

REPETITION OF SEPARATION ANXIETY AND EXPERIENCING SOLITUDE

by

SİBEL MAKSUDYAN

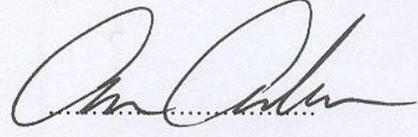
Submitted to the Graduate School of Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design

Sabancı University Spring 2008

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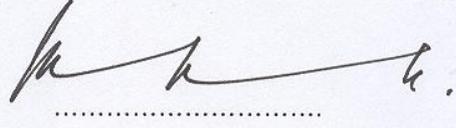
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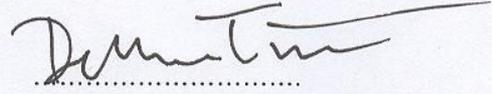


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DATE OF APPROVAL: 23.06.2008

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## ABSTRACT

REPETITION OF SEPARATION ANXIETY AND EXPERIENCING SOLITUDE /  
AYRILMA ANKSİYETESİNİN TEKRARI VE TEK BAŞINALIĞI DENEYİMLEME

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M.A., Visual Arts and Visual Communication Design

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Spring 2008

This paper is a psychoanalytic research on travelers who sometimes leave the city they live to go to different places, but always come back.

Keywords: Train, traveler, separation, loneliness, road.

DVD includes: the film “Gitmem Lazım”.

## ÖZET

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Sibel Maksudyan

M.A.,Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı

Tez Danışmanı: Can Candan

Bahar 2008

Bu makale, zaman zaman yaşadıkları şehirden uzaklaşarak bambaşka bir yerlere doğru yol alan gezginlerin neden hep geri döndüklerini psikanalitik bir bakış açısıyla inceler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tren, gezgin, ayrılma, yalnızlık, yol.

DVD içeriği: “Gitmem Lazım” filmi.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank;

Can Candan, for his great support and his wisdom. Hasan Bülent Kahraman, for his valued critiques. Defne Tüzün, for her efforts at the last minute. Aysen Bayrak, Savaş Balaban and Koray Kurban, for accepting to be in my film and sharing their ideas. All of my friends and my dear family, for their endless support and trust.

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## **Introduction**

The verb “to leave” has some synonyms such as to abandon, to depart, to escape, to getaway and to move. What is it out there making us want to abandon our attachments to others (objects/places)? In the end, what do we get away with?

Mother and child share a symbiotic life until the day comes when child has to leave the maternal (body). Then, the first trauma engenders: Birth<sup>1</sup>. Although they no longer live together, the infant is dependent to its mother. The rejection of the mother causes her to be the originary object of need, desire, or speech. In order to overcome the primary attachment to the mother, we need to go through the phases of separation anxiety which is followed by depression and mourning. If this earlier separation is not unbearably traumatic or pathological, later we can tolerate solitude (Quinodoz, 1993).

“(…) In her solitude, she no longer felt abandoned in a hostile world as she had at the beginning of the analysis, but responsible for the conduct of her life, having forged links with persons she considered valuable, in spite of their inadequacies - the analyst in particular.”<sup>2</sup>

Since I make a non-fiction film about leaving, I need to take into consideration the dynamics of separation and solitude. All the characters in my film – including me – talk about the urge (the need/the feel/the seed) to leave and the unique experience of traveling, especially that of traveling alone. Leaving the city where we have been living since we are born, and then, coming back to that city again, to Istanbul. We are ready for a fresh start. We are reborn as every single travel changes us, and as travel changes our ethos.

In my thesis, I try to find the roots of the constant repetition of the act of leaving by showing its connection with separation anxiety.

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<sup>1</sup> Rank, Otto, *The Trauma of Birth*, (New York: Dover Publications Inc, 1993)

<sup>2</sup> Quinodoz, Jean-Michel, *Taming of Solitude : Separation Anxiety in Psychoanalysis* , (Florence, KY, USA: Routledge, 1993), 23

## Home

There are lots of questions people ask each other when making even simple definitions and categorizations. The one I care about for the sake of my film and this thesis right now is the question, “where are you from?”

Even though it is a question you can hear in everyday life while wandering around your city, you get it more often when you leave the place you live. It is always easy to mark the travelers. They have backpacks, comfortable clothes, guide books and cameras. Sooner or later someone just asks you the magical question. Then, another one, and it just goes on and on. Your first definition as an outsider is your hometown.

