SILENCED MEMORIES: YAZIDI WOMEN IN TURKEY

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Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Sabancı University
August 2020

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Date of Approval: Aug 14, 2020

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ABSTRACT

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CULTURAL STUDIES M.A. THESIS, AUGUST 2020

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Keywords: Yazidi, gender, memory, violence, fear, mourning, digital mourning, Mardin

This thesis investigates the narratives of Yazidi women on the chronic state of violence and the effects of violent memories in shaping their everyday life. The narratives derive from oral history research with Yazidi women and participant observation conducted in three villages of Mardin. Fear was the most common word used by the research participants to refer to the chronic state of violence, and this thesis analyzes the circulation of fear in the community through the narratives, bodily reactions and evolution of daily practices. The research shows that mourning rituals and interaction with graveyards constitute a key aspect of every life and social relationships among Yazidis in this region. In this thesis, I analyze the ways in which mourning practices are gendered and increasingly digitalized, as a result of the ongoing migration and social transformation.

ÖZET

SESSİZ HAFIZALAR: TÜRKİYE'DE EZİDİ KADINLARI

NAZLI HAZAR

KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, AĞUSTOS 2020

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. AYŞE GÜL ALTINAY

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ezidi, toplumsal cinsiyet, hafıza, şiddet, korku, yas, dijital yas, Mardin

Bu tez, Ezidi kadınların süre giden şiddete dair anlatılarını ve şiddet içeren hafızanın günlük hayat pratiklerine etkilerini ele almaktadır. Anlatılar Ezidi kadınlarla yapılmış olan sözlü tarih görüşmelerine ve Mardin'de üç köyde yapılmış olan katılımcı gözleme dayanmaktadır. Araştırmaya katılanların sıklıkla kullandığı bir kelime olarak 'korku' süre giden şiddet haline referans vermektedir ve tez, topluluk içerisindeki korku dolanımını anlatılar, bedensel tepkiler ve günlük pratiklerin dönüşümünü incelemektedir. Bu araştırma göstermektedir ki yas ritüelleri ve mezarlıklarla etkileşim, bu bölgede yaşayan Ezidiler'in gündelik hayatının ve sosyal ilişkilerinin şekillenmesinde kilit bir rol oynamaktadır. Tez aynı zamanda, devam eden göç ve toplumsal dönüşümün bir sonucu olarak yas uygulamalarının nasıl cinsiyetlendirildiği ve nasıl giderek dijitalleştiğini analiz etmektedir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research process was an academic and personal journey accompanied by lots of emotions circulating around me and in me, and it would not have been possible without the contributions and support of many people.

First of all, I owe my deepest gratitude to the research participants and all the villagers who welcomed me. They were so generous to share their narratives and lives with me and made me comfortable during the fieldwork as if I was in my home. I also would like to propose my appreciation to Ali who introduced me to the villagers and made this fieldwork possible.

My special regard is for the advisor of this research, Ayşe Gül Altınay. She shared her academic experiences very generously and supported me in every phase of the research. All of our discussions provided insights and motivation to find better ways of writing this thesis. Leyla Neyzi encouraged me to engage in infinite learning from life stories, both through the courses I took from her and through her helpful suggestions during the research. Dina Georgis expanded my look on life stories and fed the research with new questions that will help me tremendously as I continue this research beyond the thesis. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Ulaş Sunata who opened my eyes six years ago to chase new stories and has continued to support me.

I would like to thank my extended family, both the given and the chosen ones. My grandmother gifted me with the first story and inspired me to be curious about life stories. My sister Safiye emotionally accompanied me throughout this research and gave me the courage I needed to proceed. My dear child, my beautiful cat, Lorik, calmed me during the nights I was haunted by violent dreams. My best friend and partner Ahmet always believed in me to accomplish this research, when I was not sure myself. I am grateful to my dearest friends; Narod, Mahfuz, Berfu, Zeynep, Ezgi, Deniz, Ipek and Cemre. We shared the enthusiasm of conducting research and I always felt their support. I also would like to thank Deniz Özge Gürsu; she was so kind to read and edit this thesis.

Finally, I would like to offer my gratitude to all the women who gave me a rainbow when I was feeling dark and I would like to extend my gratitude to Tawus-i Melek that led me to be humble and respectful.

Dedication page
To all the women who gave me a rainbow

PREFACE

As this research progressed, my initial concerns as well as the questions I pursued changed and transformed. I find articulating these transformations at the onset to be important both for shedding light on the shifts in my positionality as a researcher and for laying out the limitations and potentialities of my fieldwork.

Before starting my research, I had questions about the historiography of genocide in general. Whose narratives are rendered visible in the literature? Which experiences are being articulated in those narratives? Who speaks on genocides and on whose behalf? Where and how is the knowledge about genocide produced? How does gender figure in and is applied as a category of analysis in the production of knowledge on genocides? With these questions in mind, my encounter with the knowledge produced on the Sinjar Genocide (Baysal 2016; Dinç 2017) steered my focus towards the genocides encountered by Yazidis in particular. In the media, the literature and public events, the term "seventy-third ferman" has been used frequently to define the Sinjar genocide, with implicit reference to the 72 massacres or genocides that preceded it. One among those 72 had taken place in 1915, as part of what is commonly referred to as the Armenian Genocide (Aktar 2013). This was new for me, as I had never come across any mention of Yazidis being victims of this genocidal process. As I read the literature on the Armenian Genocide, I found mentions of non-Muslim communities other than Armenians being subjected to the same atrocity in 1915, such as Syriacs, Chaeldenians and Yazidis. Yet, I have not been able to find any specific research on the experience of Yazidis in 1915.

As my interest and curiosity shifted towards how the Yazidis had experienced 1915, I turned to oral-history as a possible methodology to explore this undocumented genocidal experience. As Portelli (1991), oral history can be a useful method for researching events and experiences that fall outside of official history or are not documented at all, and it can help introduce alternative interpretations about past events based on diverse narratives. While traditional historiography depends on the written archive, social history and its silenced narratives can be accessed through oral history interviews (Chamberlain 2009; Neyzi 2010; Steedman 2007).

Since the existing literature on Yazidis has gender blind language and does not give sufficient place to testimonies of women, I decided to focus on the narratives of Yazidi women. As an alternative way to trace the silences regarding the genocidal

experience of Yazidis 1915 onwards through oral history, I was intrigued to ask the questions: 1) What are the memories of Yazidi women about 1915 and aftermath? 2) How is the memory narrated by the Yazidi women? 3) What are the effects of this memory of genocide on their contemporary lives?

When I began the fieldwork, I went to Mardin with those questions in my mind. However, the questions altered at the very beginning. Before the interviews, I talked with the Yazidi men and women in three different villages to understand their daily life and organize the interviews. Firstly, their narratives on 1915 were different from any written narrative that I had come across. There were two different names used for the genocidal events of 1915: *ferman-i fillah*[1] and *ferman-i Ezidi*[2]. *Ferman-i fillah* was used to refer to the Armenian and Syriac[3] genocide in 1915. However, in their narrative, *ferman-i Ezidi* had no specific time and place. Sometimes it was determined as around thirty years ago, sometimes it was an atrocity faced by the grandparents, and sometimes it was just an event from the old times. I argue in this thesis that this temporal ambiguity cannot simply be read as silenced memory, but it might be a different construction of the memory of genocide over time. Throughout my fieldwork, I came across various memories in constant reconstruction, shaped largely by the chronic state of violence. So I re-formulated my questions referring to experiences of violence in general instead of "the genocide." As I shifted my focus, I became curious about the expression of fear, a word used a lot by my research participants in the oral history interviews. The narratives on fear were not just related to the memory of the past, but were also about the present and even the future. They derived from the ongoing violence and its probability for the future. My research question shifted as follows: Faced with a history of genocidal and other forms of violence and ongoing experiences of state and communal violence, how have Yazidis survived and cultivated resilience? I propose that the first and foremost answer was hidden in the naming of violence as fear. Calling the violent experiences and encounters as "fear" by the participants open a space to discuss the actions, reactions and practices which I consider as examples of resilience.

The concepts of "life" and "death" were integral to their discussion of fear, which led me to explore the mourning rituals that were at the center of daily life. So I tracked the mourning practices both in the physical and digital world and the

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[1] *Ferman* means genocide in Kurdish, and *fillah* refers to Christians. In Kurdish, the general use of *fillah* means the followers of Jesus.

[2] The Yazidi Genocide.

[3] There was widespread knowledge of the genocide encountered by both Syriacs and Armenians, but they did not have a memory of Armenians living in the area, so their narrations mostly stated the *ferman-i fillah* as Syriac genocide.

effects circulated on the very surfaces of mourners' bodies which are observable in both the physical and the digital world. I realized that Yazidis were equipped with abundant ways of mourning that respond to their ever-changing social and political circumstances. Mourning is a crucial research area that offers many discussions on life, loss and grief.

Finally, I should talk about my own positionality and my experience of transformation in the context of this research. In the beginning, I had the sense of going to the field as an outsider. However, during the fieldwork, my position shifted from an outsider to a member of the house and the community. Besides the difficulties of managing the conflicts stemming from the different positions the family members and I occupied, I was experiencing great emotional challenges in terms of the identities which I embodied without even realizing them. As a political stance, I had never defined myself in terms of a national identity, yet I was very pleased to stay in a place where Kurdish is the main language of communication in interpersonal relations. Even though I could not speak Kurdish as a native, I felt that I could express how I feel and what I think clearly. Every night we were singing Kurdish songs together and teaching each other new songs. When I came back to Istanbul, my first sentence to a friend was in Kurdish which he did not understand. Realizing that he did not understand, what I told him ironically marked the moment of both disappointment and revelation. Following this encounter, I ruminated on the expressions 'halfies' and 'people between cultures' used respectively by Abu-Lughod (1991, 50) and Rosaldo (1993, 28). I am one of the 'halfies', situated between cultures since I was born to a migrant Kurdish family and raised in Istanbul, albeit to the common traditions of the East Anatolian region. The awareness which comes with self-reflection and criticism opened my eyes to my position as someone who intervenes and affects the lives of the villagers and also made me realize that I am not disconnected from the memories, social practices and the rituals experienced by my research participants.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

One afternoon, I was sitting alone on the balcony of the house that I was staying at. I was watching the lands covered by green wheat and the red mountain right behind the lands. I was thinking of all of the stories I listened to in the interviews. It was two months past my first visit. Suddenly, Mir, the younger son of the house, came to the balcony. He said that there were other people who were living on these lands before. I was shocked. Actually, he had not accepted to participate in an interview with me before, and out of nowhere he decided to talk about the history of those lands we were looking at. I asked who was living before, and he said that they were Christians. According to him, a long time ago, "probably Ottoman Empire period," he said, there were Christians living there. He said that our people (Yazidis) collaborated with the soldiers of the Ottomans and sent those people away from here. Then he added "But after that, the soldiers did the same thing to our people." He did not know the specific time of these incidents or who those Christians were, whether they were Syriac or Armenian. After he came up with this story, he started to talk about the event that happened during his military service. He said that there were children who were eleven or twelve years old and were smuggling across the border. According to him, the soldiers caught them and started to beat them. He did not want to beat those children, because they were only children and they were trying to earn their lives, but he said that the soldiers were not thinking that they were only children, and the main work was to catch and beat them during the military service. He said "we were on the border, and around the border the main work was to catch the people who were crossing the border."

He gave me two stories from different periods, and there was almost a hundred years between them, but the stories followed each other as if they had happened one after another. The common point between these two stories is that there were soldiers and states of violence. The narrative of Mir proceeded with the idea that "there was always violence around us, and actually still there are." In the course of my fieldwork, I conducted oral history interviews, did participant observation and engaged in many talks without record. What I found most common were narratives

of a chronic state of violence, loss and mourning. The chronic state of violence was expressed with the emotion of fear as a common verbal phrase. The sources of fear varied based on the narratives, and the narratives were constructed depending on which critical decades the participants encountered this chronic state of violence. In the narratives, statements of extreme violence and ongoing violence in everyday life were embedded in each other. As a part of the narratives, there were certain bodily expressions accompanying narratives of fear, and sometimes there were references to illnesses. The arm movements, hitting the knees, looking in different directions than me were typically present in narrations of fear and loss. The narratives were sometimes interrupted with the references to illnesses or with the questions directed to my personal life.

The narrative of a chronic state of violence was also related to losses, and mourning for losses was an important part of daily life. The graveyards occupied an important place in daily practices and in the narratives, in addition to being the main site for public mourning practices. So, I participated in the burial ceremonies, mortuary feasts and daily visits to the graveyards. All these practices were performed through the interaction between the locals and diaspora Yazidis. The Yazidis in Germany prefer to bury their losses in the homeland, and while the deceased are buried, many Diaspora Yazidis participate in the ceremony online through the Facebook live stream. Whether after years or right after the burial, they come to organize a mortuary feast for the deceased. Hence, the social change that occurred because of the migration was affecting the social practices. In this social change, I argue that the gendered performance of mourning has been another important issue because of the visibility of women and the ceremony execution by women which would normally not be religiously allowed if the executor was not a Sheikh man. Therefore, this thesis analyzes how the chronic state of violence is interpreted by the participants of this research, and in this process how the social practices have been evolving.

I use the concepts "the chronic state of violence" for two reasons. Firstly, genocide is a term proposed with limited categories and temporality which I will explore later in this chapter. Secondly, I did not hear any experiences which were named specifically as genocide in a certain time and place[1], except the Sinjar Genocide of 2014, but I heard their narratives of fear as expressions of the chronic state of violence all the time. Since genocide is not a concept that came out of my fieldwork, it seldom appears in this thesis, but I should state that I would not deny the power of the legal recognition of those atrocities as genocide with respect to the effort on this, executed

[1]I should express that I heard the name, *ferman-ı Haco* (Haco Genocide), but the narrative about it was always blurred and disconnected from any particular time. Instead, it was a part of the general narratives of ongoing violence.

by the mostly diaspora Yazidis and all the allies working on genocides and engaging in activism of recognition[2]. Since my research is not on the Sinjar Genocide, but on the expressions and consequences of ongoing violence from 1915 onwards in Mardin, I do not engage in a discussion of this diaspora effort for genocide recognition. I argue that the ongoing experiences in the chronic state of violence continuously (re)shape the memories, narratives and practices of the Yazidi community. This thesis presents a piece of what I witnessed in a particular time period, with a caution that they are still transforming.

