected through this experience of collective listening. While thinking together these two different forms of collectivity -as the creators and the listeners of sounds- it is critical not confine to the rudimentary

argument that the former is a relatively active and the latter is a passive form of togetherness; the difference is more nuanced than this binary division. This nuance requires further argumentations and empirical examples regarding the act of listening to be expanded. The voice of the ruler is a worthwhile starting point to open up this discussion, as it is a key element in establishing a sense of togetherness through collective listening in a nation. *Nutuk*, the speech of the founder of the republic and the first President of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, is a prominent example in this regard. *Nutuk* literally meaning "speech," was orated by Atatürk and lasted for thirty-six and half hours. The text of the speech as it explained the formation of the Republic was later made into a book and was registered as the official historiography of the Turkish Republic. Rather than its content, I want to focus on the voice that orates this speech, which "can function as a social tie" (Dolar, 2006: 108) by reaching out to the ears of the masses of the nation. The distribution of the voice not only enables citizens to hear their national history, but also provides them a demonstration of their new national identity. The voice that tells their history not only connects them but also represents them, making the characteristics of this voice highly important for the depiction of the nation. The tone, intonation and the accent become primary clues for the citizen to learn how to fit into the nation. Listening through radios, or in public events, the voice of Mustafa Kemal ignited a new active transformation in the voices of the nation by reaching first, their ears. It is necessary here to indicate that to create this phonic connection between the politicians and the masses, as Benjamin points out, the technological developments holds a pivotal point: "Since the innovations of camera and recording equipment make it possible for the orator to become audible and visible to an unlimited number of persons, the presentation of the man of politics before camera and recording equipment becomes paramount" (Benjamin, 1969: 247). This becomes especially important for citizens who live far away from nation centers and also for future generations, as technological recordings are how sound and image are transferred into different spatio-temporalities. However, due to the low quality equipment of that time, the voice of Atatürk sounds very high-pitched in the recording of *Nutuk*. It is revealed only in the last decade with the emergence of new and better quality recordings of Atatürk's voice, that the tone of his voice is actually deeper. The discovery of Atatürk's resonant voice circulated in the press and social media and resounded profoundly in the groups that continue to advocate principles of Atatürk. This contemporary fascination about the best quality recording of Atatürk and his "original" voice is worth underscoring as it contributes to the argument that the phonic aspect of a voice is crucial for the masses as much as the semantic meaning it orates.

Let us make an abrupt jump to the technological context of today. Contemporary recording technologies are far more advanced; thus we now have the privilege of hearing the *original* voices of the politicians. The advancement of technology and the spread of Internet utilization also enable the masses to record and share the subjects of their will. It can be argued that this distribution of the technological power to the masses, as well as the multiplication of communication media, furnish a more democratic representation system, which if thought through in terms of voice, endorses an establishment where "everybody could hear everybody else's voice," (Dolar, 2006: 112). But, do people really take these advancements as an opportunity to listen to everybody? Relatively when there was only one TV channel, TRT (a state-owned public broadcaster), there was no variety and people were constrained to watch and listen to the programs shown by the channel. Who was going to be heard and who was going to be seen were dependent on the agenda of the state. Nevertheless, as the number of TV channels, newspapers and alternative media platforms increased, new voices were added to TV and people were provided with multiple platforms to follow (Akınerdem ve Sirman, 2016).

Besides democratizing the spaces and chances of representation, the contemporary technological opportunities also changed the conditions of listening. Now, not only one can listen the mediums of her like, but one can also easily press the mute button, record a speech, or simply put on headphones to avoid hearing the sounds she dislikes. These developments do not change the fact that voices are difficult to ignore without an exterior device due to the intrusive disposition of sounds. Since our "ears cover 360-degree expanse," (Zarzycka, 2013: 43), it is difficult to evade external sounds that constantly surround us. Unlike the case of vision where one can simply avoid seeing by shutting her eyes, voices cannot be blocked without an additional apparatus or device. Consequently, our ears are often exposed to vibrations of exterior sounds even when they are not intentionally orated to us (Cavarero, 2005: 178). As the conditions of listening are reshaped in alignment with new technological developments, the question then becomes who chooses to listen to whom? How do individuals encounter voices, especially of politicians, and how do they react to them?

