CREATION OF A "VIRTUAL WORLD" VIA SOAP OPERA: ANALYSIS OF *THE VALLEY OF THE WOLVES* AND ASSOCIATED COVERAGE IN HÜRRİYET AND MİLLİYET NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

Despite all new visual technological developments today, television seems to be one of the most effective visual media tools. Television soap opera series of our time play an important role on influencing viewers' perception of the reality. Undoubtedly, TV screen easily creates "heroes", "myths", idealizes characters and shapes the reality in order to recreate a new one. This paper aims to discuss the production of the "reality" and "virtual reality" concepts through TV screen by the example of a very high rated Turkish soap opera *The Valley of the Wolves*. To enlighten the phenomenon of the creation of the "virtual world" and its effects on people, the news in Turkish daily newspapers *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet* about this soap opera is analyzed, and the central themes of the episodes are discussed on a sociological and cultural basis. The main focus is on finding out how the characters of the series are taken as real persons by viewers and how viewers are confused about the players' real identities and their role playing. This paper argues that within the series, viewers lose track of the reality: they face confusion between what is real and what is fiction and consequently their perception of reality is altered deeply. This creation of the virtual world can be understood and interpreted as an ideological production of the reality in an effort to legitimize and clear state actions in the name of patriotism.

Keywords: Virtual Reality, Hyperreality, Newspapers, Fiction, Soap Opera Series.

Pembe Diziler ve "Sanal Dünya'nın" Yaratılması: Kurtlar Vadisi'nin Analizi ve Dizinin Hürriyet ve Milliyet Gazetelerinde Sunumu

ÖZET

Tüm yeni görsel teknolojik gelişmelere rağmen, günümüzde televizyon en etkin görsel iletişim aracı olarak görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla, zamanımızın televizyon dizileri izleyicilerin gerçeklik algısını etkilemede önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Kuşkusuz, televizyon ekranı kolaylıkla "kahramanlar", "efsaneler" yaratıp, karakterleri idealleştirip, yeni bir gerçeklik yaratmak için gerçekliği şekillendirmektedir. Bu makale televizyon ekranı aracılıyla yaratılan "gerçeklik" ve "sanal gerçeklik" kavramlarını, *Kurtlar Vadisi* adlı çok reyting alan bir sabun köpüğü dizi örneği ile tartışmayı hedeflemektedir. "Sanal dünya"nın yaratılması olgusu ve onun insanlar üzerindeki etkilerini aydınlatabilmek amacıyla, *Milliyet* ve *Hürriyet* gazetelerinde bu dizi ile ilgili çıkan haberler analiz edilmiş ve bölümlerde işlenmiş ana temalar toplumsal ve kültürel bir temelde tartışılmıştır. Buradaki ana odak, dizideki karakterlerin, izleyiciler tarafından nasıl gerçek kişiler olarak algılandığını, izleyicilerin, oyuncuların gerçek kimlikleri ile dizide oynadıkları karakterleri arasında yaşadıkları karmaşayı ortaya çıkarmak üzerine kurulmuştur. Bu makale, izleyicilerin gerçeklik algısını kaybettiklerini, gerçek ile sanal olan arasında karmaşa yaşadıklarını ve böylece gerçeklik algılarının derinden değiştiğini tartışmaktadır. Bu tür bir sanal dünya yaratımı, milliyetçilik adına hükümet

hareketlerini açıklamak ve meşrulaştırmak için gerçeklikliğin ideolojik üretimi olarak anlaşılabilir ve yorumlanabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sanal Gerçeklik, Hyper Gerçeklik, Gazeteler, Kurgu, Sabun Köpüğü Dizileri.

Introduction

By his saying "the medium is the message", Marshall McLuhan (1994) describes the human situation faced with the new media and proposes that the medium itself influences society not the message. The medium plays a primordial role not only by its delivered content but by its characteristics. This means that people's perception of the world is changed by the adoption of different media tools. In this perspective, a very common visual media tool TV is considered very powerful to influence people's perceptions and create "a new kind of reality" through the screen. Placing a soap opera within the discourse of reality production may seem assertive but the example of "The Valley of the Wolves" seems adequate to such a positioning because of its effects on people.