Before presenting my fieldwork findings, which I introduce in the following chapters, I would like to discuss the silences in the context of the genocidal experiences of Yazidi women through a review of the existing research on Yazidis and genocide studies.

1.1 Current Studies on Yazidis

Yazidis, who have historically been called "the people of Peacock" because of their belief in *Melek-i Tavus* (Angel of Peacock), speak Kurdish but are ethno-religiously different from Kurds. Yazidi communities live mostly in Iraq, Syria, and South-eastern Turkey, but from the 20th century onwards, they have been living in other countries such as Armenia, Georgia and Germany as a result of the atrocities they encountered in their homelands (Spät 2005, 17). In Turkey, although there are no accessible legal records on Yazidis, my preliminary research has shown that they mostly live in the cities of Batman, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Şırnak and Urfa.

In the 19th century, during the efforts of the Ottoman Empire to religiously convert the Yazidis[3], there was substantial research and publication on the Yazidis, conducted mostly by European researchers. As Kreyenbroek (2014) argues, the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century witnessed a growing body of orientalist and romantic literature on Yazidis as one of the "authentic" and "pagan" religions of the Middle East. In these works, the Yazidis were often called devil-worshippers and defined as being "full of hatred" towards other groups. The lack of written sources and holy scripts and the low literacy rate of Yazidis con-

[2]https://www.yazda.org/post/without-justice-and-recognition-the-genocide-by-isis-continues

[3]The timeline for Yazidis genocides can be reached from the site:
http://www.yezidisinternational.org/abouttheyezidipeople/history/

tributed to the circulation of a number of myths about Yazidism and their social structure, without their participation or input. Thus, prejudices towards the Yazidis were triggered and reproduced by a variety of sources, typically operating under an Orientalist perspective (Said 1979).

In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of the History*, Michel Rolph Trouillot (1995) argues that silences enter historiography at four main moments of knowledge production: the moments of fact creation, fact assembly, fact retrieval and retrospective significance. Respectively, there are four crucial areas, sources, archives, narratives and history, where we can search for silences and their relation with power (1995, 26). Besides contextualizing the silences created by one-sided official history, this framework offers valuable tools to understand how comprehensive, deep and diverse silences and their sites of production might be. My curiosity about the Yazidis stems from the silences regarding Yazidis in most histories of the region, despite the fact that Yazidis have witnessed and suffered from many genocidal events, forced migrations, and social and political pressures. Although studies about Yazidis started in the 19th century, these studies which focus on the traditional, religious and social practices of Yazidis are limited by efforts to define Yazidi culture, religion and society. Moreover, these efforts are often one-sided, being produced predominantly by those who have the authority or the power over the Yazidis or by researchers belonging to other (majority) cultural groups.

As Allison (2008, 3) states, there was a shift in Yazidi studies in the 1990s through the participation of Yazidis in the discussion of their own religion. Until the Sinjar Genocide the main issue in Yazidi studies continued to be the religious and social structure. After this extreme violence of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the forced migration and social change going on for at least sixty years became more visible in Yazidi studies (Kreyenbroek and Omarkhali 2016, 122-123). In the media, this mass-scale atrocity, particularly women's abductions, received global attention, although the predominant tendency has been to show "hyper-visibility of the women's injured bodies" instead of their narratives and subjectivities (Allison and Buffon 2016, 177). In recent years, important research came out in Turkish on the Sinjar Genocide, including Nurcan Baysal's *Ezidiler: 73. Ferman Katliam ve Kurtuluş* (2016) and Namık Kemal Dinç's *Ezidilerin 73. Fermanı Şengal Soykırımı* (2017) and *Kanatların Gölgesinde: Şengal Dile Gelirse* (2017), all based on the narratives of the Yazidis who witnessed and survived the Sinjar Genocide. Both in the media and the literature at large, it is possible to come across frequent expressions of *73. Ferman*, which means seventy-third genocide. As Van Bruinessen (2016, 119-120) states, the most remembered and narrated fermans are the Armenian, Halabja, and Anfal *fermans*, genocides that caused the death of thousands of Armenian, Assyr-

ian, Chaeldean and Kurdish populations, as well as Yazidis. Besides the extensive literature studies on the genocide of the Armenians, the Aramean, Assyrian and Chaldean migrant communities in Western Europe have recently been engaged in efforts to have the "Sayfo," the genocide faced by these communities in the period from 1890 to 1915, recognized internationally (Mutlu-Numansen and Ossewaarde 2015, 430). However, I argue that while the narratives of these genocides in their pluralities make visible and move beyond some of the historical silences prevalent in this history, Yazidis, who are crucial parts of these histories have been lost in all narratives and historiographies, or they have been confined to just a superficial mention. Although the activism of Sinjar Genocide recognition is proceeding internationally, the previous atrocities[4] that the Yazidis encountered are not recognized, widely studied or given attention in the media.

To analyze the knowledge production on Yazidis, I look into some of the contemporary studies. Surely, there are abundant studies currently written and published about the Yazidis, but it is not possible to look at all of them in this research. I modestly intend to draw a general map of this growing field of research. As one of the most cited studies, Philip G. Kreyenbroek's *Yezidism: Its Background, Observance and Textual Tradition* (2014) is structured as an explanation of how the perception about Yazidis and Yazidism is shaped by early Western studies. The book displays the existent written records based on phenomenon and Yazidis religious background and their social organizations. He discusses the "Western" attempts at stereotyping Yazidis, but he continues to define them in a way that Yazidis' voices or self-expressions can hardly be heard.

Eszter Spat, in her study called *The Yezidis* (2005), depicts a geographical and historical background of Yazidi communities besides giving an account on their social, religious and traditional practices. I argue that the importance of Spat's study is based on her emphasis on the interaction between Kurds and Yazidis in Iraq. She explicates the alteration of the relations between Kurds and Yazidis during wars and after wars, particularly taking into account the period during and after the Second Gulf War.

Similar studies are published by Hrant Dink Foundation as *Mardin Tebliğleri: Mardin ve Çevresi, Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Tarihi Konferansı* (2013), *Diyarbakır Tebliğleri: Diyarbakır ve Çevresi, Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Tarihi Konferansı* (2013), and *Mühürlü Kapı: Türkiye-Ermenistan Sınırının Geleceği* (2016). In the first two works specified with the area of Mardin and Diyarbakir in Turkey, the main focus is how the social, political and economic changes that took place during the late

[4]Seventy two *ferman* before the Sinjar Genocide.

Ottoman Empire and beginning of the Republic of Turkey accompanied extinction policies over the non-Muslim minorities. While these two books are not structured with an aim to depict the specific history of Yazidis in Anatolia, in *Mardin Tebliğleri* (2013) one section, called as "Ezidi Aşiretleri ve Şehirli Elitler: İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin İlk Katliamı", written by Hilmar Kaiser (2013), is directly dedicated to explaining how Yazidis in Mardin were displaced, pressured and even killed at that time. In this historical exploration, social relations and changes were taken into consideration as well as official documents from the period. In the third book mentioned above of the Hrant Dink Foundation (2016), through the piece of Manuk S. Avedikyan, the perceptions of Armenia Yazidis about the close border between Armenia and Turkey are spelled out.

In addition to these studies, Amed Gökçen has published two books on Yazidis: *Ezidiler: Kara Kitap Kara Talih* (2014), and *Kadim Bir Nefes: Ezidi Ağıtları* (2015). He starts his studies about Yazidis with an interest in their silenced voices and rapid extinction in the past century (2014, 7). However, his research and published work remain limited to the narrations of Yazidi traditions, social and religious practices, and hardly deals with political history and histories of violence.

My major criticism towards these studies is derived from their gender blind language and insufficient place given to Yazidis' testimonies while attempting to create a narration or history about them. Although they include oral history interviews, in-depth interviews and appeals to the traditional or religious songs, I argue that these narratives are typically "collected" to elaborate on the community's traditions or religion. Moreover, the lack of genocide studies, and not taking into account of the oral histories about the genocides are my other demurs in these studies. The book called as *Kanatların Gölgesinde: Şengal Dile Gelirse*, written by Namık Kemal Dinç (2017), as one of the most current works about Sincar Genocide made by ISIL, is narrating six people's stories about the "73rd *ferman*" in Sincar, and uses the metaphor of "door" referring to these six people. Every person in the book with their personal narratives opens a door, breaks the silences and presents the lost voices. Besides that, three of six "doors" in this book are opened by Yazidi women's testimonies, so he elaborates his work with gender specific experiences during genocide as well as the changes of social relations between different groups of people, and displacements because of war and genocide. However, the differences of narrations between men and women are debatable whether it is because of gender specific experiences or derived from the author's dominant male perspective, since the distinctions between the interviewee's and the author's narratives are not clear. For instance, the references to motherhood in traumatic experiences or the political discourse dominancy in men's narrative seem to be interpretations on the actual

testimonies and a re-narration of them based on the heteronormative view of the author.

In short, the emerging literature built on Yazidi testimonies (in some cases of recent wars) is slowly breaking the historical silence on Yazidis in historiography and social science. At the same time, the gendered silences remain in much of the recent literature as well.

1.2 The Limitations of the Concept "Genocide"

Since my intention is not to name specific genocides and explore them, but to understand the memory of genocidal experience as complex, deep and unique for all carriers, I would like to discuss the limitations of accepting genocide as an event confined to a particular time. Raphael Lemkin (1944, 79), the first person who proposed genocide as a term, states the definition of genocide, which is the combination of the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing), as "the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group". He argues that the destruction may be encountered in many areas, which are political, social, cultural, economic, biological, physical, religious and moral, and he expresses the genocide techniques in those areas through the practices of Nazis. Although the short version of the term's definition does not explicitly mention it, Lemkin clarifies it with an intersectional explanation, and yet his definition is still lacking because of the exclusion of gender. After Lemkin's conceptualization, in 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In Article II of the Convention, genocide was described as:

> "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

As the explication shows, the Convention limits both the type of groups and the acts, in addition to the ongoing omission of gendered violence as part of genocide. These restrictions result in the production of two oppositional positions: one is the effort to prove genocide within this limited categorization, and the other is denial and silence. For both definitions of genocide declared by Lemkin and UN General Assembly, the discourse indicates the special knowledge and analysis about genocide, and even restriction to define an act as genocide with certain categorization. Moreover, even though the experience of genocide is gendered, the definitions do not contain gender.

The restricted nature of the international legal conceptualization and the problematic time-framing of genocide have recently been addressed by genocide scholars. For instance, Sheri P. Rosenberg (2012) discusses the renewed attention to analyze the "genocidal process" in genocide studies. As she states, the rigid conception of genocide with the emphasis on legalism "causes some author and policy makers to lose sight of the fact that genocide is a fluid and complex social phenomenon, not a static term" (2012, 17). She uses the term "genocide by attrition" as a concept that "represents a new direction in genocide studies that demonstrates the field's elasticity and its ability to draw from historical episodes to understand, in practical terms, present instances of genocide" (2012, 12). She is not replacing "genocide" with "genocide by attrition", she emphasizes the attention to genocide being a "process" through this concept. As another scholar working on genocide, Nicole Rafter proposes that genocide is not an event but a process, so its end cannot be fixed and should be researched as a process (2016, 181). She discusses if or when genocides end through examples such as Indonesian, Cambodian, Rwandan, Armenian and Herero genocides. According to her analysis, each one of these genocides differ in terms of their unique process. For example, the Armenian Genocide processed through relatively smaller waves of persecution over a period of years. The first wave started in 1915, and it lasts until 1923 (Rafter 2016, 186-186). Moreover, she argues that even if there is a cease-fire or peace agreements or more generally the act of mass killing stopped, the effects of this mass violence are going on within the society and the groups who faced the mass killing (2016, 201). Feierstein (2014) analyzes this process with two different approaches; genocide as a legal term and genocide as a social practice. He also criticizes the genocide definition created by Lemkin and UN General Assembly because of its restrictions. He uses the term of genocide for legal necessity, but proposes that the definition must be changed because it prevents equality for all in front of the law. As his second approach, he offers to look at the genocide as a social practice for social scientists. He states:

> "Genocide is a process that starts long before and ends after the actual physical annihilation of the victims, even though the exact moment at which any social practice commences or ceases to play a role in the 'workings' of a society is always uncertain" (2014, 12). And adds:
>
> "The disappearances[5] outlast the destruction of war: the effects of genocide do not end but only begin with the deaths of the victims" (2014, 38).

As my fieldwork and the participants' narratives show me, there is no memory of defined genocide with restricted categories but there is a process that would be called ongoing genocidal practices or ongoing violence. I argue that looking at those experiences as a process is important to this research to see the changing social practices of the villagers and the ongoing reconstruction of the memories.

I argue that it is also important to analyze the gendered experiences of ongoing violence in this research because they are mostly discarded in academia and historiography as well as the definition of the genocide accepted internationally. Although there is abundant feminist research on genocide as a gendered experience, it is still important to highlight this intention. I interpret this intention as a continuous struggle, as I see in Arlene Avakian's (2010) discussion about the knowledge production on Armenian Genocide in patriarchal Armenian historiography and the absence of feminist voice both in community debates and academia. As a feminist criminologist, Nicole Rafter discusses gender invisibility in genocide research. She emphasizes that although "women" and "gender" are not the same, recognition of the social role of women in the genocide opens a space that "gender follows close behind." (2016, 153).She approaches gender through the concepts of "doing" or "accomplishing" during genocide as in everyday life. The important argument she makes is that gender construction cannot be fixed for all societies, it may even differ from one woman to another, as well as among men. She exemplifies this argument with eight different genocides in which women play different roles. In her analysis, men and women from different positionalities encounter different experiences, and these diverse experiences are gendered. For example, the oppression men face when they refuse to take part in violence, or selecting the men to kill because of the assumptions that they are capable of fighting back. According to Rafter, although all genocidal events have their own assumptions about gender, the subjects are "doing" gender in different ways. (2016, 161). In this thesis, this is the framework I adopt to understand the specific ways in which fear, mourning and violence are gendered in the experiences and narratives of my Yazidi research participants. I further argue that using

[5]He means the disappearances of identities, memories and relations.

gender as an analytical category is crucial to understanding the process of violence and genocide.