To unpack these questions, investigating the perspectives of camps that give negative reactions to the voice of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan provides a fruitful starting point. Keeping in mind the fact that the theoretical framework put forward in this paper is also profitable for investigating other demographic groups, for the sake of the aim of this paper, choosing this specific ethnographic focus provides a noteworthy angle to ignite the discussion about how aesthetic and political judgments are intertwined in everyday practices. Furthermore, throughout the ethnographic research, it became more clear that young individuals under the age of twenty-five, whose political awareness more or less has begun with the rule of AKP, is more relevant to the purpose of the paper as they are the ones who were mostly exposed to the voice of one specific political leader. For this aim, although the general research includes various interviewees from different backgrounds, the paper only focuses on the testimonies and interviews made with a dozen of young individuals, mostly university students, whose remarks about the voice of the President are negative in aesthetic terms. The choice of this particular ethnographic focus can also be ratified by the weariness in the voices of interviewees when I asked them about the ways they encounter the speeches of politicians, as they pointed out in different ways that AKP politicians are the ones who they have been hearing as long as they can remember. Not to mention that these interviewees always referred to the voice of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to provide examples for the questions regarding the subject matter and the weariness in their voices increased when they were talking about his speeches. The sensation of continuous presence was an echoing theme in many of their comments, boredom, was another one, as one interviewee notes "it is as if he is everywhere, when I turn on the radio, the TV. He can pop up from anywhere."[4] As none of them prefer to listen to the news from TV, they said that they do not usually hear the President's voice on purpose. "I am usually exposed to it in public spaces, like here,"[5] said one interviewee and pointed to a TV at the back of the café, on which the President was speaking. Even though they do not hear the President's voice frequently in their everyday lives, a negative sensation somehow filled the room when I made them listen to one of his speeches. "It is his voice," one of them explained, "it is full of hatred."[6] This comment is perhaps what Cavarero suggests about how voice unmasks the speech, "Speech can play tricks. The voice, whatever it says communicates the uniqueness of the one who emits it, and can be recognized by those to whom one speaks" (Cavarero, 2005: 24). When interviewees listened to the President's speech, they indicated that

4 "Her yerde gibi, radyoyu açınca televizyonu açınca. Her an her yerden fırlayabilir." (M. Akın, personal communication, April, 2015).
5 "Genellikle böyle 'public' alanlarda maruz kalıyorum." (A. Çetin, personal communication, April, 2015).
6 "Sesi, nefret dolu." (M. Soydan, personal communication, May, 2015).

whatever he says, he says it with the same intonation that emits hatred and anger. For some listeners the President's unique rhetoric did not change much in years, and the content became very predictable; hence their hesitation to focus on what he actually said increased. That is one of the reasons why they tend to comment on the phonic aspects of the President's voice when I ask them about his speeches. Some mentioned that the pitch of his voice irritates them; some others said that the "constant yelling" and the "derogatory toning" make them uncomfortable no matter what he says. Ultimately, all of them felt like they were not the semiotic addressees of the President's speeches.

While the younger generation that I have talked to seem to prefer not to listen to the President, as they are rather bored of and/or indifferent to his voice, they mentioned that their parents take on more aggressive stances. It was interesting here to realize that the families who shared conflicting political ideas with AKP had similar negative reactions to the President's voice, "When he comes up on TV, which he usually does, my father starts swearing and someone else changes the channel."[7] This immediate silencing reaction takes different shapes in different houses. In one house, it is the mother who asks the father to change the channel as she is "annoyed by the voice," in another house the Kurdish grandmother who does not understand Turkish tells someone else to change the channel, as she both doesn't understand what he says and dislikes the sound of the President's voice. All of the reactions given to the President's speeches are interestingly related to the voice rather than what he says. "It is as if listening is supporting him,"[8] one interviewee tells me; she also admits that she feels like her family will scold her if she wants to listen to his speeches even just to understand what they are about.