Hometown... Homeland... Motherland... Mother Country... The words simplify the fact that a traveler is a person who leaves the land (the country) of her/his mother. They are separated for a while. And this person will learn to go through her/his solitude there. The act of going through the solitude as a separated traveler cohere with Quinodoz's ideas:

“Contrasting with feelings of anxiety, this capacity to experience solitude as a replenishment of one's wellsprings, in relation to oneself and to other people, appears when the presence of the absent object is internalized. This progressive process of internalization is the specific result of the working through of repeated experiences of separations followed by reunions.”<sup>3</sup>

The absent object in our case here is home of course. Not the place that is made of bricks and roof tiles, but the idea of belonging, the feeling of safety and the bliss of being loved: adult recreation of mother and child relationship. However, as the mother and child relationship is defined by an inevitable notion of continuity, it necessitates that of a discontinuity as well. So, our travelers repeatedly leave the mother and then reunite with her. And by doing that they are trying to internalize the absent object: home.

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<sup>3</sup> Quinodoz, Jean-Michel, *Taming of Solitude : Separation Anxiety in Psychoanalysis* , (Florence, KY, USA: Routledge, 1993), 166

## **Characters**

There are three (actually four but I will talk about it later) characters in the film: Savaş, Aysen and Koray. They have a lot in common. However, their main similarity is, of course all being travelers and not being able to leave for good.

These three individuals were interviewed separately for the film, they were not together when they share their ideas/feelings about traveling with me, yet it is amazing to see how much they have in common regarding the experience of traveling.

And that is why I chose to make each one of them speak for everyone.

## **Savaş**

As an experienced motorcyclist, Savaş is accustomed to the process of being on the road. Although he doesn't always travel alone, his vehicle enables him to feel like that. He says that if “the traveling seed” got into you, then you have no choice but leaving. Meaning, you will live your life waiting for the next getaway and you get used to live with leaving and returning repeatedly.

## **Aysen**

*“Being on the road alone is just like the real life. You're alone in real life.”* says Aysen. A sentence that sums the whole after separation state: solitude. Another way of experiencing the reality of life. The only difference is the change of location and occupation for a while.

## **Koray**

Koray thinks that the road draws us somehow. And we cannot resist the attraction of going. We can feel the personifications of the concepts here. The place to be arrived and home are not just locations. They're more than that. They sometimes can attract you or repulse you like people.

## **What is My Part?**

Surely, I can not exclude myself when analyzing the film and the characters. Cause it's so obvious that I, myself, am one of those characters. Certainly I am not seen talking in front of the camera, but my expression is on the screen somehow.

Firstly, I want to talk about the existence of the director in general. A simple definition:

“A film director visualizes the script, controlling a film's artistic and dramatic aspects, while guiding the technical crew and actors in the fulfillment of their vision.”<sup>4</sup>

Since my film is both homemade and self-produced, this definition is accurate enough to emphasize that I'm in charge and responsible for all those images on the screen. I was the one who asked the questions, I was the one who shot the interviewees and again, I was the one who decided to put some particular pieces together. So it is fair to say that I made the film as the way I imagined it and we shouldn't forget that making a non-fiction film doesn't change the fact of subjectivity.

Another way of feeling my being in the film is covered with the interviews. Although, we generally see the characters just talking by themselves, I sometimes make comments or just laugh. And even if we don't hear any questions aloud, we know that I participated in the interviews.

Thirdly, I choose not to be seen like one of my characters, but I do not hide my existence as a director. I set the camera, I indicate that I am also a traveler by using the photographs, I sing and I leave. And those acts actually make me one of the characters of the film. Cause by using self-reflexivity I don't just make the audience aware of the fact that they're watching a film, I also underline that this is my film and my reflexivity on the screen.

And as one of the characters, all the aforementioned notions also apply to me with a little supplement: I create my repetition with images again. By doing that I get the chance to live it over and over, which brings us to the question why I did this project.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film\\_director](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_director), (downloaded on June, 6, 2008)

**Why me?**

After accepting the reality of me being one of the characters in the film, the answer for “why me?” question becomes clearer.

Just like my characters, I've been traveling a lot and I've always come back here, Istanbul. I have the courage to leave, but not for good. The important thing here is that the film ends with the actual going away part. The audience is invited to leave with or without us.

And it can be read as a permanent abandoning. Since none of us has ever done that, the film just fulfills my (our) fantasies.

Actually, fulfilling my fantasies is the most important element of my works. I always try to dig deeper into myself and I think that this is the only way to reach the exact sincerity no matter what you do for expressing yourself.

**Conclusion**

As talked above, testing the separation continuously is the main theme of my film. I'm not sure if this theory may apply for not only the travelers but also other people. And that's why I've tried not to generalize this idea for a huge crowd. This analysis is just for this film and for the people who can identify with us.

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