The present study aims to understand how media, especially the "visual media", influences people's perception of the reality through "fictive characters" and how a new reality is formed in social consciousness. The study is based on the analysis of the news published in *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* newspapers during April 2004 about the *The Valley of the Wolves*. Here, the main purpose is to try to reflect how viewers are affected by the soap opera's fictive characters and the incidents that take place on each episode. We find out that people are confused and they loose track of the reality: they think what happened on the episodes are real because there are similarities with the real incidents. Unexplained real events are "explained" or at least "clarified" to some extent. However there is a new reality created through the soap opera and its fictive characters. This phenomenon can also be named as "virtual reality production through media."

In addition, we can argue that this new reality production seeks to enable their viewers to imagine an ideal world in which the fictive characters can be easily associated with the real world equivalents. The emphasis on fiction and fantasy, which is linked with the way in which it explores the current social life's issues through the creation of utopias, plays a central role in people's perception. What the soap opera offers is not only a representation of what an ideal world might be like but what it should be according to customs and rules; the virtuality relies on the blurring effect of the fictive characters of the soap opera and the real world. Here, the representation adopts an ideological point of view where through the help of a powerful media tool, TV, some ideas, myths, images, concepts coherent with the dominant

ideology and the dominant values and norms are infiltrated to social consciousness. Consequently, the soap opera has a persuasive role in reshaping people's perception.

Theoretical Background

Early theories on the influence of mass media derive from the idea that social order is a mass and cleverly designed mass communication messages can have an effect on a large number of people. Influenced by Darwin's evolutionary ideas, "magic bullet theory" defends the strong effect of media on people. According to that theory, human beings inherited a set of unconscious instincts that are not guided by the intellect causing to react more or less similarly to whatever stimuli. Human populations are considered irrational creatures that can be controlled by cleverly designed messages (Defleur & Dennis, 2001, p. 426). This theory leads to believe that who control media can control the public because media messages reach every eye and every ear the same way a bullet reaches its target. This early suggestion about effects of mass media messages is not a wrong one when we examine the attitude change on people when they face media messages and images on screen.

Walter Lippman (1997) explains that of any public event having wide effects people see only a phase and an aspect. Opinions have to be pieced together out of what others have reported and people can imagine. There is a transfiguration of events in people's consciousness, like for example a report is the joint product of the knower and known in which the observer is always selective and creative. The facts people see depend on where people are placed and the habits of people's eyes. The problem of acquisition of meaning by things or of forming habits of simple apprehension is thus the problem of introducing definiteness and distinction and consistency or stability of meaning into what is otherwise vague and wavering. Briefly, people do not see first and define, but on the contrary define and then see. They pick out what their culture has already defined for them and tend to perceive that which they have picked out in the form stereotyped for them by their culture (pp. 54-55).

Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed in what position they shall be printed etc. There are no objective standards but conventions (Lippman, 1997, p. 223). Newspapers can not be charged with the duty of translating the whole public life even though the press is asked to create a mystical force called public opinion and encourage democracy.

The press has come to be regarded as an organ of direct democracy. The quality of the news is an index of its social organization. The better the institutions the more all interests concerned are formally represented, the more issues are disentangled, the more objective criteria are introduced, the more perfectly an affair can be presented as news. The press at its best is a servant and guardian of institutions (Lippman, 1997, pp. 228-229).

As stated by Lippman (1997), the press, newspapers and the media helping to create public opinion, are a guardian of institutions and the state. Media shape people's perception, influence them, create new realities. This phenomenon is explained by Althusser as "false consciousness." According to Althusser (2006) ideology represents the "imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence." (pp. 85, 96). His theories concerning ideology published for the first time in 1970 claim that ideology inserted in individuals' practices does not reflect the real world but represents the imaginary relationship of people to the real world. It hails individuals as concrete subjects, and they are passive; the way that ideology evokes and positions them displays their passivity. (p. 96). Althusser's ideology concept rejects Marx's humanist and historical expression (Larrain, 1995, p. 96) and puts this reality in a rigid way (Fiske, 2003, p. 223). Rigidity's reason is found out in the passivity of the subject. Ideology is also a structure associated with the idea of unconscious of Freud and Lacan. Althusser considers ideology mostly unconscious and institutional (Eagleton, 1996: 166) and emphasizes the role of ideology in maintaining the power of the minority over the majority without repressive tools (Fiske, 2003, p. 224).