These testimonies add to the point that there is a fracture between the semantic and phonic reactions to the President's voice. It seems that the semantic references are eschewed due to strong affective reactions to the phonic characteristic of the President's speeches. When I tried to analyze these rather aggressive reactions to the President's voice, a complete opposite example provided me with a possible answer. It was a text message from the mother of my friend to their family Whatsapp group, saying that she purposefully turned the President's speech on TV since she misses her husband being in the house. Her husband, a strong advocate of the President, listens to his speeches constantly when he is at the house. Usually, as the mother is annoyed by the voice of the President, she asks her husband to listen to it in another room, but she can still hear the President's voice when her husband is at home. Consequently, when her husband is not at home, Erdoğan's voice is also absent. In this particular case when she missed her husband she symbolically filled the absence of her husband by opening the President's speech. Erdoğan's voice resonating in the house made her feel as if her husband is present at home. The interconnectedness of voice and presence is an issue that Derrida touches upon: "the voice associated with time, is represented as an acoustic signifier that is more or less collapsed with the signified, hence giving the illusion of presence" (Schlichter, 2011: 37; Cavarero, 2005: 222). The connection of the voice and its possessor and the figure of the father in the example above is another case to examine, but if we were to apply Derrida's point to the silencing reactions of the oppositional circles, silencing the President turns into a very personal matter that is related with the invasion of private sphere. The resonating voice in the house signifies an illusionary presence of the speaker himself. Unlike the image that is bound to the screen of the TV, voice invades the house by creating a symbolic physicality. Therefore, the decision of listening to the voice or not becomes related with the question of who subjects want to host in their houses. When an unwanted

7 "Televizyonda çıktığında, ki genellikle çıkıyor, babam küfretmeye başlıyor başka biri de kanalı değiştiriyor." (K. Sazlı, personal communication, April, 2015).
8 "Sanki dinlemek desteklemekmiş gibi." (G, Sever, personal communication, May, 2015).

guest's voice echoes inside the walls of the house, the residents feel an intrusion into their private sphere; therefore they get upset, and irritated. This triggers an immediate reflex to exile the possessor of the voice from the house. In contrast, if subjects are fond of the owner, the signified of the voice, they are more inclined to continue to listen to the speech as if they are welcoming a guest into their house. Ultimately the voice of the political leader prompts certain reactions that generate different affective reactions and therefore different listening positions.

Finding the President's voice unpleasing is an aesthetic judgment, however in these cases it is usually a biased sensory opinion, meaning it is not disinterested -if we were to use Kantian lexicon- as it is linked to one's political viewpoint. Not liking the voice of the President, deeming it aesthetically unpleasant, ugly, or annoying therefore is not an end in itself; it is an active form of political listening. Moreover, the decision of accepting or refusing to listen to the voice of the President becomes a political choice. As listening frequently becomes associated with advocacy, the act of not listening becomes political *per se*. I do not mean to suggest that one's political and aesthetic preferences are distinct; on the contrary, I want to emphasize that they are interconnected and mutually shape each other in this case. I also do not aim to put forward a dichotomy of two groups, one choosing to listen, and the other preferring to silence. One can dislike the President's voice and still choose to listen to his speeches. However, interviews I conducted exhibit an apparent correlation between aesthetic judgments and political inclinations related to the President's voice.

Voice and Representing the Nation

So far, I have dealt with the ways certain circles perceive and react to the voice of the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. I argued that although the technological advancements enable an opportunity for subjects to be engaged with different voices, this opportunity is hindered by the listening habits of the subjects, which are conditioned through their aesthetic and political judgments. Now I would like to shift the focus to another concept that is intertwined with the perception of the President's voice: Representation.