Drawing from and building on these studies that highlight the limitations of the term "genocide" and the narrow focus on the time-frame of genocide prevalent in historical research, I focus on Yazidi women's memories of genocidal experiences as a gendered process. I curiously search how these experiences exhibit in the narratives of Yazidi women, how these memories affect the social practices of both women and men, and if there is a transmission, how the transmission of memory works. I should state that after I interviewed the Yazidi women, I wanted to interview with the Yazidi men. I asked nine men to interview - it means almost all men considering the number of the Yazidi men living in the villages-, but only three of them accepted to talk with me, and only one of them actually progressed as an interview. The other two did not want to talk about what I was pursuing, namely the memories of violence. So, I argue that the expression of the memories of violence and the silence are also gendered.

Ayşe Gül Altinay and Andrea Petö (2016), in their edited book *Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories: Feminist Conversations on War, Genocide, and Political Violence*, offer us an intersectional look on gender studies, memory studies and war/militarism studies, and search for methods to analyze the silences, as well as to "unsilence." During this effort, they emphasize the variety of silences that positioned the people carried them in various situatedness, and they propose the effort to trace and listen to the silences as an important way to prevent the risks of "unsilencing." They state the risks as:

> "The first risk (...) is to assume that women's experiences and memories of wars are undifferentiated from one another and categorically different from men's. Another is to regard all silences as equal (and equally problematic) and celebrate all forms of unsilencing as equally progressive, without taking into account the context and the politics of unsilencing. In a related vein, much of the scholarship on silences assumes a normative stance on the basis of which some women can be judged for not 'speaking up', without taking into consideration the possibility that silence can, at times, be a form of resistance and self-defense. Yet another risk is to position the narrator, in this case the feminist scholar, in a privileged position of the 'knower', who uncovers what no one else has been able to see and articulate" (2016, 12).

They bring intersectionality[6] and "situated knowledges[7]" together, which are the current contributions of feminist theory, to engage in an analysis of silences and the knowledge production on silences. With respect to those contributions, and considering the risks stated by Altinay and Petö, in this research, I emphasize the diversity of the narratives among my research participants, and seek to analyze the narratives in their very uniquenesses. Moreover, throughout the thesis, I situate myself in the experiences that I faced during the fieldwork, as well as in my analysis. Besides, I remind myself that those memories and their expressions are just a piece belonging to a certain duration which is the period of my fieldwork, and they are still transforming themselves with regard to ongoing violence.

1.3 Memories of Ongoing Violence

> "What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness?" Hirsch (2012, 2).

I searched for a better way of understanding the Yazidi women's memories of violence with these questions raised by Hirsch in my mind. Since reaching Yazidi women who encountered the genocide in 1915 is not possible, I argue that the concept of post-memory proposed by Hirsch would be my main theoretical framework to analyze the memories conveyed to me. Hirsch explains the concept as:

> "Post-memory has certainly not taken us beyond memory, but is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Post-memory should reflect back on memory, revealing it as equally constructed, equally mediated by the processes of narration and imagination" Hirsch (1992, 8-9).

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[6] Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." *u. Chi. Legal f.* (1989, 139).

[7] Haraway, Donna, and Situated Knowledges. "The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991, 183-201).

At first glance, the fieldwork and the interviews were not specifically offering any post-memory about 1915. The transmission was blocked, because the participants did not meet the grandparents who were forced to migrate or die, and the parents did not talk about the period with them, as they stated. Instead, there was a memory of ongoing violence, although some parts of the memory was transmitted from one generation to another as Hirsch explains, if not directly through specific stories, but through certain emotions. There were no specific events highlighted in the narratives in terms of space and time, but there was a reference to an emotion, fear, to express all the violent memories transmitted from the old generation and faced directly by the participants. This embodiment of emotions and the expression of fear without spatial and temporal certainty made me reassess the concept of post-memory to frame the evaluation of the narratives. As Thompson argues, the memories having subtle layers are unique and personal, and yet they include the traces from the past giving the clue to a collective memory through the values, attitudes and behaviors (2009, I-V). In addition to that, in the family story it is possible to see both unique "personal experiences and the personal consciousness reshaped by the shifting phases of political and social attitudes, through the complex intertwining and interpenetration of different layers of collective memory" (2009, IV). For the people who do not have a memory of certain violent events, emotions give the meaning to the narrative. The transmitted narrative through the emotions is de- and recontextualized according to the people's own contemporary contexts (Maček 2017, 2).

In my fieldwork, I argue that the individual memories on violence are transmitted within the families from one generation to another, but these memories are recontextualized by the people from different generations, and actually the recontextualizing is still continuing, because the people are still living in a space and time that is shaped by political violence. So I decided to use the perspective of intergenerational transmission as Maček (2017) and Thompson (2009) offer. As in my fieldwork, the intergenerational transmission proposes no linear or no unidirectional memory flow. It does not just depend on the past, but it shows the traces of past, the present context and the relation with the future.

Saul (2014) starts his book *Collective Trauma, Collective Healing* with a differentiation between individual and collective trauma, referring to the conceptualization of Erikson. According to him, individual trauma is "a blow to the psyche that breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively, leading people to withdraw into themselves, feeling numbed, afraid, vulnerable and very alone." In addition to that, collective trauma is "a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and

impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (2014, 3). I found these explanations in line with the distinction of individual and collective memory proposed by Argenti and Schramm (2009). They refer to both trauma and memory studies; moreover, they associate them with the history. They quote Caruth (1991, 192): "History, like the trauma, is never simply one's own; (...) history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (2009, 13). The relation between trauma, individual and collective memory and history, as stated above, demonstrates the necessity of an interdisciplinary perspective on memory. I argue that this interdisciplinary look provides understanding the deeper layers of narrative and practices more clearly.

To assist the resilience in family and society, Walsh (2003; 2007) proposes that the belief systems, organizational patterns and communication/problem solving are significant. Saul elaborates this systemic classification of resources as: "1) Belief systems: making meaning of traumatic loss experience; a positive outlook, transcendence and spirituality; 2) Organizational patterns: flexibility, kin and community connectedness, and economic and institutional resources; and 3) Communication/problem solving: which includes clear, open emotional expression and collaborative problem solving" (2014, 8). In my fieldwork, mourning practices such as the burial ceremony and mortuary feasting have come out as significant resources facilitated by the belief system and organizational patterns. In addition to that, the transmission of the fear and grief as an open emotional expression within family and relatives, thus in society, is fitting into this systemic elaboration of the resources. I argue that the intergenerational transmission of the violent memories for the Yazidi families I interviewed contains the resources containing emotions, daily practices, rituals and narratives that they all have the hints for resilience.

1.4 Methodology

Renato Rosaldo, in *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, criticizes the concept of an ethnographic present which is proudly used by anthropologists to "designate a distanced mode of writing that normalized life by describing social activities as if they were always repeated in the same manner by everyone in the group" (1993, 42). Since I began with the critique of descriptive research and generalizations on Yazidis, my main effort is to create a language in my fieldwork and in the analysis which is not offered from the position of the ethnographic present.

Moreover, I argue that the historicity of the research and the unique experiences of the participants are crucial for my analysis to avoid situating the participants as marginal. Anna Tsing (1993), in the book named *In the Realm of Diamond Queen*, engages in an in-depth and insightful discussion about *marginality*, through her ethnographic research about the Meratus people who live in the Meratus Mountains in Indonesia. She examines three processes about the marginalizing discourse that are *state rule, the formation of regional and ethnic identities and gender differentiation* (1993, 5). She states that heterogeneity and transcultural dialogue is significant in out-of-the-way places. She refuses looking out-of-the-way places as in unilinear processes towards being "modern" or as the stagnant cultures (1993, 10). In a similar vein, Charles Piot (1999), in *Remotely Global: Village Modernity in West Africa*, re-theorizes the concept of out-of-the-way place, and proposes that the society, the Kabre of northern Togo, has already been globalized. So it is important to emphasize that they are already living within modernity. He points out the global processes which are not considered during the stigmatization of the people in the region through the primordialist assumptions (1999, 5). Exploring the transcultural dialogue and heterogeneity with respect to knowledge production about out-of-the-way places, also considering Piot's global-local connection, I analyze the power relations and the marginalization process for Yazidi women and new possibilities to research and discuss this process.

I conducted ethnographic research in three villages of Mardin for seven months, I did not permanently stay there for seven months, but visited five times during this period, and every visit was at least one week. Before going to the fieldwork, I used my personal network and found a person, Ali, who already did visual work, a photographic portfolio, with the people in these villages. Since his connections were still active, he introduced me to the people of the house I stayed in. After that, the daughter of this house provided the network in these villages for me. I interviewed nine local Yazidi women and one migrant woman who came to Mardin after the Sinjar Genocide. Although my main aim is to collect the oral histories of Yazidi women, I also interviewed three Yazidi men to contextualize the daily life and interactions. Besides the oral history interview, I engaged in participant observation during these seven months. In addition to the interviews, I had many talks with numerous people who came from Germany and were visiting their relatives or locals. Although I did not permanently stay in the village during this period, the fieldwork was still proceeding online. During the period I came back to Istanbul, I was still participating in the online burial ceremonies, and I was talking online with the people in the villages about the current events and daily life. Even in the writing period of the analysis, the online interaction with them was happening.

Before the fieldwork, I was just planning to do oral history interviews with Yazidi women in these three villages, but after my first visit, I noticed that I should stay for observation because the people in the villages said that I should participate in many activities and rituals to know them. I would not argue that "knowing" a community is possible, but my stays in the village have helped me to understand the heterogeneity of the experiences and the daily practices that empowered the people.

The participants were mostly related to each other as family members or relatives. I argue that the interviews might be affected in a way by each other, because they were asking each other what we talked about during the interviews. Even though I did not encounter a detailed talk about the interviews, I think it is important to know that some of the women might have an idea what we would talk about and start the narratives accordingly.

Before introducing the chapters, I would like to mention one of my participants and her position in this research. Mizgin is the daughter of the house I stayed in. She was nineteen and a high school graduate. Although she enjoyed schooling, she did not continue her education at a university because of what she called "the insecure environment of Turkey." However, she was following the research about Yazidis and Yazidism written in Turkish. When I introduced myself, she was pleased to be a part of the research. Besides being a participant, she helped me with the interviews as a mediator. I would not say that she was only a translator, because I interviewed the women in both Kurdish and Turkish, and when I or participants felt that we did not understand exactly each other or express ourselves adequately we applied for the mediation of Mizgin. She would introduce me to other participants and after I explained my research, Mizgin would also stay with us during the interview to comfort the participants in terms of language. I argue that the position of Mizgin is crucial for this research with all the advantages and disadvantages. Since she was situated as a mediator, my fieldwork was very open to her lead and interpretation. Although I tried to protect the distance between the research and Mizgin, it was impossible to execute the fieldwork completely independent from the emotional or contextual contributions of Mizgin. So, throughout my analysis, I try to situate her, especially if I notice that she has affected my observation and analysis.

1.5 Chapters

In the chapter, *Fear, Body and Narrative*, I analyze fear as an expression of the continuum of violence. Instead of taking for granted genocide as an event with an exact beginning and end, I consider genocide as a process, in the context of the prevalent expression of fear among my participants. I argue that fear is an expression of the chronic state of violence and displays itself in the narratives in such a way that it also highlights the positioning and the reactions of the participants vis-a-vis ongoing violence. The narratives of fear were constructed according to which critical decade was experienced by the participants. So, they were displaying the different layers of the process. I also focus on the expression of fear on the surfaces of bodies which exhibit various body movements, gestures and mimics, and its verbal expression of the bodily illnesses. In this chapter, I argue that the narratives constituted by verbal statements and bodily expressions show the traces which would fill the gap in the silenced narratives. In addition to my participants' expressions and interpretations, I situated myself in the context of fear, because fear was an emotion which was in circulation between the bodies during my fieldwork, and I was not independent of this circulation.

In the chapter on *Mourning, Performance and Gender*, I focus on the mourning practices and burial ceremonies which take place both physically and digitally. I analyze the practices in the context of global interactions and the reshaping of the social structure. I examine the gendered performances of mourning and the burial practices with respect to the alterations of women's position in the society and its expression in the area of mourning. Besides, I explore the application for mourning to the digital world via live streaming on Facebook as a new area offering various possibilities to all of us. Throughout my analysis, I consider the unity of life and death, and I approach the loss and mourning practices not as marking a state of constant bereavement but as celebrations of life.

2. FEAR, BODY AND NARRATIVE

As a "curious feminist" (Enloe 2004) exploring the potentialities of an intersectional lens, I analyze the discarded narrative(s) on the genocides faced by Yazidis in the past century. For seven months, I engaged in ethnographic research in three villages of Mardin, Turkey; doing participant observation and conducting oral history interviews with Yazidi women. Instead of a monolithic genocide narrative, I found silence and "lost" generations. For instance, most Yazidis living in Mardin have not met their grandparents who migrated to Syria and Germany to escape the massacres in the 1920s. Genocide is not an atrocity that occurred at a certain time and place, but that it is a continuing occurrence and probability. The end of genocide is a fact that already debated by the researchers in the genocide literature. As I discussed in the introduction (Ch.1), it is not an event whose start and end are not fixed, but it is a process that its effects are proceeding.

Since one of my preliminary question is on the narrative of genocide encountered by Yazidis, I asked them the narratives of their elders on the experiences about the forced migration, political oppression and war. However, there is a lost generation to tell the experiences, because the participants have not been able to meet their grandparents or elder relatives due to the escapes from massacres. The one specific story was told by one of the participants whose husband's family was subjected to two different massacres in different places and times. His grandparents had been living in Syria and after the attack and forced religious converting to Islam his grandfather had come to Turkey and hid in a cave with many Yazidis. The second is the ferman of Haco, faced by Yazidis in the 1920s in Turkey. It causes hundreds of people to die and forced migration from Turkey to Syria. Yet, the narrative I listened to is constructed blurrily in terms of time and space because none of my participants could give specific time and spaces in their narratives. In addition, the participant who was telling these two stories as if they are actually one specific genocide narrative, times and spaces were disappearing throughout the narrative. I observed that the transmission of memory was blocked, fragmented and reconstructed several times because of the continuing atrocities. Instead of hearing

specific memories of specific genocides, I listened to interwoven stories containing the loss of the past, apprehension about the future and the fear as in complex relation with times.

