"The Crisis of Masculinity" on the Screen: Conflicted Masculinities in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* and *Poyraz Karayel*

Özlem AKKAYA

Yeditepe University, Faculty of Communication

Department of Visual Communication and Design

İstanbul

ozlem.akkaya@yeditepe.edu.tr

Abstract

In Turkey, the number of studies that probe mediated representations of masculinity has been on the increase, but the figures for the research on televised masculinities are still limited. The subject matter of this study, aiming to contribute to this emerging field, is the diverging representations of masculinity in the recently popular Turkish TV genre of crime series, the contested transformation in the dominant notions of masculinity or the "crisis of masculinity," as some name it, that these representations signal, and the ways young male audiences receive and make sense of this transformation. To this end, the study examines two broadcast TV series, *Behzat* Ç. *Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* (2010-2013) and *Poyraz Karayel* (2015-2017), from a comparative perspective. First, the study will evaluate how the series construct narratives of masculinity in crisis with their title characters portrayed as frustrated and aggrieved men, and what solutions they fail to offer to this "crisis." Then drawing on the findings of a focus group discussion with young male audiences, four students and one recent graduate from Yeditepe University Faculty of Communication, Istanbul, it will question how they relate themselves to the male protagonists of these narratives which apparently defy the conventions of television drama and whether their decoding practices are indicative of an oppositional stance against dominant socio-political discourses, particularly concerning gender. The results of the study are expected to provide fruitful insights to the historical interplay between masculinities and the media, and audiences' active involvement in it.

Keywords: hegemonic masculinity, masculinity crisis, television, crime series, anti-hero

Ekranda "Erkeklik Krizi:"

Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi ve *Poyraz Karayel*'de Çatışmalı Erkeklikler

Özet

Türkiye'de medyadaki erkeklik temsillerini irdeleyen çalışmaların sayısı gün geçtikçe artmaktadır. Ancak televizyondaki erkeklik hallerini inceleyen araştırmaların sayısı hala sınırlıdır. Söz konusu alana katkı sunmayı amaçlayan bu araştırmanın odağında, ülkemizde son

Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 23.09.2018
Makale Kabul Tarihi: 08.10.2018

yıllarda televizyonda popülerlik kazanan bir tür olan suç dramalarındaki farklılaşan erkeklik temsilleri, bu temsillerin hâkim erkeklik modellerinde işaret ettikleri, "erkeklik krizi" olarak da adlandırılan tartışmalı dönüşüm ve bu dönüşümün izler-kitle tarafından alımlanması yer almaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmada sırasıyla 2010 – 2013 ve 2015 – 2017 yılları arasında ulusal kanallarda yayımlanmış olan *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* ve *Poyraz Karayel* adlı diziler karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenecektir. Öncelikle dizilerin iç çatışmalarla ve hayal kırıklıklarıyla hemhal erkek kahraman temsilleri aracılığıyla nasıl bir "erkeklik krizi" anlatısı kurdukları ve bu "kriz"e hangi çıkış yollarını önerdikleri ve/veya önermedikleri değerlendirilecektir. Ardından Yeditepe Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi'nden biri yeni mezun, dördü öğrenci beş erkek katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilen odak grup görüşmesinin bulgularından hareketle, bu anlatıların genç erkek izleyiciler tarafından nasıl okunduğu ve bu okumaların izleyiciler nezdinde özellikle cinsiyetle ilişkili hâkim toplumsal söylemler karşısında muhalif bir duruşa işaret edip etmediği sorgulanacaktır. Çalışmanın sonuçlarının ataerki ve medya arasındaki tarihsel etkileşimi ve izleyicilerin bu etkileşime dahil olma biçimlerini idrak etmede yol gösterici olması umulmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: hegemonik erkeklik, erkeklik krizi, televizyon, suç dizileri, anti-kahraman