Althusser adds the concepts of "ideological state apparatuses" (ISA) and "repressive state apparatuses" (SA) to Marx's ideology concept (Balibar, 1991, p. 54). According to him, ISAs compared to SAs, are believed to access the private realm of existence of individuals rather than the public, such as religious, communicational and cultural realms. SAs include the government, the administration, the army, the police, the prisons etc. He defends the idea that ISA function predominantly by ideology and SA predominantly by violence or repression and only secondarily by ideology (Batuş et al., 2006, p. 91). ISAs generate ideology which individuals internalize and act in accordance with. He also highlights the importance of ideology in supporting, consolidating the present social structure and relations. As the ideology of the dominant class is completely controlling everything, it names both the dominant class and the class under domination. They are the defenders of the common ideology in the service of the ruling class.

For Umberto Eco, against the use of popular culture artifacts by a manipulative power in order to conceal the reality or the ideological messages and power relationships present

within our contemporary world, the intellectual task must not be merely to denounce this aspect of popular culture (qtd. by Bondanella, 1997, p. 51). He believes instead that a contemporary intellectual must deconstruct the manner in which such a dangerous message is hidden beneath a highly consumable popular culture artifact. The great fault of the mass media according to Eco is to convey a standardized and oversimplified interpretation that mask the complexity of things (qtd. by Bondanella, 1997, pp. 51-52). He proposes to work for forms of entertainment that are "honest." In the frame of what Eco calls "semiological guerilla warfare," popular culture messages must be decoded to reveal their latent ideological content in order to prevent the mass media from becoming an instrument of passive control (qtd. by Bondanella, 1997, pp. 51-52).

Stereotypes created by means of popular culture diffused on the mass media concretize social and cultural values, and, according to Eco, semiotics aims to understand mass media messages created for ideological and political ends and uncover the ideology inherent in potentially manipulative messages. He also argues that mass communication is a powerful tool, but it is impossible to completely control it even by totalitarian powers. He defends the idea that politicians, censors and even educators falsely believe they can control the means of communication by controlling the "source" and the "channel." They fail to realize that the receivers of such messages receive only an empty form that each receiver fills up with his or her own cultural models (qtd. by Bondanella, 1997, p. 88).

Receivers of mass media tools interpret and get affected by media messages according to their cultural models. Jean Baudrillard (1994) investigated and deepened this concept in order to enlighten today's concept of the reality where the replacement of our world by its images became more evident with the help of new technologies. He explains the experience that we have today questions the borders of the real and the unreal, the virtual and the simulation. The immersive and intervening character of mass media tools in our lives made us wonder where and how the limits to virtuality should be detained. In other words, understanding the philosophical aspect of the reality and simulation as well as virtuality may help to clarify and better understand how mass media influence people's perception of the reality and how confusions in people's minds can be created.

According to Jean Baudrillard, simulation is no longer a referential being or a substance; it is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal (qtd. by Storey, 1998, p. 350). Baudrillard (1994) explains the difference between dissimulation and simulation as "to dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has" and "to simulate is to feign to have what one doesn't have; one implies a presence and the other an absence." (p.

3) Simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false", the "real" and the "imaginary." (p. 3)

Simulation is opposed to representation; representation stems from the principle of the equivalence of the sign and the real: simulation, on the other hand, stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6). Whereas representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation itself as a simulacrum. The image is the reflection of a profound reality: it masks and denatures a profound reality: it masks the absence of a profound reality, and it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 6).

According to him, the reality has a new perspective; the reality is represented, and the representation becomes more important than the "real thing". He claims that today we experience prepared realities and we think that they represent the reality. Division between "real" and simulation has collapsed. The word reality defines what exists effectively. The real is the data and even the content of our existence. Nevertheless, fiction is the opposite of the real just because it only exists on us and not in self. For example, a literal work is constructed from a reality; a social organization, a historical event or a biography may be the subject of a fiction. Photography and film industry, too, have the same objective to reflect real social lives where the creator aims to create a new vision far from human expectations (Hunzinger, 2003).

In the frame of entertainment TV, soap operas present the possibility of an ideal world. The production of this "new", "virtual" world in the soap operas offers the image of "a better world" where people's hopes and desires can be fulfilled and creates an escape for them.