During my fieldwork, there was a contested lawsuit because Muslims had attempted to take Yazidis' lands in Mardin right after the Sinjar massacre in Iraq. The Yazidi graveyard and lands have been put on fire in the context of the war between Kurdish guerillas and the Turkish army. A howitzer recently fell onto the edge of one of the villages I visited during Turkey's military intervention in Syria. After a year from the beginning of my fieldwork, there was an assault on the Yazidis' graveyard; the gravestones were broken and no one knows who the perpetrators are. Not surprisingly, narratives of fear dominated the discussions of genocide in the interviews. Hence, I chased the narratives and their effects on bodies in a chronic state of fear. However, I am not arguing that fear is a passive emotion as if it is only owned by the people carrying violent memory. In the *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed (2014) analyzes how emotions circulate between the bodies. To realize the circulation is important because whether individually or collectively emotions are not characteristics of the bodies. Their effects on the surfaces of bodies circulate between the others and take the reactions from them. So, various emotions circulate between the bodies in Mardin and one of the reactions may be defined as fear. This fear determines the actions and shapes the subjectivities which point out the numerous ways of resilience.

> *"I don't remember if the genocide against the Syriacs happened first or the genocide against the Yazidis." (Delal)*

Linda Green (1994) states that fear is not just a subjective response to danger but it also penetrates social memory. It thrives on ambiguities and becomes a way of life. For the participants of this research, the ambiguity is based on the continuum of violence. It is not possible to differentiate the narratives of certain experiences historically because its continuity adds another layer into the narratives. It contains violence of everyday life besides the memory of extreme violence of the past. The violence of everyday life exposes fear, anger and loss. It is seen in collective experience and in the subjectivity of personal experience (Kleinman 2000, 238). Its routinization affects the emergence or the expression of fear. Linda Green gives the example of social scientists working in Guatemala. According to her, they learn not to react at first, then not to feel or see because it is impossible to live in a constant state of alertness. Then, the fear appears in dreams and chronic illnesses

(1994, 231). I did not ask my participants' dreams or chronic illnesses. Since the circulation of the emotions may affect people differently, I followed the narratives and the bodily expressions that accompanied them. I should signify that I, as a researcher, was not independent from this circulation. So it is almost impossible to write about fear as an outsider.

I argue that what I saw during the fieldwork was not just fear but also hope which enables various modes of resilience. While the young generation is planning to go to Germany, as did most of their relatives since the 1990s, diaspora Yazidis are building new houses in the villages, even if they have no plans to permanently return to their homeland. The locals are changing their houses with new ones. Those who had already moved to new houses were engaged in renovations. As Carbonella (2009, 353) argues "to understand a structure of fear is to situate it in relationship to its dialectic opposite." He uses Raymond Williams's (1977) formulation and situates hope as the dialectic opposite of fear. I am not proposing that we should take hope as the dialectic opposite of fear and define fear. However, tracing hope as another emotion in the circulation provides to realize the expression of resilience in a chronic state of fear, considering the establishments of the new houses and the renovations.

Moving to a new house is important to cope with fear. Their old houses contained mostly one room and were established with the stones which are not resistant to any assault.

> *"You know the holes of the door, my mom was closing even the holes of the door with napkins, since nobody saw the light inside. We actually grew up with this kind of fear." (Mizgin)*

I listened to this narrative from Mizgin, but the narratives were transmitted from her mother and elder sister. They all mention this strategy to be invisible against the threats. Its transmission was not restricted within the family. Gule also listened to the story from Mizgins's sister. She grew up in Batman and settled in Mardin after she got married. During the early years of her marriage, she was staying with her mother-in-law at their old house in the village in which Mizgin and her family also lived. When I interviewed Gule, she was staying in another village in her new house.

> *"Maybe you saw, we were staying at the old house before. I was afraid of that house. Because it was old, the windows or other things... When I heard a voice, I was looking outside, I was so scared. Since she told me that, I did not know how the nights or days were going by. Because I was scared there." (Gule)*

She did not mention what she heard from her (Mizgin's sister), but she emphasized that the old house was scary. It is important to state that the Yazidis were living like *koçer* (migrants) for decades. As the participants said that they were mostly in the mountains and taking care of their flocks, but for ten or fifteen years they started to settle, built the new houses and are still renovating for the future. I modestly argue that settling into new houses is a kind of resilience against the fear in terms of creating a secure environment and making it relatable to their daily lives by using the cultural symbols on the walls of houses. During the fieldwork, Mizgin and her family started to renovate their new house and chose the image of peacock as the facade element of the wall. In the house, there were already lots of paintings and trinkets with the peacock, but it seemed important to show it on the outside of the house. It is either to express their existence or the hope of its possibility.

So, I decided to hear and understand the narratives of fear embedded with hope and resilience, instead of the past's certain atrocities. As a start, I situate myself and my own relation to fear during the fieldwork. After that, I analyzed fear as an expression of the continuum of violence and as a bodily experience based on the observation and interviews during my fieldwork.

2.1 Is It Possible To Be An Outsider?

I just arrived in Mardin and set off to the village with Ali who introduced me to the Yazidi people in the village I stayed at during the fieldwork. There were many checkpoints along the road. Every time we saw a checkpoint, we wound down and turned the Kurdish music off even if the soldiers were not coming across the window to talk to us. But it was like written regulation. When we approached the border, I saw the wall established after the Syrian migration, but between the highway and the wall, there was a land covered by flowers and grass. The questions in my mind were; what is this land or whose land is it? I asked Ali and he said that it is a minefield. After that, he talked about his mine portfolio containing the photos of

the people who were wounded on the minefield. At that time, I was not able to react or say anything, but along my fieldwork, I silently watched the borderline and carried an inexpressible fear and grief. Seeing the border, minefield and the rage of Ali started to react as fear and grief in my body. Linke and Smith (2009), in *Cultures of Fear*, conceptualize the culture of fear established by the border regimes. They express the border regimes as an application of global logic of fear to the locals, with respect to Balibar's (2004, 14) explanation of the dual disposition of border regimes as *a violent process of exclusion* through the quasi-military enforcement of "security borders" and *a "civil" process of elaboration of differences* creating the sense of identity or community. To analyze the civil process in Mardin, it is not possible to state there is an identity construction referring to the differences beyond the borders because there are Yazidis and Kurds living on two sides of it, and there are economic and social relations going on. However, the fear of difference, as it articulated itself during my fieldwork, was based on the existence of ISIL on the other side of the border and the possibility of its militants passing over to Turkey. As one of my participants, Gule said:

> *"We were too afraid. We were really too afraid, I mean anything may also come here like that any moment. It may happen. My mother was always calling me and saying that we were too close there, we might encounter something like that. She was saying that if there was a fear, we should go there. I mean, the people were inevitably afraid." (Gule)*

For me, who saw the wall across the border and minefields, the border was evoking the fear of war. One night, I was at the rooftop, talking with Mizgin before we slept. I realized that there is a fire around the border. The fire continued until the crack of dawn and spread beyond the border. I started to look at the news if there was a conflict on the border between Syria and Turkey, but there was no news. Mizgin said that when the grass became tall making it impossible to see the people who are not allowed to be there, the soldiers would start a fire to destroy the grass. At first, I could not believe it because I was seeing miles of fire, but there was no news about the fire and we were not hearing any gunshots. At the crack of dawn, the sky was covered by soot and fog, and it was possible to smell the remains of the fire. After my last visit to the village, I saw a military convoy which was transporting ammunition across the border. It was before the intervention in Syria and the people were predicting that the war was coming. Simultaneously, there was no news or institutional explanation in the media about the intervention. I came back to Istanbul thinking about the ambiguity of the future around the border.

Meanwhile, there was no one talking about the intervention or probability of war with the anxiety of life changes in Istanbul, because it seemed a probability which has been debated in the parliament and not directly affecting the people in Turkey. There was no news about the military activities on the border.

For seven months, the fear which is growing on ambiguities and destabilized relations followed me; I feel that during the interviews, on the road or even just staying at my hosts' home to observe. I believe that it is important to state my position and talk about my feelings because their stories are not exactly independent from mine in some way or another. Donna Haraway (1991) proposes the idea of situated and embodied knowledge which have no objects but subjects. Subjects may produce knowledge from their bodies, and moreover the body is also not unchangeable so both the subjects and their knowledge cannot be fixed and they are in constant evolution or alteration. The way of knowledge production is significant because it offers a new method beyond identity politics. I argue that even if a study supports the claim of multiple identities and diversity, it is not adequate to prevent being in the masculine scientific structure since the instruments or the concepts created by this structure will still be parts of the study. However, the multiple experiences encountered and embodied by the subjects may work for producing knowledge without the masculine structure's categories or dichotomies. She also opens the discussion on the responsibility of positioning. Every subject may provide knowledge but as she says "Positioning is, therefore, the key practice grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision, as so much Western Scientific and philosophic discourse is organized. Positioning implies responsibility for our enabling practices. It follows that politics and ethics ground struggles for the contests over what may count as rational knowledge" (1991, 193). There was an ongoing pressure during my fieldwork, which reminds all of us the experiences and makes it possible to take an action to be resilient for upcoming circumstances. I am not referring to any personal experience, but I am expressing how I was included in the circulation of fear and how I reacted. For this reason, I do not propose the process which I did not affect or I was not affected by. I only may situate myself and take its responsibility as Donna Harraway argues.

After each interview, I was backing up the voice records and hiding all my equipment in my hosts' house. I did not plan to apply this strategy before the fieldwork, but it was the reaction to what I heard about the 1990s. Rengin, the elder sister of Mizgin, told me that they were hiding all Kurdish music tapes and books in *tandır* which looks like a borehole but mostly used for cooking bread. Since there were no soldiers actively in the village but the provinces, and I had an ethical obligation to my participants, I never went to the center of the province with my equipment

in order to avoid their confiscation by the soldiers just because the interviews were made in Kurdish. I was impersonating as a guest and even in the village, as a relatively safe space in terms of not having soldiers permanently, I was trying to be like a ghost because I had listened to the story of Haje about closing the door holes to prevent the light coming out and being invisible in the 1990s. I have been feeling my body as shrunk as I ever feel, but I interpret this shrinking as an adaptation to resist the fear.

2.2 Fear As A Bodily Expression

> *"Don't go; please don't go to the graveyard on the hill. There are soldiers, they will take you." (Bejne)*

The first time I went to the Yazidi village in Mardin, I was prepared to go to the Yazidi graveyards that are on the mountains. On the road, Bejne, the elder woman of the village, blocked my way, held my arms and started to warn me loudly to not go to the old graveyard on the hill because the soldiers were there. I was inquisitively looking at her and asked Mizgin, the young Yazidi woman who was accompanying me, why the soldiers were there. She said that the military operations are going on against the Kurdish guerillas so when the villagers want to go to the old graveyard, they have to ask for permission from the military two or three days in advance. If the soldiers were not informed, they might take them into custody. According to Joshua Barker, "the fear may be sufficiently repressed that it is not displaced onto other subjects but becomes manifest in a discourse of expressive silences, unfinished sentences, and non-verbal cues" (2009, 268). After days, I was interviewing Bejne and I asked why she warned me to not go to the old graveyard. She circumspectly said that she told that for my sake, and as it was hard to climb up a hill, and she did not say anything about the soldiers.

Bejne was the eldest woman in the village whose father established the village for Yazidis and became the headman for years. After her father, her brother was also the headman. Therefore, for decades they have had direct interaction with the state and soldiers. She had lots of *daq*, traditional tattoos of Kurds and Yazidis, made by her friends while they were shepherding on the mountains. She was narrating the

memories of her childhood and teenage years as if she was free and powerful, since she was working a lot without physical pain. She emphatically said that "my father was the headman and there were a lot of soldiers coming to our houses, but I didn't even learn a word." She was referring to Turkish. It was important for her to state that she did not know any word of Turkish. As if the language was successfully protected, because she was able to resist the interference of Turkish in her mother tongue.

Bejne was the woman who made me feel the various expressions of fear. Firstly, there was the bodily expression of fear in her holding me to not move and to stay in the village when I said that I was going to the old graveyard. As Sara Ahmed (2014) argues, fear causes shrinking of the bodies, but to react by shrinking for protection, it is important to know or face what is the fearsome. If the space where it is likely to encounter the fearsome is known, then the body may stay in an individual space or safe space like home. Other bodily expressions of fear included looking in a different direction as if she wanted to create a distance while I asked something that reminded her of fear during the interview. She was interrupting me with questions about my personal life when I tried to ask any issue related to memories of violence that she did not want to talk about. Her facial expressions were becoming serious, and she was bringing up new issues related to my life as if she did not hear my questions.

During the interview and our other talks, she always mentioned her illnesses, the physical pain in her body. She was telling me that she was powerful, she was riding a horse when she was young and doing all her work on horseback, but now she is too tired and sick to handle anything. Linda Green (1994) analyzes the chronic state of fear in Guatemala and she mentions the embodiment of violence and the testimonies in the bodies. She interprets the body as a site of social and political memory in case of silence about the fear and terror. Even though she is not claiming a commonality of sufferings for the women who traumatized by fear and terror, she suggests that "the invisible violence of fear and terror becomes visible in the sufferings and sicknesses of the body, mind and spirit of the widows of Xe'caj" (1994, 247). Although there was much research about the trauma-related sickness on a physiological and psychological level, I do not have the purpose of analyzing that. My aim is to show bodily expressions as a reaction of violent memory since I argue that they are a part of the discourse to understand the context. If the violence is embodied as a type of knowledge and fear as its emotional reaction operates on the surfaces of bodies, then the bodily expressions may tell the discarded parts of the narrative in some level.