Introduction

In Turkey, the research about cinematic images of masculinity and their historical transformation has already accumulated a critical wealth of knowledge deepening our understanding about the media's role in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Yet, when it comes to television, the situation gets disappointing as there are so few studies examining televised portrayals of masculinity that we can count them on the fingers of one hand. This might be related to the long-held assumption about TV being a feminized medium. Television, as a medium conventionally designed for domestic use and made of a discontinuous flow of content interrupted with ads, promotions, notices, and so on, has been associated with the "distracted, obscured, already busy" female gaze whereas film has been identified with the "fixed, controlling, and uninterruptible" male gaze (Petro, 1986, p. 5). But, this picture is changing with the growing popularity of male-centered TV serials in Turkey, and, it will probably be accompanied by an increase in the number of studies on masculinity and television in the near future. For the time being, we could list Özsoy's (2011) research on *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* and Baştürk Akça and Ergül's (2014) study on popular broadcast TV series *Kuzey Güney* (2011-2013) among them. Baştürk Akça and Ergül (2014) explore how contemporary changes in the notion of hegemonic masculinity are represented in the series via conflicts and compromises between different modes of masculinities. And, employing the methods of textual analysis and reception analysis together, Özsoy (2011) examines how the contradictory codes of masculinity embodied by the title character Behzat Ç., which both

correspond and conflict with hegemonic masculine ideals, are read by university students in a negotiated manner.

Following an analytical trajectory similar to Özsoy's (2011), this study takes one step forward and compares two contemporaneous crime series that center on crisis-ridden masculinities, albeit with different narrative styles: *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* (2010-2013) and *Poyraz Karayel* (2015-2017). Through critical textual analysis, it explores how these narratives open the door, however slightly, for contradictory ways of seeing the world, how their discourses are articulated with changing notions of hegemonic masculinity, and what the images of masculinity in crisis they depict signify as regards the larger society, and through reception analysis, it brings into question what pleasures and meanings real audiences derive from these texts and what these could imply concerning their involvement with the gender order, in particular, and their political inclinations, in general. I hope that with its focus on a rather neglected topic, the study will bring in fruitful insights about the construction of masculinity on television and its decoding by audiences to the developing subfield of critical television studies in Turkey.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Its "Crisis"

The literature exploring the links between the media and the gender order centered upon the woman for long. The urgency of struggling against women's "symbolic annihilation" (Thucman, 1978) led feminism to attach priority to disclosing the media's role in the circulation of discourses subordinating women (Feasey, 2008). However, as Elliot Johnson (2017) remarks, "silence about [the man] confuse[d] its unmarked invisibility with transcendent universality" (p. 16), the awareness of which encouraged many feminist and pro-feminist activists and researchers to incorporate the notion of masculinity, as well, into the universe of critical social sciences from the late 1970s onwards. And men, who had enjoyed the privilege of "seeing without being seen" (Sartre & MacCombie, 1964-1965) until then, also became the object of a critical sight.

Brittan (1989) states that masculinity had not been considered a problem at all until feminism began to attack the premises of conventional political and social theory (p. 78). In fact, the path to critical masculinity studies was opened by feminism's challenge to the claim about the naturalness and normalcy of gender categories. Initial research on the issue tried to show that masculinity is also a socio-cultural construction like femininity. In addition, it asserted that men are victimized by traditional gender roles like women (Goldberg, 1993;

Farrell, 1993); some researchers even claimed that "masculinity oppress[ed] men the most" (Atay, 2004).

From the 1980s onwards, while feminism was having its third wave along with the "discovery" of various ethnic, cultural, sexual and class-based differences and cleavages among women, there emerged attempts in critical masculinity studies to go beyond the notion one is not born but rather becomes a man. They advanced the idea that masculinity is both fluid and fragile as it is subject to social, cultural, and historical change and could not guarantee a fully secure hold for itself but has to wage a continuous struggle in order to patrol its borders (Baştürk Akça & Tönel, 2011, p. 24). These studies also dealt with masculinity as a popular social construct with which various patterns of power relations are articulated in attaining and maintaining dominance in society (Yüksel, 2013a, p. 15).