Today's popular culture discourse is based on "poverty, oppression of lower classes, inequality and injustice between the ruling and the working class, unrealized dreams of wealth and happiness." (Gültekin, 2006) This discourse has a considerable run on mass media especially on films and series because people are always attracted to these conflicting subjects and their interest is highly valuable and intense. That's the reason why we constantly see on screens: the wealthy families dealing with unfortunate fate, poor people trying to survive in bad conditions, unrealized love, lovers who should be apart, good people suffering of injustices, inequalities, the bad man irradiating violence and crime to good people etc. In fact, it sells. And it sells well. The play between the contrasts: the battle for power, the search for justice, the need for happy end, is the requirements of today's people who can not satisfy their feelings on the ongoing real life that they have. The consumerist actual social life we have force us to find satisfaction of our unsatisfied needs and desires in another environment that

we should create to be able to live: the virtual world. This is easy, cheap, ready, offered for us to reach. The magical screen is there for us to watch. The inequalities, the oppression, the injustice, the poverty we face in reality are fed by their contrast in screens because there are heroes who fight against all type of injustices, inequalities in films. In a sense, we see the realization of our dreams in created virtual worlds where we associate ourselves with heroes.

Presentation of "The Valley of the Wolves"

The Valley of the Wolves also named in Turkish *Kurtlar Vadisi* is a Turkish television series produced by Pana Film that premiered in 2003. This action soap opera with "This is a mafia series" slogan totaled 97 episodes between the years of 2003-2005. It features a Turkish undercover secret service agent, Ali Candan, who infiltrates the Turkish mafia to destroy it. To do so, the agent reconstructs himself through plastic surgery and takes on a new identity: "Polat Alemdar". Part of mafia world, he fights with injustices, crimes and he defends patriotism. The series is inspired by international intrigue and mafia stories as well as the headlines of the day. It received several warnings from Radio and Television Censorship Commission in Turkey (RTÜK) "representing a bad example for children and encouraging them to act violently" and "violating the Turkish customs and traditions with its content" because of its violent scenes. Consequently it was banned in 2005 on TV.

The series was so popular that in 2006, the production company filmed an $11 million movie called *Valley of the Wolves: Iraq*. It is not a total fiction and starts with a depiction of a July 4, 2003 incident that happened between U.S. Army and Turkish Special Forces in Iraq. The second film called *Valley of the Wolves: Gladio* was shot in 2009 dealing with the deep state and illegal formations. *Valley of the Wolves: Palestine* premiered in January 2011, is about Polat Alemdar and his team going to Palestine to track a Israeli military commander who planned to attack on a Gaza aid flotilla. In a written statement, Pana Film said the show "will continue to tell the truth and expose the wrongs." (Hürriyet, 2010)

In February 2007, this top-rated series returns to the television screen with *Valley of the Wolves: Terror* but was banned after the first episode because of the violent scenes again. *The Valley of the Wolves: Ambush* was launched in April 2007. Currently the show airs every Thursday and deals with the relations between the state, mafia, business circles and the deep state of Turkey. The series has its own web-site introducing the whole characters and episodes

(www.kurtlarvadisi.com). It is a very detailed website where photographs, videos, analysis, fragment of the series are presented to viewers.

Methodology

This study is based on the presentation and the analysis of the headlines and the news that appeared during April 2004 in Turkish dailies about the series. In the frame of the news analysis, the news covered in *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet* are choosen as they seem abundant and they have a considerable circulation all over Turkey[1]. Both newspapers covered *The Valley of the Wolves* several times and columnists made comments, viewers' reactions to the episodes made the headlines consequently the series became very popular on media.

In order to understand the effects of the news on people and how a public opinion is formed, the news and the headlines about the series are sorted out: they are presented and analyzed by an interpretive research methodology. Additionally, central themes such as violence, the reproduction of the state ideology, the male dominant society myth are examined by a discourse analysis to acquire a deeper understanding of the series. The data of a quantitative analysis on 55 episodes by Çelenk (Gezmek, 2009) about the violence in *The Valley of the Wolves* is used to help to support the discussion.