"G: They did not tell anything, just said that the soldiers were passing through the village. I did not see them during my childhood, until I came here. I was shocked when the people telling the stories. Halime, Mizgin's sister was telling the old stories in here to me, I was shaking from fear.

N: What was she telling you?

G: The soldiers came here... I don't know, everything..."

When I asked the memories transmitted by Gule's parents, she did not address any specific event or memory, but she stated how terrified she was from what she heard. While she was telling this reaction, she was raising her hands and moving them as if she was portraying the moment she listened to the stories. Her most sentences were half but she stated the fear with the audial expressions accompanying her body movements.

During the interview, I observed that Bejne was hitting her knees with her palms like Haje and Kevi who are the other elder women in the community. I especially want to emphasize and think about this movement, because hitting the knees is common between the Kurdish women to mourn and express the feeling of loss. In Turkish, the idiom of *dizini dövmek* corresponds to hitting the knees, but it is mainly used for the moments of regrets. The idiom for hitting the knees in Kurdish is *li çokan xistin*. Although it is used for the moments of women's mourning and wailing, I do not remember the idiom used in daily life during my fieldwork or my personal background. As an example from my personal life, my grandmother was telling the stories of the past while she was hitting the knees; she was not using the idiom but she was performing the movement during the expression of her narrative. I was feeling the fear, loss and it's mourning in her stories, like I feel in Bejne's narratives. The salient feature of this common expression is that they were repetitively saying they have knee pain. Besides knee pain, there were lots of expressions about the illnesses by the elder Yazidi women. Sometimes they asked me to check their medication boxes for no explained reason. When I did that, I was just learning what their reasons were for taking the pills, but I could not have any further explanations. *"Ez betilim"* (I am tired) may be the sentence that I heard the most from the Yazidi women in the villages whether they are old or young.

2.3 Fear as a Narrated Expression of Continuum of Violence

"Life was nice then, there was no fear." (Bejne)

Bejne used the fear as a word many times during the interview. She never directly addressed a circumstance, an institution or a group of people as a reason for the fear, but there were two certain references that pointed out some sources of the fear. Firstly, while she was talking about the Sinjar massacre, she said that they were surely afraid, ISIS is not just there; it is also here. Secondly, even though she explained her childhood as nice and peaceful because of no fear, she said once that there was no time without the fear. It is important to see how the continuum of violence affects the lives and the silences in terms of the analysis of complex structures of fear. She refers at least six decades considering her age without any direct reference to the circumstances encountered by Yazidis and the subjects establishing the environment of intimidation. When she saw that I was looking curious because I could not hear anything but the feeling of fear, she looked into my eyes and said that *keçam* (my daughter), they were calling us *haram* (forbidden by religion). To my opinion, this statement was an example of a complex structure of fear because it is not possible to differentiate the fear of extreme violence from the fear of everyday life in the narrative. Haje also stressed to be addressed as *haram* by Muslims in her narrative.

> *"I was going to the village water tap to fill the bottles. They were staying away from me and even from my bottles. They said to each other that I was haram. They did not drink even our water." (Haje).*

As Arjun Appadurai says:

> "Hence, the first step toward addressing why the weak, in so many ethnonationalist settings, are feared, is to go back to the "we/they" question in elementary sociological theory. In this theory, the creation of collective others, or them's, is a requirement, through the dynamics of stereotyping and identity contrast, for helping to set boundaries and mark off the dynamics of the we" (2006, 50).

Haram is the common label used by Muslims in this sense for Yazidis. Before the interviews and talks about this labeling and its reflection on Yazidis' attitudes, I was not aware how it was important to eat the meal prepared by Yazidis. It is important as if it is a determinant element to show your sincerity and respect to their existence. It is the first expression when they talk about their Muslim friends: "They come to our house. We set a table, and we drink and eat together." So creating boundaries through stereotyping or labeling reinforces the circulation of fear between Muslims and Yazidis, and destabilizes the social relations in that sense.

Haje is the mother of Mizgin and Rengin. She gave birth to eleven children and she is around sixties. She was living with her four children in the village. Her main narrative was based on her husband's illnesses which were related to the oppression in the 90s, his death and the conditions in which she raised her kids. She tried to live in Germany at two different moments in her life but she got sick and returned to Mardin. Her sickness was not physical, but she stated that she was psychologically ill because of missing her homeland. After she turned back to the village in Mardin, she felt good, and she said that she would never consider going to Germany and permanently stay there. Since her father was the headman before and she knows Turkish adequately, she was the woman who's contacted by the soldiers if needed. Like her aunt Bejne, she has rejected living in her husband's village and convinced her husband to move to "her father's village" in order to be with her family and community. Both Haje and Bejne expressed that their marriages are different because they were able to move their own villages after the marriages.

> *"We heard the voice of shooting and thought that somebody attacked us. We were not able to see the people; there was no light. But we thought that we should defend ourselves. The men in the village fired the gun into the air to show that we could strike back; but when the soldiers came to our houses, we realized what was going on. They said that 'you attacked us', they beat the men and said 'say goodbye to your wives'. They took the men and some of them did not return." (Haje)*

> *"I was in love with him but we got married to different people. One day he came home and said to his wife that if anyone asks me you should say I am not home. But when the men came with their white car and asked him, she said that he was inside. They took him and I have never heard about him since then. We don't know who the men are." (Haje)*

Haje was generously open to sharing the experiences and memories of her. She talked about the losses of the men in the village during different circumstances. In some narration, the perpetrators were not known but it was not the fact that

she highlighted. She was summarizing most of the narrations with the statements: "They were/are always happening" or "the fear is always here", but "we are here." She was telling the chronic state of violence and fear emphasizing the way she survived or overcame this condition.

There are infinite possibilities of memory connected to both past, present and future. Its temporality is not linear but transgenerational. It is based on the selections from numerous fragmented stories of people, and this process of selection depends on time, space, generation and encounters (Argenti and Schramm 2009). In addition to the complex, fluid and fragmented structure of memory, looking at its transmission as intergenerational provides a broader view to analyze what happened in one generation and how it affected the older and younger ones (Danieli 1998). Four of the Yazidi women I interviewed are the members of the same family; Haje is the mother of the family, Rengin and Mizgin are her daughters and Bejne is the aunt of Haje. I may say that they are from different generations, but I propose that the idea of generation is not precisely determined by the age; their experiences are shaped constantly, and their reactions to fear are altering respectively. For those four women, the critical decades they encountered and also the transmission of their experiences and narrations to each other affect the memory and its narration.

For Haje, Rengin and Mizgin, their stories focus on the death of the father of their family, who had exposed to torture in the 90s, and because of the diseases after torture he confined to bed for years. Haje and Rengin are the witnesses of what happened in the 90s. At that time, since Haje took care of her husband, Rengin became the mother of the house and raised her siblings before she was not ten from the view of Mizgin and Rengin. Mizgin did not directly witness what happened in the 90s but she saw the years that her father was sick abed. Even though she did not directly witness what happened in the 90s, Mizgin brought up the death of her father and the encounters in the 90s at the very center of her narration. She related this memory with her own experiences.

> *"They tried to take the land before, there was pressure for nineteen years. When I was little, my father was still alive, the family members were sleeping upstairs. My father, mother and I were sleeping downstairs. I remember only one thing. You know the hole of the door; my mother was closing the hole of the door with napkins, for the reason that no one saw the light. Actually, we grew up with this kind of fear. If anyone asks what the advantage of growing with fear is, we stand up powerful, powerful and not afraid of. Are we afraid, not much actually. May I go outside at midnight? I surely can, but I look out at the environment carefully. Namely, we grew up with this fear. If a person is closing even*

the hole of the door, she is encountering extreme things, uncomfortable things. She is doing this because she is afraid. We grew up this way." (Mizgin)

Mizgin was narrating the fear fed by the chronic state of violence through stressing the continuum or repeating of experiences during her lifetime and back. She told the lawsuit going on against the people from the next village because they tried to take the land owned by Mizgin's family. According to her statement, the people from the next village had also tried to take their lands nineteen years ago, but this time their attempting to take the lands coincided the period of Sinjar Genocide.

"It happened like that: we have lands, and the next village is Muslims'. They've tried to take our lands as if the lands are theirs. In this village, we have crops right next to here, they've tried to take them from us. I mean these are our crops. It happened after the Sinjar Genocide. They said that 'these are our crops, you took from us, we would do something because of that'. The Muslims living in the next village said these. They are trying to take the lands forcefully now. They are trying to take our rights, our lands. They got into the lands, planted the crops and collected the harvests. They sowed the wheat, it turned green, and then the court decision came up. They said that the crops cannot be used, you should destroy the harvests and crops, because no one has the right on the lands now. After all, it is a court decision and you are trying to use the lands and crops. So our people went there with two or three tractors. The soldiers intervened in the situation, surely there would have happened something like that. When the soldiers intervened in the situation, they tried to assault us, they tried to assault our village and my brothers. The soldiers were there for the only reason of protecting us, because there was a court decision. They tried to assault and take our house, but the court is still going on for three or four years. No one is planting the lands now. We will see what will happen. They wanted the thing that is our right. We've faced many threats. They said that they would take the lands anyway even if we put effort to take them. They said that we would do what the ISIL did to Yazidis in Sinjar. They've come with this attitude. We, surely, went forward with the trust and support of the state. We never did anything unjustly. They were always coming to us with that kind of staff. They did not come as one village. Think that! They brought their families from other villages to assault us, to walk all over us. If they came here alone, I would not say anything. I would think that it is not a problem but they were coming all together. Were we afraiding of this? Well, there was a fear; after all you are only one village, you cannot handle many villages, can you? But now, we are waiting for the state's decision, we will see what will happen. If the state gives our rights, of course we will be happy. If our rights will not be

given to us, I don't know, we will think that it is unjust. It is continuing for 3-4 years. The lands are given neither to us or them. In old times, they were coming to plant the crops for us, they were using our tractors, they were the drivers. They were planting our crops for us, and now they are saying all of these, they are saying that 'you are taking our crops'." (Mizgin).

Since the Muslims threatened her family with doing what the ISIL did in Sinjar, the narrative on the fear of ISIL, which is the organization perpetrating extreme violence, and the fear of everyday life, likely relatable with Muslims as the dominant group of the area, was merging. After the Sinjar Genocide, some Yazidis from Sinjar migrated to Mizgin's village. The villagers had them as guests in their houses and listened to their experiences during the massacre and migration. I propose that this sharing process and the threat by the Muslims of the neighboring village circulated the fear and reshaped the structure of it. The source of fear widened; the ISIL was not the only source of the fear but it was related to another source, Muslims, feeding the fear of everyday life.

"Something happened like that; we were careful much more because we were afraid, we were really afraid very much. The honor was gone, lots of people died, people escaped. They came here, but both we and they were scared after the massacre, after the ferman. We tried to be more careful, I mean, we tried not to show ourselves. Of course, was there our state? It was always there. Was it protecting us? Surely, it was protecting us. But still we had fear and something like that. Because as a woman I was behaving cautiously more; because I was afraid, the honor was also gone. I mean, I think there is nothing important than having the conflict with her honor and fear for it for a woman. We were afraid continuously. Besides, there was the idea to take us to Germany, we thought about the idea of migration and leaving here. Then, after it was slowly calming down, we moved on our lives. Surely, are we cautious; yes we are. It gave us fear, I mean. There was fear of ISIL and the circumstances happening in our environment. You know that ISIL was a thing made in the name of Islam. Since we were alone, living in the only Yazidi village here, and all of the villages around us are Muslim... I am not disparaging anyone... There is a fear, I mean, there is something unavoidably. It seems huge, like a huge fiction. Someone is saying that I am Muslim, but cutting the head, taking your honor, I don't know, causing a massacre... You would inevitably be afraid of the people around you." (Mizgin).

Like many participants stated, Mizgin mentioned the fear of losing *namus* (honor). She was referring to the abduction of Yazidi women by ISIL in Sinjar, but she

pointed out that it is quite possible to encounter this because it is perpetrated in the name of Islam. During the fieldwork, I have never met or encounter the people from the Muslim village, but I sensed the fear in this context. The women in the village were not going outside, and when a car was passing the road of the village everyone in the house was checking if they are "stranger" who may be defined as not Yazidi or any Muslim friend. When the sons of the house I stayed in went out and were late to come back home, the mother of the house was worried about them and she was calling them several times to say that 'be careful'.

Since the lawsuit still continues and there is no legal decision to terminate this tension and the intimidation by Muslims are still going on.

> *"3-4 years passed like this. Our road for transportation is passing by their village. Think even of the children. The children around four-five years old are spitting at us, while we are passing through the road by a car. We are staying in the car and they are literally spitting at us. Why are you spitting? We are just passing and moving on our lives. You should also move on. If we are not behaving like this, you cannot do it. At first, when we destroyed the crops, they closed the road and said that you cannot pass through the road. What they taught to their children is not nice. They learned all these from their elders and are doing it to us. In the first week, they blocked the road and we stayed in the village for a week. The state came. It is the road that we are using to go to the province, they closed because it is in their village, and they established a wall. So the state came and destroyed it. For example, we went out to walk with my two friends from Sinjar and a person from Germany who was visiting us. It was not the road in their village, they did not have any relation there. It was far from their village at least five or six kilometers. They came with the sticks. They came with a car, and every one of them had a big stick. They said that you cannot walk here, these roads belong to us, you cannot do anything here. We asked 'who are you, why do we have to explain ourselves to you?'. After the argument, our people saw the car and tried to come here. He said that 'where is your brother, he should come here'. I said that my brother was not afraid of them just because they had the sticks, he would come. I said that 'even if you want to block our roads like a bandit, my brother is not scared'. My brother tried to come from the back road, but we stopped him, and came back home. It was a bandit after all, how can you handle a bandit, how can you explain yourself to him? When we came home, my mother and family were scared. After all, we were the women, and they came with the sticks to block our road like a bandit. Now, these are still happening, but we are staying away. The only thing that we are seeing is the behavior of the children. The hate of their family is transmitted to their children. They are doing something, swearing and spitting. We do*

not react anymore, we get used to it." (Mizgin)

"N: How was your relationship with them while they were your workers?