As aforementioned the technological advancements enable a more democratic representation system, nonetheless in the political arena citizens still choose a voice that represents them. Correspondingly, Dolar argues, "in our highly technically sophisticated society, one still has to give one's voice or one has to ritually perform, as it were, the myth of a society organized and tied together by the voice, where the people are still called upon to give their voice in favor of the ruler" (Dolar, 2006: 112). Consequently, each speech of a politician becomes a performance that manifests that representative power. In single-party regimes, although there are many voices in a democracy, the winning party maintains an upper hand in representing the nation. In the case of AKP, whose voting rates have been either really close to or over fifty percent, the expression of "the power of the %50" is frequently repeated to legitimize this representative authority. As oppositional circles are divided into several parties, the President is depicted as the voice of the majority of the nation. AKP as the ruling party constitutes its power from representing the majority of the masses; it is crucial for their authority that their advocates are a homogeneous mass that corroborates their image and agenda continuously. State then operates on many levels to maintain and expand their body of voters and as Marc Redfield argues its "core mission becomes pedagogical: its job is to acculturate its subjects into citizens. The production of a docile citizenry thereby obtains an ethical aura and an aesthetic character," (Redfield, 2003: 46) which is often embodied in the figure of the ruler. However, although only certain individuals of the nation give their voice in favor of the ruler, state's "pedagogical mission" transcends this crowd and aims

to shape every citizen, especially in totalitarian regimes. In the early republican era of Turkey, Atatürk became a crucial figure for this purpose. The way he dressed, the way he talked became a symbol for the ideal citizen. Yet, as Arendt points out, the will to reach a total unity also means a silencing of those others who do not fit into the image of the suitable citizen: "The dominance of a single thought, typical of totalitarian regimes for example, is in keeping with a mass society where the negation of plurality, or the reduction of all men to a single Man, is borne out by the existence of a single perspective," (Cavarero, 2005: 192). Consequently, totalitarian regimes indicate a distinguished voice that silences certain others.

The secular agenda of the early republican era resulted in silencing of many others including the more religious voices that do not "fit" into the new representation of Turkey. Although this silence slowly began to break off in the following years, the AKP regime became the first period where the distribution of the voices was eventually reconfigured. The more religious camps found their voice in AKP especially in Erdoğan who became a symbol of their unity. Therefore, it is no surprise that the song written for him starts with the lines, "He is the vibrant voice of the oppressed, he is the free voice of the silent world," and continues with indicating that he "takes his power from the nation"[9]. The reconfiguration of the voices starting with the AKP regime, although was strongly advocated by certain parties from conservatives and liberals, the modus operandi of AKP changed within time; from a heterogeneous network that maintained a liberal political agenda, it turned into a relatively more homogenized unity that operates through identity politics. This creates a heavy reliance on the leader as he represents the values of the party through his performances. The image he portrays, the identity he represents and the narratives he chooses to bring forth become consequential in weaving long-lasting associations between the party and the people. This type of politics can often yield an excessive amount of power to the performance of the leader. Accordingly, as AKP continued to win the elections, the political visibility and hearability of the President proliferated. The authoritarian tendencies in his political language and his voice heightened. These rather new tendencies often resulted in conflicting encounters with the national law where the President had the upper hand as what he said would eventually be enforced even if it did not fit the constitution. The "unofficial" campaign speeches for AKP in the general elections after the presidential elections is one example in this regard. This change can be read as a transformation of his voice to what Dolar defines as the "authoritarian voice". Dolar argues that, "all phenomena of totalitarianism tend to hinge overbearingly on the voice, which in a *quid pro quo* to replace the authority of the letter, or put its validity into question" (Dolar, 2006: 116). As the volume of Erdoğan's voice increased, it started to be perceived as the source of law; a power that holds a potential to undermine the written law. It becomes necessary in this regard, that he continues to perform his speeches frequently to make his voice heard, to maintain his authority, to not to yield his power to the written law. That is why Erdoğan is commonly positioned at the center of many political discussions. He anthropomorphically embodies in his public persona the "one focus of desire," the "one object of pleasure: the regime" (Falasca-Zamponi, 1997: 145), which necessitates his performance to be flawless for pursuing the power of his voice over the written law. Furthermore, as Dolar argues, "if the voice [is] the ideal medium of producing such Events in establishing a direct link between the ruler and the masses, then the main concern of the [totalitarian regime is] that nothing [will] happen, that everything [will] run according to the preestablished scenario," (Dolar, 2006: 117). Moreover, the intricate dependence of identity politics on the charisma of the ruler makes the ruler's presence and