Findings

This soap opera captured the headlines several times the first years it was broadcast and journalists wrote articles in their columns about the series. The news enumerated below indicate that a public opinion is created by the mass media about the story and the characters of the soap opera. Some of the news shows how deeply people get affected by the series' episodes and they treated the heroes as real personalities. The findings include the analysis of the news appeared in *Milliyet* and *Hürriyet* in April 2004.

1) Headline: "I do not kiss hand like Çakır" (*Hürriyet*, April 1, 2004)

This news article is about the statement made by a famous mafia world member Alaattin Çakıcı. He states that he feels himself uncomfortable of being identified as *Çakır*, who is a mafia leader in the soap opera series. He says that he does not kiss hand as Çakır did in one of the episodes. Çakıcı affirms that he feels sorry that young people get affected by

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[1] On April 5th-11th , the total circulation for newspaper in Turkey is 4.517.158; Hürriyet's circulation is 489.129 and Milliyet's is 273.909. On April 12th-18th the total circulation for newspapers is 4.499.886; Hürriyet's circulation is 486.516 and Milliyet's circulation is 271.235. Hürriyet stands in the second rank and Milliyet stands on the fifth rank of the circulation list (Dördüncü kuvvet medya, 2004).

virtual anti-heroes who are extremely violent and that they imitate them. According to the news every character of the series is associated with some real identity in Turkey.

2) Headline: "His heart could not stand to *The Valley of the Wolves*" (*Hürriyet*, April 6, 2004)

This news article is about 45 years old Tahir Türköz, a fan of the series who died of heart attack in his home while he was watching the series. As *Çakır* died he was so excited that he had a heart crisis and was hospitalized and he died in the hospital. His family said that he did not even accept guests his home on Thursdays while the series was on air.

3) Headline: "I dream and I sell dreams" (*Hürriyet*, April 8, 2004)

In this article the director Osman Sınav affirmed "I like to dream and sell dreams, and I do not care about the speculations," and he refuses the speculations about the reality production of the series, but people got seriously affected by the incidents happened in the episodes. He points out that he is a film producer, and he realizes his dreams through the films.

4) Headline: "Did they see me while racketeering?" (*Hürriyet*, April 12, 2004)

In this article, Oktay Kaynarca, named *Çakır* in the series, is blamed of being very close to mafia leaders in his personal life, defends himself with a question, "Did they see me exacting fees or racketeering from people?" He feels sorry that people are in confusion concerning his role playing and his real identity. He confirms that he has no realtionship with any mafia member in his personal life.

5) Headline: "One minute silence for the hero of TV series" (*Hürriyet*, April 16, 2004)

Çakır is assassinated by his rivals in one of the episodes in April 2004. This article is about a group of people in Adapazarı, affected by the death of *Çakır*, who protested the film producer. In a football tournament played by 25 teams in the Colesium, the players stood in one minute silence for *Çakır*. The team coach Nazım Aktürk stated that the character *Çakır* animated by Oktay Kaynarca is his favorite character and he said *Çakır* died and the series is over for us, with this act we send a message to the producer and to the sciptwriter."

6) Headline: "A moment of silence for Çakır" (*Milliyet*, April 17, 2004)

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This article also is about the protest to Çakır's death.; in Sakarya during a football tournament played by 25 teams, local players named "The Valley of the Wolves" protested *Çakır*'s assasination. To do so, they paid homage in memory of his death with standing one minute in silence, and the tournament started by the generic music of the series.

7) Headline: "We used to know him as a nice person" (*Milliyet*, April 18, 2004)

In columnist of Tuba Akyol's article, subheaded as "We buried Çakır. He was involved in dirty business, he killed men but we can not backbite a dead man. May he rest in peace?," she criticizes severely people's madness about the series. The actor who killed Çakır in the series is beaten by his fans in the shopping mall Akmerkez. *Çakır*'s death was announced on newspapers; people prayed for him in the mosques; university students pinned his photograph on their neck in homage to his death; a seller placed a banner to his market stand, "We've lost Süleyman Çakır after an unfortunate accident, God bless his soul, my condolences to those who loved him." She enumerated the reactions of the people and criticized them.

8) Headline: "The Violence of The Valley of the Wolves…" (*Milliyet*, April 21, 2004)

Can Kozanoğlu's news article comments the series and questions how an actor can be taken by the role he plays like in the case of Oktay Kaynarca with his role of *Çakır* in the Valley of the Wolves. He criticizes the violence in media and the effects of violence on people. He discusses the power of influence of violence shown on TV screen. He states that characters using violence in media have a role modeling effect on young people. He points out that even if the rumor about the characters of the series referring to real people in mafia world is not true, people want to imitate them.