M: It was not bad, we are too good. For example, when we had nane miriyan[1]*, they were all coming. When there was a bairam, we both were going to each other. We do not know how we've come to this position. Did they feel powerful after the Sinjar genocide? Or did they say that we could take the lands through this power, they would be afraid? I don't know. We used to be good, we were kirve*[2]*."*

I argue that all the sources of fear; being labelled and marginalized as *haram*, the oppression and violence in the 90s, the hazard of ISIL's violence causing the loss of lives and honor, and the threats of Muslims, seem interwoven with each other and together they expressed the chronic state of fear as independent from the time and place as in certain context. While the memories of violent moments were transmitted from one to another, their expression was fear as a word used by all the women carrying those memories.

"When we go to the graveyard on the mountain, they are reporting us to the soldiers saying that they are helping the people from outside."(Mizgin)

In the narratives of fear, I found something intriguing which also led me to analyze the mourning rituals and the importance of the graveyards in daily lives of the villagers in the next chapter. The graveyards were the places included in the narratives of fear. I mentioned the assault of the graveyard and the fear of Bejne based on persecution by soldiers because of going to the graveyard on the mountain at the beginning of this chapter. Besides all that, Mizgin talked about being reported by Muslims in the next village to the soldiers. In her statement above, while she was saying "*the people from outside*," she meant the Kurdish guerillas. The ongoing conflict between the soldiers and the Kurdish guerillas was already a source of fear, because some of the participants said that the graveyard was on the location of a militarily active zone, and if they went there unnoticed, they might be persecuted because the soldiers could not know if they were with the guerillas or not, or they might encounter an armed conflict between the soldiers and guerillas. However, I argue that being reported triggers the fear of being suspected, marginalized or "out-

[1]Mortuary feast in Kurdish.

[2]The families vowed to support each other whether spiritually or economically for the lifetime.

sider". Reporting with the accusation of helping guerillas was an effort to situate the Yazidis in existent conflict, and increasement of the fear that was already circulating. It was a fear affecting the relationship with the soldiers and their daily practices, and it might cause some silences like not investigating who assaulted the graveyards as I mentioned before and proposing different reasons for the destruction of the graveyard like the windy weather.

In this chapter, I observed and analyzed a violent process instead of the certain genocide narrative belong to specific time and place. I chased and showed fear as a concept expressing the chronic state of violence in the narratives and its expression on the bodies as a reaction because those bodily reactions also constituted the narrative, especially the silenced and discarded parts of it. All the participants of this research had unique ways to express the fear as I observed in their narratives, gestures, mimics and all the other bodily reactions, and moreover in their verbal expressions of the bodily changes and feelings. I argue that all these unique stories demonstrate how the Yazidi women in Mardin interpret the chronic state of violence. However, I believe there are still so many questions which would find answers through further research. All the sources of fear are already containing the moments, events and interactions which are very nuanced, deep, unique and fragile. So I propose that there are still many layers in those narratives waiting for searching with different perspectives and questions to show the variety of stories, interpretations and reactions.

In the next chapter, I will analyze the position of the graveyards in daily life of Yazidis in Mardin and the narratives about those graveyards. In addition to that, I will explore the mourning rituals embedded in daily life and burial ceremonies with respect to views of gendered performance and what was the performances of mourning proposing. Besides, I will look into digital mourning which is a new space to express the grief and share it.

3. MOURNING, PERFORMANCE, AND GENDER

"On sunny days, you can see the Sinjar Mountains from here," said Mizgin during a fieldwork visit to the Yazidi graveyard. As I heard my research participants converse in Kurdish, Turkish, and German about their lives on both sides of the border, as well as in Germany, my whole orientation was shifting. I had come to this village expecting to connect with local Yazidi people, and instead, I found a cross-borders place hosting Yazidis from Turkey, Germany, and Iraq, as well as people from other communities such as Syriacs and Muslims. In the literature on Yazidis, which I mentioned in the introduction, it is common to come across such concepts as "cultural marginality" and "closed society." Yet, during my fieldwork in Mardin, I witnessed a highly globalized Yazidi community. Connecting via FaceTime with Yazidis in the diaspora for a burial ceremony in order to enable their participation and mourning, or encountering a woman Sheikh from Germany visiting the village were ordinary happenings. Even the daily routines were scheduled accordingly. Most villagers were staying up late to be able to talk online with their relatives or loved ones in other time zones. Although it is possible to say that this community lives in an *out-of-the-way place* (Tsing 1993); in terms of its physical location at the border of Turkey and Syria, away from major cities or travel routes, their daily lives and imaginaries are unexpectedly global, with close ties to Yazidis in Syria, Iraq and those in the diaspora. I have been intrigued by this *global-local connection* (Piot 1999; Tsing 1993), and the cultural and political shifts that it has enabled as a topic for further research. As Tsing argues, I believe that putting gender in the discussion of this global-local connection enables us to see and comprehend the wider cultural negotiations.

In this global interaction, I was stunned by the number of burial ceremonies. Every time I went to the villages there were at least one ceremony. The lost ones were not the local people but the people who were living in Germany. Someday we were just waking up and had a call that informed us to prepare for the burial ceremony. Yet, the village was always ready to do it. There were always Yazidi men and women

from many villages and the Syriac and Muslim friends, not women but the men[1], to help the interment. There were people who were responsible for live video streaming on Facebook for a closed group of community members and their friends. Sometimes a professional photographer would participate in the ceremony to take photos and shoot videos via drone. The lost one would be brought by a hearse and the women would welcome the hearse. While the coffin was taken out, next to the hearse, the women would salute the lost one with *dilo*[2] which is to wail for the dead. After that, the men would bury the body and cover it with cement. During this process, some men would fire the gun into the air. Then, the ceremony would come to an end. In this chapter, I will analyze the mortuary feasting and mourning practices as a part of daily life. I will elaborate on the details of the burial ceremony as a gendered performance, and its visibility in a digital world which is proposing a new place to share the grief that I called as digital mourning later in this chapter. Before all of these, first I would like to focus on the graveyards as the crucial parts of everyday life as I also stated in the previous chapter in the context of fear.

Mizgin said they were walking when they were bored, and the arrival point was the graveyard. I must say that I would not visualize a walk for mourning or state that the walks were because of continuous grief. In fact, during the walks, we never talked about grief or lost ones. Instead, I remembered that we played a game using wheat[3] and laughed. The graveyard was a crucial part of life, but I should be cautious to express how the relationship with the graveyard or grief was complex. I felt the grief, fear and enjoyment at the same time. The graveyard was the place where life was celebrated besides being a place where grief was felt, shared and performed. I believe that it was impossible to live in a permanent state of fear and grief, and the people's creativity was offering the various ways of surviving and feeling the joy of life.

Surely, the ceremony was not happening every day but most of the days people visited the graveyard whether there were special events like *cejn*, bairam, or not. The graveyard was the first thing that the people wanted to show me, not their houses or lands. After I met with Mizgin and her family, she said that I should see the graveyard. When we arrived there, she emphasized how the graveyard looks like Lalish, the holy region for Yazidis in Iraq where the people go to become *hecî*,

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[1]Even though there were many daily interactions between Yazidi, Syriac and Muslim women, I did not encounter any women from those communities at the ceremony of interment. Those men participating in the ceremony were responsible to help with the process of interment. There was no one just participating to offer their condolences.

[2]The other usage is *dengbej*, but in my fieldwork, the people were using the word *dilo* instead of *dengbej*.

[3]Since the wheat ears are sticky, we were throwing them to each other to stick them to our clothes. It was like playing darts with wheat.

pilgrim. There were symbols on the gravestones like sun and peacock. Some of the graves had the shape of a room, complete with a dome, like the temple in Lalish and locked doors. The domes and other symbolic references provided the sense of staying at the Lalish. If there was a *cejn* like *Çarşema Sor*, which is the day when the world was fermented by God, and life began, the graves were decorated with boxes of painted eggs, colored stones and trinkets. The women were singing *dilo* to celebrate *Çarşema Sor*. They were stating in these songs who was there to celebrate the bairam of their lost ones like they were talking directly to them. I felt as if these occasions constituted a spiritual reunion for the people in the village and the ones living far away.

During my fieldwork, I met many Yazidis from Germany visiting the village and their relatives. When the guests came from Germany, they would bring meat in lots of bags to different households for cooking on the brazier. After they gave the meat to the villagers, the first visit of the guests would be to the graveyard. Then they would come back from the graveyard to the house and the people in the village would eat the meal together with the guests. The food was dedicated to *miriyan*, dead ones. It was called as *nane miriyan* in Kurdish, which may be translated as the bread of deads. In Turkish, they said *hayır yemeği*, which means food for the sake of the dead. So the feast for mourning or the sake of the dead's afterlife was a part of the continuum of daily life, especially during the period of spring and summer, when Yazidis in the diaspora prefer to visit their homeland, as local people explained to me.

One day, on a quiet morning, Haje's family had a call that their relatives and family friends from Germany would come to visit them. We immediately had our breakfast. After that, Mizgin and I started to clean up the house. I washed the dishes and cleaned the furniture while she was sweeping the house. After a while, the relatives and friends came, they had lots of bags full of chicken and red meat. At that moment, I realized that it was not just a regular visit but it was also a feast. Mizgin said before that when their relatives from Germany came to visit, they sometimes brought the food to cook for a mortuary feast. In every mortuary feast, whether organized beforehand or spontaneous, the food served was grilled chicken and meat. I and Mizgin set a long table for the guests on the porch and started to make salad. Haje called the two elder sons of the house to prepare the brazier and grilled the meats. While we were preparing the food, Zozan, who was the neighbor, came to help us. She made the tea and served it to the guests. During that time, all the neighbors in the village came and participated in the feast. They were talking about their lives, work and children. When I and Mizgin prepared the siders of the food, we sat with the guests, and the sons of the house served the grilled chicken and

meat. After we all ate the meals and the last tea was served, I was tired and went upstairs. Mir, the younger son of the house, called a Muslim friend who was able to play *tembûr*[4]. After the friend came, he, some of the young relatives who came from Germany, all the children of the house and I sat in the kitchen. We started to drink, play *tembûr* and sing together. During that time, the elders were still on the porch and talking. Around midnight, the relatives left the village. I and Mizgin started to clean the house again, and the feast was over.

I argue that the positions of hosts and guests reshaped because the social structure changed in a way depending on the migration. The relatives and friends were living in diaspora, but the burials of diaspora Yazidis executed in the homeland. The feast was not in the house of the person who would like to organize to mourn for the loss. The person who would like to organize the feast was actually the guest for the locals, and the work of the feast was performed by the locals in their own house. It felt like there was a loss for all of us, and the new structure of the feast offered an alternative way of sharing the grief. During the feast, the people were conversing with each other and trying to catch up. At some point, the son of the house, where I was staying, started to play tembûr and we were singing together. It was like including the losses to the enjoyment and flaw of life. As R Hemer (2013) discusses, mortuary feasting is a space where the personhood, emotions and relations are publicly performed and transformed. In her analysis on the mortuary feast in New Ireland, she adds the deceased into the discussion of the dichotomy of host and guest, and proposes that none of these are homogeneous. She emphasizes that the personhood is an issue for the rituals of feasting, especially of the deceased and the hosting group. I agree that the idea of personhood performed in everyday life appeared in the ritual of feasting because I might not state that every feast was performed in the same way; they were all unique productions. In addition to the personhood, emotions and relations, I do argue that gender roles performing in everyday life were another crucial effect on the ritual of feasting performances, and there may be a transformation for the gender roles. For instance, cooking for guests or in everyday life and serving the meal were generally done by the women, but during the *nane miriyan* the men and the women were almost equally responsible for them. Among the tripartite structure of the mortuary feast constituting hosts, guests and the deceased, I questioned my position if I was an outsider or not. I believe that the position of myself was as blurred as the deceased but I did not seem as an outsider. As fitting in Hemer's argument of not homogeneous tripartite structure, my position was transforming with respect to every other experience of the mortuary feasting. At the beginning of the fieldwork, in mortuary feasts, I

[4]A string instrument used in traditional Kurdish music. It is similar to baglama used in Turkish folk music.

was situated as an observer by the villagers, who tried to understand the Yazidi practices, so I was not responsible for any tasks of the feasts. I was just taking photos, shooting videos and listening to all the conservations between the locals and diaspora Yazidis. Sometimes they were giving advice to me about what I should record. After two mortuary feasts, I became a guest which was introduced to other guests and I started to participate in the conversations. In the fourth feasting, I finally transformed into one of the hosts. I was responsible for making tea, serving food and fruits. It was not just a process I naturally involved in, but I was also asked to be part of the hosting. For example, when the guests came, Haje was telling me that I should make tea. She was directly calling me to serve.

Since the mortuary feasting was not always organized right after the burial or the anniversary of the death, I started to think about the period of bereavement. During our interview Mizgin talked about an old practice marking the mourning period, which was not performed anymore. In old times, actually still in the holy region, Lalish, growing hair, beard and mustache, and making braids of hair were the traditions. According to her narrative, the women and men had braids and when they lost a person, they were cutting one of the braids. When the braid became as long as before the death, the period of mourning was completed for them. Woodrick (1995), in the research about Yucatec Maya women, also reflects on the period of bereavement. She mentions the meaning of the burial ceremony for Greek peasants in terms of the mourning period. The ceremony is important for the Greek peasants because "mourning ends when the body is exhumed" and "the deceased is no longer recognized as an individual"; the deceased becomes a part of collective identity (1995, 410). However, for the Yucatec Maya, the soul of the deceased remains in its own personality and the relation between the deceased and the loved ones continues. So the period cannot be expressed with a specific length. As a similar example of Yucatec Maya, in the villages I went to, the interaction between the deceased and the loved one was going on through the mortuary feasts and memorializing the bereaved with saying *dilo* in everyday life.