Of the pioneering figures of this critical perspective, R. W. Connell (1987) argued that we do have not a single mode of masculinity but a plurality of masculinities coexisting within a hierarchical and complicated power structure. The notion of "hegemonic masculinity," he formulated to explain how this structure operates by drawing on Gramsci's ideas on the class relations in Italy in the interwar period, indicates a normative pattern of masculine practice that allows men's dominance over women to continue (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). It characterizes young, urban, white, heterosexual men who are "in the paid labor force [and] who dominate the moral, cultural, and financial landscape" with their features like being competitive, sexually suggestive, physically active and the like (Connell, 1997, p. 77). Its hegemonic nature denotes that it "operates on the terrain of common sense and conventional morality that defines what 'it means to be a man'" (Hanke, 1992, p. 190); that is, despite being supported by physical violence, it attains and maintains social ascendancy mostly through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). In this regard, Kimmel (2004) suggests that hegemonic masculinity does not need to have a one-to-one correspondence in reality. It is rather a desired ideal, especially for young males willing to "become real men" (p. 184).

For Connell (1987), in producing popular consent to hegemonic masculinity, the complicity of men on behalf of their common stakes vis-à-vis women is as significant as the gender ideology, which has deeply penetrated into daily life, social institutions, and culture, is. In other words, let alone "oppressing" them the most, hegemonic masculinity provides men, especially heterosexual ones among them, with a "patriarchal dividend" (Connell, 1987) since its eventual aim is to secure women's global subordination by men, with some forms of

masculinities being stigmatized and marginalized just because of their incongruity with this hierarchical project (Carrigan et al, 2006, p. 592).

In his critical review about Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinity, Demetriou highlights (2001) that in the Gramscian formulation, the hegemony of the dominant class depends not only on subordinating the enemies "whose interests are radically opposed to its own" but also on leading the allies "whose interests could be reconciled" (p. 344). Actually, the dominant class aims to form a "historical bloc" uniting all the allies under its umbrella (Demetriou, 2001, p. 346). The creation of this bloc relies not on denial, ignorance, and disregard but on reconciliation and negotiation (Bhabha, 1994, p. 25). That is, it involves a process of bargaining in which otherwise silent partners have a voice, however limited it is, with their interests and demands not being totally suppressed. In fact, some of their characteristics could be appropriated into the definition of hegemony if useful for continuing domination, which would result in some hybridization in the bloc (Demetriou, 2001, p. 346).

To illustrate this "dialectical pragmatism," Demetriou (2001, pp. 349-55) cites the contemporary shift in hegemonic masculinity towards including more "feminine" values and ways of conduct as well as the increasing visibility of the gay culture, not merely due to "gay agency… but… [as] closely related to the logic and structures of late capitalism," (p. 350), as seen in the appropriation of some elements of this culture by the mainstream fashion, photography and advertising industries and the growing eroticization of the male body in the popular culture (pp. 353-54). In this sense, he argues that hegemonic masculinity reacts to such opposing forces like feminism and the LGBT movement by not totally denying but absorbing and domesticating them. In turn, he questions whether these apparently progressive historical changes really subvert hegemonic masculinity or serve it by "casting the illusion that patriarchy has disappeared" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 353).

Some other thinkers interpret recent changes in hegemonic masculinity as the symptoms of a "masculinity crisis" (Horrocks 1994; Robinson, 2000; Kimmel 1996), a term coined to indicate the state of depression, disillusionment and frustration modern men are thought to experience as a result of the tensions generated within the dominant model of masculinity by contemporary socio-economic and cultural developments, including the increased competition with women at school and at work, the expansion of precarious labor practices, the growing legitimacy of sexual identities alternative to heteronormativity, the representation of men negatively in the media, and the undermining of conventional sex roles, particularly the dissolution of the male breadwinner myth (Edwards, 2006, p. 6). Kimmel (2017/2018) describes this feeling of crisis modern men supposedly suffer from as follows: "Once men were kings

even outside their castles, and now they are walking on eggshells lest they be blamed for all the world's problems." And he argues that it is caused by a sense of "aggrieved entitlement;" that is, today men feel that they are dispossessed of their once-secure privileges by some "unforeseen forces larger and powerful than themselves" (Kimmel, 2017/2018).