9) Headline: "Brother, Çakır is dead, send me more 1500 watches" (*Milliyet*, April 25, 2004)

The editorial piece of Şule Yücebıyık, the sponsor of the series Romanson (Swiss watch brand) received an enormous amount of orders for the watch given to *Nesrin* by *Çakır*. Fanatic followers of the series call Romanson to order the same watch, and they make some comments such as "What the hell are you doing with a mafia serial?" or "Tell Polat not to betray Arslan, or he will be punished!"

The headlines show how deeply people are affected by the incidents; people take for real what happened in the episodes. For instance, the death of *Çakır* character represents a

turning point for the series. It had a huge impact on media, and people showed reaction to his death. This reaction may be explained by *Çakır*'s unfortunate character in the series: he loses his father very young and has to take care of his family, he is caught by the police while selling food on the streets and killed a policeman accidently and has to go to jail. Later discharged, he joins the mafia and becomes a killer. But he is good-hearted, brave, nationalist, and a man of his word. He is a "good mafia guy," an anti-hero but popular, and viewers can easily feel themselves close to him. They can not dissociate the TV's illusionary aspect from real life. According to them, there is a continuation between the life shown on TV screens and their own life. This phenomenon can be also explained by a search of a greater, higher power within the society which lacks in real life. The imaginary virtual world, also called "simulacra," created here is taken for granted; people do not question its illusionary aspect. There is a replacement of their world by the images transferred from the series. The borders of the real and the unreal are lost, and a reality without the origin is created. In this case, the absence of the reality is masked, and people live in a real and pure simulacrum.

In fact we can talk about the creation of a "new reality:" the representations in the series become more important than the real life, and people experience the prepared representations, then it becomes their "new reality". This new reality is a kind of escape from the daily routine and daily inequalities and injustices. With the help of this series, there is a proposition of a "better, equal and ideal" world where people can have justice.

Results and Discussions

The series' episodes refer to the central themes valorized by the Turkish society and culture such as "family, women, patriotism, nationalism, heroism, power relations, sacrifice, religion, and justice" (Gültekin, 2006). Besides, "the good-bad" contrast, and "violence" themes seem to be other elements attracting viewers. Violence can not be questioned and is represented as a daily routine of the Turkish social life. Each mafia leader should be violent in order to carry on his hegemony. Internal family violence, beating, raping, violence against woman, shooting or killing between mafia leaders etc. seem to be common acts. A content analysis on the 55 episodes of the series by Çelenk depicts the visual and literal violent scenes (as mentioned in Gezmek, 2009). Some of the main findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Main Findings of the Çelenk Study as mentioned in Gezmek, 2009

Covered Violent Scenes	Open Violent Scenes	Nationalist Symbols
Shouts: 296	Gun use: 145	Homeland: 128
Insults and swearing: 145	Gun show: 226	Nation: 142
Indirect insults: 131	Armed conflict: 111	Flag: 240
Threats: 174	Killing: 411	Blood: 13
Indirect threats: 149	Injury: 152	Sacrifice, to die for: 144
Oppression: 161	Assault: 137	Country: 164
Indirect oppression: 119	Beating: 147	Honor and pride: 123
Exclusion: 111	Slap: 155	Soldier and army: 255
Indifference: 127	Fight: 175	Map: 313
Humiliation: 124	Torture: 110	Religion: 299
Mockery: 122	Rape: 3	They (skinheads, Jews, Americans, Kurds): 513
Intimation: 149	Harassment: 191	Crescent Moon: 117
Criticism: 113	Kidnap: 4	
	Bombing: 3	

There is an abundance of violence and violent scenes during each episode, altering people's perception of violence. For instance, the execution of a member of mafia world includes very violent techniques such as follows: Çakır is sprayed by bullets; the brother of Cerrahpaşalı *Halit*'s throat is cut on a table; *Pala* is fired on the head, *Memati* killed the ship owner by a silencer on his mouth in the toilettes. By the repetitive display of such violent scenes, violence is represented as a daily routine. Such a presentation of violent and criminal events also creates a negative role model for young viewers in search for identity. Through the presentation of a violent mafia and gang's world, people especially young people, envy them.