Although there was just one graveyard which has been used actively for the villages I visited, there were two more graveyards. As I stated in the previous chapter, one of them was the old graveyard which Bejne warned me not to go. There was no permission for a custodian to take care of the graveyard because the area was in the zone of military operations. So, when I asked about the old graveyard, Mizgin told me that she went there once and some of the bones of corpses were exposed, and it was almost impossible to be sure whose graves were there. It may be bold to argue that there is invisible or hidden grief. I would not propose that the fear and oppression was preventing them from feeling and performing the grief, but the

fear did not allow the performing and feeling the grief at the graveyard which is the place that meant to perform and display the grief in the first place. I believe this may shift the way of expressing and sharing grief and even the burial ceremony itself, and it should be an important topic for further research. I witnessed that the graves were covered with cement. I wondered when this practice had begun because I had heard about the bones being scattered across the field in the old graveyard and it seemed to me that cement might have been there to protect the body from such intrusions. However, the answer was that "It was always like this. How do you bury your bodies? Don't you use the cement for covering?" So I have no response whether this is a conscious alteration or not and whether it depends on fear or not, but I argue that there may be a shift in ritual practices throughout the continuous transformation of the social structure.

The second graveyard was hard to identify as a graveyard. I did not even realize that it was a graveyard. I and Mizgin were walking on the village road to go to her sister's house. There were children playing games right next to the road. We smiled at them and went on. After a few hours, Mizgin said "you also saw the graveyard of the children." I could not create a complete sentence. In my mind, I started to criticize my observation capacity. I could just say "which", "when", "where"? She said that right next to the road we were walking, where there were children playing. So I wanted to see it again. When we went back there, I realized why I did not see it as a graveyard. There were just little stones on the soil, and the children were playing there, right by the stones. I carefully looked at and noticed that the little stones were ordered to create separate spaces which were apparently the graves. There were no specific gravestones to know the names. It was also interesting that Mizgin did not know why there was a graveyard like this and how long it had been there. It was a place that no one claimed.

On the same village road, there was actually another grave which I immediately realized the first time we were passing through. I asked Mizgin whose grave that was and why it was a single grave protected just by an iron structure. It was the grave of a Kurdish guerilla, and she told the story of how and why it was placed there. Yet, there was no narrative about the graves of children. I suggest that there should be grief that was lost or silenced, since the objects were unknown or unspoken, but I did not also hear anything about the grief. Still, it was significant that Mizgin pointed out the place even though the story behind was not there.

As Aslı Zengin (2020)[5] expresses, "the cemetery for the unknown exposes a story of dispossession that denies the marginalized a social afterlife entrenched in a hegemonic spatial and temporal order." In her analysis, she focuses on the cemeteries for the unknown which contain the graves of the deceased buried by the state and called as unidentified or unclaimed because they were in the margins that may be based on ethnicity, religion, sect, gender and sex. She proposes the term "transgressive death" to understand the moment of the death and the afterlives of the deceased. Through following the way she opens to understand the meaning of the death in the margins, I am still not able to express the margins of the children's graves, because it was not even recorded as a cemetery by the state. It is hard to determine the margins and the meanings of death for both state and the people. Still, I believe that recognizing the existence of this place and its expression may bring lots of questions for further research.

After I saw the importance of the graveyards, mortuary feasts and burial ceremonies in the everyday life of Yazidis as I explained above, I decided to do a thorough analysis of the mourning practices. When I first faced the mourning practices, it was a bairam. We were in the graveyard, and the loved ones showed their griefs through different performances which I argue that they are gendered. Then, I realized that the performances were not done just on the occasion of bairam, but there were various performances exhibited in the burial ceremony and the visit of graveyards. In addition to that, the process of mourning and the performances related to the grief were displayed in the digital world through the live stream on Facebook. In what follows, I will first look into mourning as gendered performance based on my fieldwork observations, and search the meaning and possibilities accompanying this way of analysis. After that, I will analyze the mourning practiced on social media which I call digital mourning since the circulation of the grief and participation in the ceremonies are digital.

[5] https://allegralaboratory.net/turkish-cemeteries-for-the-unknown-afterlives/?fbclid=IwAR0m8kdV595ksP4hPXglr8AFMdq
https://allegralaboratory.net/magical-afterlives-in-post-genocidal-turkey/?fbclid=IwAR11Gol-uL2qY31IqFVuzawS$_I w4m - M2mJSYrGpIQuJ - Npdk5yb5e4nhRhU$

3.1 Mourning As Gendered Performance

Black is the color that should be noticed. I was in a house in one of the villages I went to. I had just done the interviews with the hosts. We were preparing lunch on the porch. Then, an old couple came, they were dressed fully black. They brought lots of food and flowers. I introduced myself and at that moment Ari, the father of the house, whispered in my ear. He said "you should not ask any questions to them, they are in mourning, you see they are dressed black, they lost their son." I silently sat on a chair until they had gone and ate the food as a sign of respect because they brought the food to us as *nane miriyan*, in the name of their dead son. Then I started to think about the mourning expressions on the very surfaces of bodies. I argue that dressing black after a loss or during burial ceremonies was also a common expression among many religious groups. However, I realized that this common expression may have different meanings in different contexts because the interaction with the losses, their loved ones and even the graveyard may not be the same. According to my observations, dressing black was not just related to the moment of burial or the rituals after that. I participated in several burial ceremonies of Yazidis during the fieldwork. I saw that most people did not dress black except for the scarves of some women. In fact, I saw just one man who came to Ari's house wearing black, and he was grieving for his son.

"I have been wearing a black scarf to respect their mourning." (Haje)

One day I went to a village for a *nane miriyan* with Mizgin's family. The host was one of their relatives, but apparently there was a conflict among them before I arrived. Suddenly there was a verbal fight between the host and Haje. Haje took off her scarf and started to walk to her house. Since her house was in a different village, I and Ali ran after her and took her to the house by car. When we arrived at the house, she told us what the fight was about, and she said that she had been wearing a black scarf to respect their mourning, but they did not respond respectively. I assert that the women had a kind of obligation to be in ownership of the grief and should show the respect accompanied by this responsibility via their dress in black. Actually, it was also important to show my ownership of the grief for the villagers. When I was going to a burial ceremony for the first time, I did not know that I should wear a black scarf or jacket. Since the weather was hot, I was wearing a white t-shirt. The grandfather of the house asked me if I had brought anything

black like a jacket. Surely, it was not mandatory, but it was the first time I was participating in a public ritual and probably it might affect the relations with the people. As a guest of the grandfather's house, it was important for him. Besides, as a woman, it was an open space to display my ownership of the grief. During *Çarşema Sor*, we visited the graveyard to celebrate the loved ones' bairam. When we came to the grave of Mizgin's father, I burst into tears because of the *dilo* sung by Haje. For a week following that incident, I heard that the people were talking about my cry. Some of them asked me directly if I cried. They were pleased that I owned the grief as if the lost one was my relative and I was "one of them". I found this reaction crucial because crying was expected from me as a woman, not the men attending, whether Yazidi or Muslim.

> *"I only remember the day that we lost him. It was the night, we were all sitting and the aunt of my mother came. He was at the hospital, he was always being treated by dialysis, I guess it was three times a week. One day, after he went to the hospital for dialysis, he became worse. He was transferred from the hospital in the province to the central hospital of Mardin. We thought that it was normal, sometimes he was becoming like this. They did not come until the night. The aunt of my mother came from her house, the television was open, I was a child, I was doing nothing. When she came, she said to turn off the television. When someone dies, we turn off the television, it should not be open. My sister understood the situation. Our cousin was also there, and she said that he died. I did not want to believe, actually, I did not want to do anything. While I was waiting for them, I fell asleep. I don't know what was the time, it was around three or four a.m. I woke up because of my mother's wails. She was saying my name at that time. I was laying on the side of my brother. I said that 'Brother, are you hearing, she is saying my name'. My father was dead. At that time, I don't know how I said something like this or in which feeling, I don't remember. Surely, I was crying under the blanket. I lost a piece of me. It was a weird feeling, I was so small, I couldn't understand anything." (Mizgin)*

Mizgin narrated what happened and felt on the day when she lost her father as above. I also listened to the story from other family members. The grief was expressed by the sons of the house differently. It was an important day that actually I did not ask directly to no one in the house, but every member of the family mentioned it. The sons pointed out that even during the burial ceremony they did not cry. They were still mourning in a way - writing the day of the father's loss on WhatsApp bio- and commemorating him, but they emphasized that they did not cry. Then, I started to think about the mourning performances and the ways of expression of grief.

I do not intend to strictly differentiate the performances and classify them according to gender, I believe that it may cause the reproduction of the designated gender roles in my own analysis. I argue that these performances are already gendered, and analyzing them respectively may open new possibilities to see the resilience coming out from the fractures of social structure and its effects on transformation. I aim to analyze the performances taking gender as an analytical category because I argue that the mourning performances are shaped by gender norms and constantly evolve through gendered negotiations among the community members and between the members and 'traditional' rules and practices, such as the execution of the burial ceremonies. I propose that during those negotiations coming out from the evolution of social structure, gendered performances and gender itself are redefined and reconstructed. While I investigate the mourning performances and the roles of men and women in burial ceremonies and feasts, I cautiously focus on these transformations of gender.

During the burial ceremonies, there were two main tasks shared by the people. One was to bury the body which was executed by the men, and the other was the verbal and bodily expression of the grief which was practiced by the women. The men were not talking about the loss. They were mixing the cement, preparing the grave and burying the body. At the same time, the women were saluting the loss, saying *dilo* and crying for the loss. They were expressing the grief using the music, words and their own bodies. They were mostly wearing black scarves and moving their arms. Until the end of the ceremony, the women seemed to me as the visible carriers of grief. Surely, the men were displaying their grief at the end of the ceremony, but the way they were practicing was intriguing. They were shooting into the air. During the visit to the graveyards for special occasions like *Çarşema Sor*, I observed a similar picture. The women were walking among the graves, saying *dilo*, performing bodily expressions with arm movements. At that time, the men were silently saluting the graves and taking place on the periphery of the graveyard. They were watching and listening to the women. When the women finished their performances, they were all leaving the graveyard without any talk about the loss or grief. The mourning practice of the men was limited to the moment which was the end of the interment, and the grief was expressed with an object evoking the violence or anger. On the other hand, the graveyard and the ceremonies were the open spaces for the women to show their existence and feelings about the loss. I remind myself, these differences in the mourning practices should not be taken granted as the gender roles designated from the beginning. In fact, I argue that it may be an outcome of the social reconstruction which is still transforming in

everyday life. According to the social structure of Yazidis, a kind of caste system[6], the people called *Mirid* are not able to execute any religious ceremony. The men inherited as *Şêx* were only assigned for this obligation, and even if a woman was also *Şêx*, she was not allowed to do any religious ceremony. A *Şêx* woman was only assigned for religious consultation of the *Mirid* women. Yet, what I saw during the burial ceremonies was quite different from this structure. There were no *Şêx* families living in the villages I went to for the fieldwork, so the ceremonies related to the religious traditions like interment or bairam should be executed by *Mirid*. Since I have never seen a ceremony performed by a *Şêx*, I am not able to state if there was any difference in terms of the actual ceremony. However, it is possible to say that the absence of the *Şêx* family may open a space for new regulations, which may increase the visibility of the women in the ceremonies and graveyards as the public places. It is also important to say that this visibility was not for all Yazidi women, but the old and married women. Mary Elaine Hegland (1998) searches the mourning rituals of Pakistani Shi'a women, and she traces the transforming meaning, identity and gender in this patriarchal community, as she stated. According to her, although the Shi'a mourning rituals such as flagellation are under the domination of the men, women executed their own rituals through using their bodies as the site of the power of resistance. They practice grief with their very unique ways which Hegland interprets that there are gender meanings in addition to religious, spiritual and political meanings. The intriguing argument is the transformation of the meaning, identity and gender are also processed through using religious obligations. She gives the example that a Shi'a woman continues to participate in the ceremonies although her husband forbids her to go. The women can stand against the husband because it is religiously allowed to participate in (1998, 253). Hegland also states that:

> "Shia'a women especially, members of an entrenched religious minority, generally avoided forms of gender resistance, which would disrupt Shi'a identity markers and unifying ideology. Resistance through ritual performance, proclaiming women's competence through practice rather than verbally, did not threaten Shi'a interests. Rather, women's outstanding ritual performances, outreach activities, and strengthening of ties served Shi'a interests and therefore pleased male leaders, while simultaneously subtly contesting gender characterizations" (2003, 420).

I argue that the Yazidi women were also showing their competence and confidence in

[6]There are three main casts ordered: *Şêx*, *Pîr* and *Mirid*. The people belonging to the casts of *Şêx* and *Pîr* are priestly and upper castes than *Mirid* which refers to ordinary people who should follow the *Şêxs* and *Pîrs*.

the mourning rituals through their performances as Hegland expressed for Pakistani Shi'a women, because they were situated as the visible carrier of mourning within the society, and there were no religious leaders to dominate the ceremonies. The whole performances constituting verbal and bodily expressions by Yazidi women were determined by the Yazidi women and conducted by them. At this point, it is also important to note that each production of mourning practices were unique to the performers, even though they may affect each other throughout the time.

"There is no burial. How can I say dilo?" (Besna)

I was requesting to listen to *dilo* from each woman I interviewed at the end of our talk, but no one said it even though I listened to *dilo* from them in everyday life or at the graveyard. When we finished the interview with Besna, I asked for a *dilo* and she said that she cannot say *dilo* because there is no burial. After a while, we were sitting in the kitchen with Besna and her daughter Berfin. The son and the father of the house were not at the house. I made coffee for us and Besna started coffee reading -a kind of fortune telling- for us. We were talking, singing and laughing. Suddenly, Besna began to say a *dilo*. I was confused at that moment because she refused to say dilo before because of the absence of a burial. When she finished the *dilo*, Berfin said that it was for her lover in her youth. Then, Besna told the story. They were in love, but they had to get married to different people. In the 90s, a white car came to the village and took him from his house, and Besna did not hear anything about him from then. After I listened to *dilo* and the narrative of loss, I realized that the burial, she was referring, did not have to be a ceremony in the graveyard or the loss did not have to be at that moment. She was referring to the feeling of grief and the need for mourning. Wailing for the deceased or loss is expected from the women during the burial ceremony or visits of the graveyard. Wellenkamp (1988) also mentions wailing as a practice that must powerfully show the feelings of sorrow and pain among Toraja. For example, fainting during the wailing proves the intensity of feelings, and sometimes the wailers faint during the funerals in Toraja. Besides anyone who would like to wail for the deceased may do so, although many of the wailers are close relatives. It is perceived as a release of the emotions out of the body. The collective wailing of Yazidi women in the cemetery may seem similar to Wellenkamp's explanation. The wail was more appreciated when it was more visible and sensible through the bodily movements and the loud of the voice in public ritual. However, the spontaneous wailing in everyday life, which was not collective practice, was not open to the public and there was no need

to express powerfully. I may say it was private, but important to mourn for the publicly unspoken loss and heal after the death.