9 "Ezilenlerin gür sesidir o. Suskun dünyanın hür sesidir o. Gücünü milletten alan, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan" AK Parti Seçim Müziği - Uğur Işılak Dombra - Erdoğan Dombıra 2014. (2014). [video] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrupgoSCMB8 [Accessed 12 Feb. 2018].

flawless performance crucial for the legitimacy of his authority. Voice is central to this purpose as it is the "carrier of self and identity" (Schlichter, 2011: 36). Since it is impossible for the ruler to be physically present in more than one place, his voice takes on this job. The continuity of the resonance of his voice in public and private spheres disseminates his authority through the ears of the nation. Nonetheless, for those who do not perceive him as the representative of their voice, the President's voice becomes oppressive and ensues negative effects. Subjects resist to its authority by refusing to listen to it and/or by disdaining it in aesthetical terms.

Loss of Voice, the Case of Van

Within this frame of thought, the case of Van speech, which was performed by Erdoğan in May 2014 three days before the local elections overtakes a unique significance. The uniqueness of this speech, however, is not related to the content -as again he repeats very familiar rhetoric- but to the high-pitched tone of Erdoğan's voice, caused by a damage in his vocal cords as a result of various speeches he continuously gave at the campaign rally for local elections at that time. The damaging of vocal cords, which is generally a result of too much talking or shouting, is usually referred to as "ses kısılması" in Turkish, literally meaning decrease in voice volume. Nonetheless, as Erdoğan refused to change his style of talking which contains sudden increases in tone and volume, his cracked voice sounded as if he had inhaled helium.[10]

It is questionable if this occasion is an example of an *Event* that is outside of what Dolar calls "the preestablished scenario," which would hinder the continuity of the regime, but it unquestionably created an opportunity for certain camps to harm Erdoğan's intended representation. By some of his advocates, this incident was only a case of illness that resulted in emotions such as compassion and respect for Erdoğan's will to continue. However, other camps ridiculed his peculiar voice in social media. The event took attention from the international press, including the BBC, which covered the story with the title, "Turkish PM lampooned for 'helium' voice"[11]. All of the interviewees for example said that they found the voice extremely funny, as it seemed very off-key vis-à-vis his other speeches; they could not stop laughing while they listened and one even said, "I cannot take anything he says seriously after hearing that voice."[12] Nevertheless, if we were to dismiss the analysis by only indicating that it was a humorous event for some circles, we would miss several vital discussions. It is therefore crucial to understand why and under what conditions did this event became funny in some circles to broaden this discussion. We have to analyze what kind of sensory and affective transformations this experience gave birth to and question what do they further signify.

In musical theory, being off-key denotes having an incorrect pitch that fractures the flow, which also means being out of tune. In order to avoid an off-key sound, a musical instrument or a vocalist must realize pitch accuracy. For that purpose, the intonation settings must be done in advance to prevent a potential distort in harmony. Metaphorically, one can relate the reactions given to the speech in Van to the concept of intonation. By being the PM of Turkey, Erdoğan was situated in a political position that symbolically represented the whole nation; but mockeries related to his damaged voice put the claim of the cohesiveness of his position into question. One of the reasons why this voice got a considerable amount of attention is the fact that it ruptures the continuity of Erdoğan's successful "Events" and displays the difficulty of maintaining autho-

[10] YouTube and Twitter were banned that day due to a leak of an official conversation regarding a possible military attack to Syria. Therefore some circles interpreted the peculiar voice of Erdoğan as an intentional attempt to change the political agenda. Also, despite the ban, the event became a hit topic in Twitter with the hashtag #helyumlobisi, in reference to Erdoğan's popular accusation of Faiz Lobisi for the Gezi events.

[11] "Turkish PM lampooned for 'helium' voice", BBC News, March 27.2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-26770111.