Killing is a routine. Like in the film *Godfather* mafia leaders in their personal life are good and caring fathers protecting their sacred private lives but outside their families they are the cruel mass killing giants. Male characters show their power by violence and in return receive violence easily. Violence against women aims to have a control over women and this is normalized. Women should be punished if she gives her decisions herself. She should obey

the rules set by men. For instance, violence against women includes slapping, raping, kidnapping, assaulting, harassment: *Çakır* slaps and sends his wife *Nesrin* flying to floor when she answers him while disputing or *Erdal* rapes women, and some construction workers harass *Derya* (Gültekin, 2006). Thus, men have the right to be angry or jealous and this makes them violent against women.

In this male world, men prefer women who remain silent: *Laz Ziya* says to his children "Women who do not talk are good." The series is based on the men's world. No matter women are educated, clever or rich, they have to obey men. *Elif*, an educated and intelligent lawyer, needs men help to be rescued, however. The idea that women should be protected by men is dominant. In fact, women represent an arena of conflict for men. They are kidnapped to take advantage of a situation: *Çakır*'s wife and children are taken hostage by his rival *Testere*. Consequently, the series reflects a male dominant society where there is gender segregation, where men decide, and, the women accept. This is normalized unconsciously on viewers' minds.

On the other hand, patriotic nationalism is another concept worshipped in the series. This concept is embodied by the contrast of good-bad, Turk-Foreigner, Muslim-Not Muslim etc. Even the name of the series *Valley of the Wolves* refers to the old myth cited by nationalists saying that Turks are the inheritor of a she-wolf. The wolf symbolizes honor. Within this circle of nationalism and heroism, on one hand there are heroes and on the other hand there are rival mafia members.

Heroism is associated with Turks, Muslims, Turkish traditions, customs; they represent all viewers would desire to associate themselves with; and on the other hand the "bad" represents the "other." Polat Alemdar is in fact a humanist, a hero, the defender of the social order; he loves his country and his people. Violence and killings executed by him are tolerated; viewers accept and approve his acts. He is like a father to his country protecting everyone and wants to eliminate the social inequalities. Consequently he represents what every man in reality wants to be: a "respected, powerful, clever, honorable, kind, caring man." In a sense, he is idealized. He constructs his relations with his environment by power that he exercises over people. He makes sacrifices for his country.

Religion is another cultural element proposed and defined in this TV series. The traditional way of life is worshipped as sacred and profane concepts are emphasized. An ideal type of Turk and Muslim is proposed with higher humanistic qualities. This type of person is

good, nice, patient, respectful to older people and protect traditional values and norms, nationalist, trustable etc. The Turkish identity is defined by religion and also by the flag. The idea that "family life is best in its traditional form" is put forward.

Justice and punishment are other primordial aspects of the series. Polat Alemdar and his men defend the idea that "Justice should be established for any cost." Any kind of sacrifice is acceptable in order to create an equal society. Consequently punishment is normal.

On the other hand, the series had some social and cultural consequences on people: It encouraged social armament among young people; for instance, according to the news in *Milliyet* on April 20, 2005, 25 years old Serhat Karadeniz killed a well-known lawyer Cihan Eren just because he wanted to imitate Polat Alemdar and be famous as a hero. He stated "I want to be as famous and respected as Polat Alemdar is. I have chosen Cihan Eren, a well-known lawyer in the area". Lawyers, sociologists suggest that since this series is shown on TV violence and killings became prevalent among the young and unemployed people in Turkey. The rates of gun use and armament have increased, criminal acts multiplied, people started to get involved in criminal acts more often[2].

Concepts such as "deep state-mafia-death sentence-organized crime-threat-black money-illegal acts" became central themes and are now presented as daily realities. This is perceived as a common reality of our daily lives; we can even talk about people's sympathetic approach to such behaviors.

This whole creation of an alternative world with the help of this series has consequences on viewers' minds from a different perspective, too; people start to think that what happen on the episodes are real, and unconsciously they believe that there is a deep state in the country which fights against all the injustices. In another word, the series works for the legitimization of the so-called deep state. This series seems to be a kind of reflection of the unspoken reality of the mafia world and the deep state of Turkey. This is an ideological production of reality and psychological purification which manipulates the masses. It creates a psychological relief on behalf of viewers by a fictive hero created in order to take revenge of the incidents happened in real life. This is an ideological manipulation of people's perception of the reality which blurs the real world.