3.2 Digital Mourning

> "When one works on work, on the work of mourning, when one works at the work of mourning, one is already, yes, already, doing such work, enduring this work of mourning from the very start, letting it work within oneself, and thus authorizing oneself to do it, according it to oneself, according it within oneself, and giving oneself this liberty of finitude, the most worthy and the freest possible" (Derrida, Brault, and Naas 1996, 172)

I woke up and saw this Facebook notification on my phone: "*Miran was live at Graveyard X: Keviye şekir pîraka Ahmede alik rahma Xwede lebe.*" According to the notification, Kevi, the grandmother of Ahmed, had died, and the person sharing the video was offering condolences. I sent a message to Mizgin asking if Kevi had really died. For hours, I could not receive any news from her. I saw that almost everyone in the village was on the video, and I thought that they were all busy with the ceremony. Mizgin might have been taking care of the granddaughter of Kevi, that's why I was not able to reach them. Suddenly, in this ambiguity, I felt myself in a kind of grief. I remembered that I was waking up every morning and watching Kevi while she was slowly walking to the place in front of her house to sit because the sunlight was perfect there. I was thinking of all the memories I had with her. It was impossible to go there because of the flight restrictions of Covid-19, and I felt pain because of that. I remembered the day Ali said to Mizgin that she should call to inform him when Kevi died, so he would participate in the ceremony. I thought that he could not go there because of the pandemic. As these thoughts were flowing, along with grief, I could not share with anyone that she was dead. I almost believed it was a day of mourning for me but it was hard to open my feelings to anyone because I was not sure of the death. There was no other information on the video except the name in the notification. I was just seeing Haje and the other Yazidi women saying *dilo* on the live streaming. There was no picture of the loss to be sure. Still, I was feeling the grief that I should claim. I even thought that I may cook *helva* since it was the desert made after death or for commemorating the loved ones

in my family tradition. After several hours, I was finally able to talk with Mizgin, and she said that she was not the Kevi that I know. She was another person whose body came from Germany for interment in the Yazidi graveyard. I felt like I was in grief, although there was no loss. As Mizgin said, many people called her and asked the same question. So, for many people, it might be the day of mourning as if it was the right time for it.

During the hours of ambiguity of Kevi's death, I had a call from my sister. She said that our aunt - who was the cousin of my father but we called her aunt- was dead because of COVID-19. Five days ago, her tests were determined as COVID positive, and two days ago the doctors said that she was intubated. I was confused about what I feel and what I could express. The death was sudden, the deceased was unreachable. I thought that I should call my father to offer my condolences, but I couldn't. I silently sat and thought about how I would grieve for this kind of loss. It was similar to the statement of Besna: "*There is no burial. How can I say dilo?*". There was no body, grave or burial that I was allowed to see or participate in. So, how would I mourn? How would I share the grief with the other loved ones? While thinking of these questions, I realized that I have already mourned for another loss, Kevi. I participated in the burial ceremony via Facebook, I cried for her, I wrote to the other loved ones, and I even thought about doing *helva*. So, what was the difference?

The first time I learned that they are streaming all the burial ceremonies on a Facebook page, I was amazed at the thought of participating in ceremonies beyond borders. Lots of Yazidi people and their friends from other communities were able to see the ceremonies, and they were showing their grief online through their comments and reactions behind the video. It was an opportunity for all people who were not able to come to Turkey, especially those who were living in the village before but applied for asylum to Germany now, or for the people who could not come to Mardin for economical or other reasons. All the live streams were also recorded and uploaded on Facebook, so there is actually an online archive for the burial ceremonies of Yazidis. Sometimes there was a professional photographer coming from the province of Mardin who shot the video of the ceremony using a drone in addition to his camera. The Facebook page seemed a new space to mourn independently from time and place, even though there might be occasions of ambiguity as I encountered in Kevi's death.

There is abundant research focusing on the grief of loss and memorializing the deceased on the digital world through the analysis of the practices and the interactions of the postmortem accounts on various social media tools such as Facebook,

WhatsApp, Myspace etc. (Brubaker, Hayes, and Dourish 2013; Lapper 2017; Ryan, Eliot, and Peters 2012). Different from the experience of Yazidis displaying burial ceremonies on a Facebook page, much of this research focuses on the postmortem identities and personalities living in the digital media. They consider the digital interaction between the loved ones and the deceased, its effects on the daily lives of mourners, and the contribution of the loved ones to those digital identities and personalities. Since the Facebook page I mentioned is not a personal account, it is not possible to propose any digital identity or personality creation happening there; but I would argue that the opportunity to share the grief with other mourners is a crucial feature of all the digital mediums. All the digital media and the various ways of using them are providing sites for collective mourning and commemorating. Dobler (2009) discusses MySpace as a digital site of mourning. On MySpace accounts, even if the owner of the account is dead, the account stays open [7]. So the loved ones and all the friends are able to write to the message board on the account. As he states, the active message board becomes a tool to interact with the deceased. People share the memories, the updates of their lives, and they ask for guidance and signs from the deceased (2009, 176). Through the tools of the digital world, it is possible to expand the remembering and to persist the deceased in memory (Ryan, Eliot, and Peters 2012, 74).

Lapper (2017) analyzes the opportunity of mourning through the digital tools as an alternative way explored because of the people's internal struggle with the feeling of loss. She quotes Arendt (1970): "Pain [...] is so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that it cannot assume an appearance at all" (2017, 51). She argues that physical pain cannot be shared with anyone, and she proposes that grieving is a type of physical pain. According to her, the internal struggle of grieving may lead the bereavement post on Facebook as an alternative way of sharing this pain with other mourners (2017, 133). As another approach to death and the digital media, Tony Walter (2017) interprets death as material with the funeral and grave in a certain location. He focuses on the distance of migrants and their virtual interaction with the deceased and death as a material process in the digital world. He argues that the "social distance of the mourners" and "spiritual distance of the dead from living" are disappearing via the digital media. I cautiously take the Yazidis' live stream of the burial ceremony on the Facebook page as a type of bereavement post, and it may work as a tool in the way that Lapper suggests. However, the reason for opening the page on Facebook was to show the burial ceremony of the deceased to the loved ones in the diaspora, as the brother of Mizgin said, who one of the admins of the Facebook page was. During the period of COVID-19, there

[7] On Facebook, after the owner of the account is dead, the account may be updated as the deceased.

were also news about the online funerals[8]. So it was an important tool reducing the distances for Yazidis as Walter argued, and also a new tool for mourning in the period of a pandemic.

Since the digital medium, especially the Facebook page I investigated, is an important area in terms of proposing an archive of the burial ritual and the sharing of grief, I curiously inquired if the gendered performances physically observed in the graveyard were appearing in the digital or not. I argue that the women were not active participants of the Facebook page because the shared videos or live streams were uploaded by the men who created the contents in the first place; although the most visible performers of the physical ceremony were the women. So the men were the creators of the digital archive of the ceremonies. In addition to the women's inactive participation in the production of the digital content, they did not seem as visible on digital media as in the physical ceremony. The live stream mainly focused on the interment.

I propose that although there are restrictions which may be defeated by adaptations to this new digital world or updates in itself, and by finding alternative ways to show the gendered practices of mourning, the digital world offers a lot to share our griefs with other people. This way of sharing grief was constructed in the Yazidi community in Mardin because of the social change that came with the migration of a large part of its population to Germany, but we can learn from their experiences to share our grief especially in the period of COVID-19.

All in all, the social practices of mourning were evolving, transforming themselves through the migration and the interaction between the locals and diaspora Yazidis, in addition to the changes that came with the memory of fear related to the graveyards and the violent environment around them. Since gender has an important role in those practices and performances, it is possible to say that gender is also not independent from this transformation.

[8] https://newseu.cgtn.com/news/2020-05-15/Online-funerals-A-new-way-of-mourning-in-times-of-COVID-19-Qw24f4bj3O/index.html

4. CONCLUSION

"To the dragon
any loss is
total. His rest
is disrupted
if a single
jewel encrusted
goblet has
been stolen.
The circle
of himself
in the nest
of his gold
has been
broken. No
loss is token."
Kay Ryan[1]

[1]https://poets.org/poem/token-loss

After I came back to Istanbul from my last fieldwork visit, I thought that I would finally create a distance to analyze and write what I encountered and learned during the fieldwork. However, what I experienced, listened and felt continued to haunt me in my dreams at nights and in my thoughts during the day. It was not just because of the intensity of the fieldwork, but also because my interaction with the participants was still going on and they wanted to talk about their ongoing experiences, which included the chronic state of fear, after I came back to Istanbul as well. After a year from my first visit to Mardin, one day I woke up and started to check my social media accounts. I realized that some friends from Mardin shared the photos of the graveyard which was actively used for burial ceremonies. In the pictures, I saw the broken gravestones of those I had saluted and felt the grief with their loved ones during my visits. Apparently, there was an assault which was denounced by the people who shared the pictures. I searched if there was any news about this assault in the media because there were no details in the social media postings. There was no news in mainstream media. I just found one news article on an independent media website which had no details about the perpetrators. I contacted Mizgin to verify if it had happened. She said that the assault was probably done a few days ago but that they realized it recently. She said that they did not know who had done it, and added rhetorically: "Who will we ask?"

So, this research was conducted during ongoing violence and it carries the effect of the fear in everyday life. I modestly show some parts of the narratives of a chronic state of violence which I intend to display what are transmitted in the memories of violence and how does ongoing violence effect and reconstruct those memories. As the narratives demonstrate, the word "fear" was often used to point to violence, but to refer to violence as fear is not simply about hiding the violence or adopting a passive position in relation to it. I argue that while this may be an aspect of this choice of words, one can also interpret it as a strategy to move on with life. I observed fear as an alternative way to express violence, and noted the reactions which accompanied the fear, such as closing the door holes, establishing and renovating the houses.

The narratives of fear included bodily expressions in both interviews and daily encounters. The gestures, mimics, body movements like hitting the knees and waving the arms and references to illness were adding another layer to the narratives of fear which reminded me of the importance of observing non-verbal expressions in addition to listening to the words. Although I tracked those expressions to notice the various layers of the narrative, I did not specifically focus on the physiological and psychological changes bringing those references to illnesses. So I argue that further research into fear and violence in this community would need to incorporate

multidisciplinary tools.

The mourning practices and spaces were not independent from the narratives of fear. They were actually offering various meanings during the ongoing violence. The positions of graveyards or how the villagers situated the graveyards in their daily lives was related to the process of chronic violence. The three different graveyards that I mentioned in the previous chapters were carrying different meanings, which call for further research, and I was able to focus on only some of these meanings. In addition to the graveyards, the mourning rituals such as mortuary feasts, burial ceremonies and celebrating the bairams of the deceased were important practices in daily life. I argue that tracking those rituals and their meanings in daily life showed me the ongoing transformation within the community (both locals and diaspora) and the reconstruction process of those practices. Surely, it should be noted that this process was also an outcome of ongoing violence because the chronic state of violence caused the migration of Yazidis for decades. I propose that in this transformation process, the mourning rituals may have opened an area for some Yazidi women - all of whom I encountered are the old and married women- to express their existence and feelings through the performances actualized during burial ceremonies. The burial ceremonies were the events for sharing their grief publicly. The Yazidi women's performances such as saying dilo loudly and wailing for loss and expressing the feelings with the body movements were pointing to the women as the most visible subjects of the ceremonies. On the other hand, the only moment when the men attracted attention was when they were shooting in the air with guns, and the voice was not coming out from their bodies but a deadly tool that reminded me of anger and violence.

The social transformations that came with migration and increasing interaction between the local and the global as its outcome, created a new tool to share grief between the loved ones who had a physical distance to each other. The burial ceremonies of locals and diaspora people who would like to bury their loved ones in the homeland were streamed live on the Facebook page, so the loved ones were sharing the grief and offering their condolences to each other online. I argue that it is a crucial example to explore the new ways of grief, performing and sharing of it digitally, especially as the world is learning to deal with loss in the context of the pandemic, COVID-19. It is also a significant research area to pursue alternative ways of mourning in the digital world and comprehend the various meanings in them.

4.1 Limitations of the Research

I propose that the main limitation of this research is the language barrier. Although I was raised in a family where Kurdish was a mother tongue, and I had Kurdish courses before the fieldwork, I was not as fluent as the participants of this research. Besides, Kurdish is a language in which daily expressions differ greatly from one region to another. So my interactions with the participants and the villagers were in both Turkish and Kurdish. The interviews were also conducted as bilingual. Even though some of the interviews were bilingually fluent and did not need translation, there was always a third person, Mizgin, who was ready if we needed any explanation or translation. She was a mediator for the interviews rather than a translator. Her existence during the interviews sometimes caused indirect interaction between me and the participants or interruptions with questions to Mizgin about the daily life of the village.

The language barrier was also an advantage for me. The villagers positioned me as almost an insider because I was regularly staying in the village and participating in their daily practices and ceremonies, and at the same time I was clearly understanding the language in daily life. So in the conditions of conflicts between the villagers or within the families, sometimes they would like to situate me as a mediator to resolve the conflicts. In those cases, I used my incapability to talk Kurdish fluently and did not get involved in the conflicts.

Although I engaged with fieldwork through five visits to Mardin in seven months, and each one was at least one week, my interaction with some of the participants continued during the period of writing and I was still participating in the online ceremonies. Yet, I suggest that the subject of this research should be thoroughly studied through spending more time in the area to deeply track the layers of transformation and the memories. I believe that there are still plenty of narratives that might be listened to, and there are many practices to learn from.

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