[12] "O sesi duyduktan sonra artık dediği hiçbir şeyi ciddiye alamıyorum." (M. Taşbilen, personal communication, May, 2015).

rity. By laughing at this voice, subjects demonstrate that there will always be a certain mass that rejects to realize the pitch accuracy of the regime that longs for harmony. Simultaneously, they refuse to be in the tone interval where Erdoğan's voice would be regarded as appropriate however he sounds; hence they refuse to maintain a harmony with the voice of Erdoğan. As harmony can only be achieved if they had internalized the intonation settings of the regime, the break of this harmony is an opportunity to display their stance towards this imposition. By pushing his voice out of tune, subjects show that they resist to the "into-nation" settings of Erdoğan; they decline the pedagogical mission that the AKP regime imposes on them and refuse to turn into the ideal citizen that the current regime craves for. The extreme case of Van speech provides them a chance to manifest this refusal more obviously. From their perspective, the high-pitched tone of the former PM Erdoğan ruptures the representation system that is built around him. His "squeaky" voice does not confirm the portrayal of him as the "free" and "vibrant" voice of the silent masses. This voice, different than the one that represents the collective unity of its advocates, suspends the symbolic continuity between the voice, its possessor and its supporters. The Van voice fails to manifest the authority that "takes power from the masses" as the song suggests. And the fact that he still pursues his authoritarian tonality without the representative power is perceived as a humiliating and funny moment. The high-pitched voice of Erdoğan, in this case, is a symbolic evidence for them that his claim of authority over the written law is as unusual as his voice.

It is also remarkable that the subjects, who refused to listen to Erdoğan's voice beforehand or mentioned it with dismissive comments, voluntarily listened to this particular speech. Consequently, it can be argued that the deliberate choice of listening to Erdoğan's speech in Van became a novel form of resistance. This reversal of listening habits towards Erdoğan owes its resistance power to the fact that it provides a new consumption form that contradicts the expectations of its possessor. Rather than acknowledging the claim of seriousness or the inherent logic of the voice, or subordinating to the Laws it endorses, subjects focus on its phonic aspect and judge it in aesthetic terms. This particular reaction, in turn, breaks the intentionality of the voice of Erdoğan. Akin to the parking lot that had an innate resistance to language, subjects dismiss the semiotic references given in the speech and focus on its phonicality; meaning that rather than discussing the content of his speech they focus on how he sounds. It is obvious here that the speech, although orated with a rather peculiar voice, is not the same as the rhythmic chants of the performers in the parking lot. Yet, the comparison becomes more meaningful if we think that this specific focus on the phonicality of the voice of the President points to a desire of creating a space where the semiotic references are not processes or transferred. If we were to take this comparison a step further this desire to create a sonic space that obscures the intentionality of the speeches of the President by focusing on the voice rather than content entails an allusive will to ban Erdoğan's voice from the ground of "logos – in the largest sense of what makes sense-" (Dolar, 1996: 24) and divorce it from rationality. This banishment can also be interpreted as a forced relocation of his voice to the land of another type of voice that Dolar defines as the "voice as an intrusion of otherness, *jouissance*, and femininity" (25). This argument of course, being intertwined with the discourse of gender, requires several clarifications in advance to fully contribute to the discussion.

Voice has been a pivotal subject matter for feminist critiques. Among several others, Anne Carson (2015) proposes insightful theories on the female voice by presenting a detailed inquiry of the connotations of the gender differences related to voice. Deriving from Ancient Greek literature, she argues that characteristics and usage of the voice maintain a central position in the construction of gender binaries. She explains, in order to be regarded a man, the usage of voice

must contain *sophrosyne* -the ability to have reason, solid wisdom, temperance, tranquility and self-control (Carson, 2015: 11). Women, on the other hand, were considered to have high-pitched voices that lacked *sophrosyne*; they were the *others* who yell, shout, sing and chant. In the distribution of the senses of the *polis* they were required to be silent, absent and isolated from politics. Man, who was regarded as capable of creating his own laws hence became the sole candidate for ruling. Carson further argues that this fundamental role of voice regarding gender binarism still prevails today. If we were to associate this discussion to the perception of the President's voice we can denote that the high attention given to his high-pitched voice along with comments about his normal voice revealing negative emotions are tacit attempts to rob him off from his suitableness to perform politics, to push him out of the *polis*. By dismissing the semiotic references within, subjects banish the speeches of the President out of the land of language, logos and rationality. On that account, the camps for which Erdoğan is unsuitable to be their ruler, the case of Van becomes an empiric embodiment of their thoughts; as his high-pitched voice resembles the *other*, feminine voice that is commonly thought to be lacking for doing politics.