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[2] According to the Turkish Police Department's investigation, there is an increase in gun use in Turkey. The numbers show that from 2005 to 2007 there is a gradual increase of licenced and unlicenced gun use. Police Department obtained 15582 guns in 2005, 22428 guns in 2006 and 32828 guns in 2007. (Umut Vakfı 1993).

Conclusion

This phenomenal soap opera series became an instant hit by its sociological impact on people as well as by its references to the Turkish politics and patriotism, and by brave scenes of violence that included assassination and torture. There are lots of connotations on the episodes to create such an impact on people. For example the leading character Polat Alemdar is brave, good looking, serious, a patriot with a self-defined sense of justice including punishing traitors very severely. Thus he is very successful in establishing a mafia-macho Turkish guy image that is admired by a large number of people from all over Turkey. Other male characters of the series too, support the image of mafia-macho guy and they create the image that they live in a male dominant society. Here the message is: "the ideal community only functions if men are in control." Therefore, there is an implicit transmission of male dominant society's values and norms to the audience. The series legitimates also the "deep state," "unidentified murders," "torture" where "a male-dominant society" and "a male-dominant popular culture" is venerated. The experience of the deep state is offered to the audience most explicitly in the rituals and in the violent scenes which mark major events.

In this context, the series of *The Valley of Wolves* matches the need of popular culture adherents for "a hero who would save everyone," so that "…at the end there is a stop to every injustice and inequality." Polat Alemdar represents a figureof male dominant society figure where he gives decisions, orders, executes, and defends. He is powerful and revengeful against traitors. He punishes people when they act violently. He becomes a cult figure for Turkey. In a geographical area where male power is dominant and the male dominant ideology is omnipresent, the state of existence is reflected by virile, masculine tools such as "guns, mafia world, killings and fights." The male dominant myth created through this mafia series, embellished by half-real, half-virtual heroic stories, is internalized very easily and quickly by viewers because of their huge need for justice and equality. By the way nationalism and fundamentalism is pumped to the social consciousness.

The attraction of this soap opera relies on its psychological extension on the viewer where he or she derives pleasure from a historical, national myth mixed up with several actual, uncovered events. Viewers are withdrawn from the tension of past-present-future for a couple of hours at the same time and at the same day every week and they are face to face with a pseudo-reality that they could not understand in real life. People enjoy repetitious stories where there is a superhero who is invincible, who fights for the good against the bad,

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and in the case of *Valley of Wolves* for nationalistic purposes, which are highly appreciated in the Turkish culture.

Here, the representation adopts an ideological point of view where through the help of a powerful media tool, TV, some ideas, myths, images, concepts coherent with the dominant ideology and the dominant values and norms are infiltrated to social consciousness. Consequently, this soap opera has a persuasive role in reshaping people's perception. This persuasive role of the series is demonstrated by the newspapers headlines presented above. The themes and the characters of the episodes, have a role to legitimize the violence and the illegal acts for the sake of government, and the state. There is the idea that everything can be done to protect the state and the country even defending the deadly acts and results. The other message is that values and norms of society are deteriorated so they should be fixed with nationalism and patriotism. There is an ideological production of the reality in an effort to legitimize and clear state actions in the name of patriotism. Viewers are passive and through the media they create an imaginary relationship to their real conditions of existence.

The danger to the intellect and to society here is the implicit and explicit manipulation of popular culture for ideological reasons. The series operates according to the mechanisms of hidden persuasion attempts on viewers' perception of the reality; it presupposes a kind of escape from what is real and to jump into a "blurring real-fiction sea" where the hidden reinforcement of the male dominant society myth and values are easily internalized by them.

The critical part with it, is that people lose track of the reality, they do believe on the incidents that happened on the episodes, and they themselves create a virtual world with it. There is an important part in the series embellished by fiction and fantasy effecting people's perception. Myths, images are abundant and represent the dominant ideology. The manipulation of minds relies on the subtlety covered context of myth and images. The messages are conveyed through the popular culture discourse. Consequently, the male dominant society concept is internalized by people.

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