Final Remarks about Limits and Potentials

While concluding, I cannot help but go into a discussion that is extremely important, yet might perplex the arguments proposed so far. It is the inherent controversy in the attempts related to the exile of the voice of Erdoğan and the difference in the empirical and theoretical frameworks about the consequences of this exile that I want to expand on. As Carson pointed out, the silencing of the voices which Dolar also refers to as the *feminine* still echoes in our contemporary praxes. That is why subjects who do not approve the President's authority define his voice with qualities that they think to represent being unsuitable to do politics. These qualities, which can be summarized as tempered, emotional, high-pitched, boring, funny can be thought as the opposite of *sophrosyne*. These common derogatory remarks that attempt to exile the President's voice by showing its lack of *sophrosyne*, are also materialized in different aesthetic forms, for instance, *Uzun Adam (educatedear remix)* ([Educatedear], 2014), a song made with the President's speech in Van. Although it is clearly stated in the explanatory section of the video that the song is not created for political purposes, it still embodies the attempt of alienating Erdoğan's voice from having *sophrosyne* by turning his high-pitched speech into a melodic, rhythmic song. Additionally, by adding other female back vocalists on to the President's singing voice, the song emphasizes his feminine pitch. Even the title of the song, "Tall Man" (Uzun Adam), which is actually a nickname given to the President by his advocates, represents the juxtaposition between his phallic authoritarian image and his feminine high-pitched voice. It represents the controversy between the legitimacy he claims over the nation and the resistance of the oppositional circles. However, can this montage "cancel obliterate, retroactively undo, *aufheben*, the effects of the first one, [Erdoğan's voice] of which it's a remake?" (Dolar, 2006: 116). This piece constitutes an evidence of the apparent difference between theoretical and practical aspects of the banishment of an unwanted voice. The song is successful in the sense that it is "a cessation, a suspended moment of the process, as which it reveals itself to the unwavering eye" (Leppert, 2005: 97) or an ear in this case. It displays a momentous event that symbolizes the rupture of the hegemony of the ruler's voice. By reconfiguring the sensory perceptions towards the ruler, it contributes to the deconstruction of his authority by presenting a different, enjoyable consumption of his voice. Yet theoretically, this deconstruction -by drawing a similarity between Erdoğan's voice and the female singing voice- fails to transcend being a reproduction of the existing hierarchical sensory structures that define subjects' political and gendered positions. The song in that sense harms

the hegemony of the ruler's voice, yet it indirectly contributes to the banishment of the feminine voice and also incarnates the subtle intention of exiling Erdoğan's voice. As the banishment of unwanted voices is the underlying fuel of the hierarchies and oppression within a totalitarian regime, it is necessary here to ask what more can another banishment achieve if the overall aim is to overcome oppression.

I have tried to show how the dominance of a particular voice over a nation leads to affectual resistances from individuals who are expected to remain silent and compliant to the authority of the voice of the ruler. Nevertheless, if these resistance forms also endorse a total ban of the ruler's voice rather than just the "authoritarian voice", it becomes nothing more than a reproduction of prevailing hierarchies. The case of individuals who tend to consider the voice of Erdoğan negatively in aesthetic terms and the aforementioned music video hint at this hazardous potentiality. It is evident that art bears a huge aptitude as a resistance form against the dominance of oppressive political regimes, especially music, for example, provides "the wherewithal to imagine social utopia" by "directly confronting the actuality of the present dystopia" (Leppert, 2005: 93), but the way art confronts politics is a very delicate topic with challenging nuances. How to define this confrontation, and how to ignite change without reproducing existing forms of injustice are just pivotal questions that I find influential and leave open to think about for further inquiries.

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