With reference to Betty Friedan's (1963) concept of "feminine mystique," which she formulated to indicate the state of depression and hopelessness experienced by women trapped into their domestic roles, some writers even employ the notion of "masculine mystique" (Kimbrell, 1995) to advance the idea that contemporary men are victimized by contradictory social, cultural, and economic pressures on them. For example, Lea and Schoene (2013, s. 12) explain the "crisis of contemporary men" by their subjection to two antagonistic sets of imperatives and ideals, one patriarchal and the other feminist or post-patriarchal. Being expected to sustain the traditional codes of masculinity like aggressiveness, superiority, and hierarchy, on the one hand, and to become "super husband/fathers," on the other, men are assumed to get lost in a world of ambiguity and uncertainty (Lotz, 2014, p. 13).

Yet, these assertions about contemporary masculinity's crisis are criticized from various perspectives. First of all, Connell (1995) questions the notion of crisis itself and its relevance for masculinity. In his view, "'crisis' presupposes a coherent system… which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of a crisis… [whereas] masculinity is a configuration of practice within a system of gender relations" (p. 84). Thus, he suggests, we could only talk of the "disruption or transformation" of masculinity but not of its crisis. However, he acknowledges that it is plausible to talk about the crisis of the gender order as a whole or about its "crisis tendencies" (Connell, 1995, p. 84)[1] since men's domination over women is always "open to challenge" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846).

In fact, a given mode of hegemonic masculinity would sustain its hierarchical status as long as it offers a solution to contemporary tensions within the gender order (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 853). And aside from its rather inherent tensions like the problem of childcare and the emergence of alternative patterns of sexuality (Connell, 1987, p. 61), "changes in social structures with which [it] is linked" (Connell & Wood, 2005, p. 348) have a potential to challenge the gender order, with globalization "understood as neoliberal, market-based world integration," (Connell & Wood, 2005, p. 362) currently ranking first among them. Harvey (2007) suggests that as a dominant discourse which entails "creative destruction" in the sense of tearing down any institutions and narratives from the past which upheld more egalitarian frames of distribution, neoliberalism has almost become part of the common sense with "pervasive effects on ways of thought" (s. 22). Accordingly, Connell and Messerschmidt point

(2005) at the emergence of "transnational business masculinity" as a new pattern of hegemonic masculinity sanctioned by neoliberal subjectivity; it involves "little of the old content of bourgeois masculinity," like patriarchy, patriotism, and religion, and privileges individualism, flexibility, tolerance, and a certain form of libertarianism instead (p. 361-62). In his article where he searches for the changing codes of hegemonic masculinity in neoliberal Turkey, Cenk Özbay (2013) also argues that today the desired form of masculinity involves adopting neoliberal values, making rapid and strategic advances in flexible organizations, displaying extreme individualism, playing with and negotiating the rules when necessary, and having a materialistic structure of feeling and mentality (p. 190).[2]

Against those who interpret this transition in hegemonic masculinity as a crisis situation, critics maintain that the claim that a sense of crisis is what characterizes contemporary masculinity rests on the assumption that masculinity had once been solid, unambiguous and complete (Yüksel, 2013a, p. 42). Instead, they argue "masculinity *ipso facto* is crisis-inducing," or it is the crisis itself (Edwards, 2006, p. 15). For example, drawing on anthropological and ethnographical findings which suggest that masculinity is a painful process to be completed by passing through some extreme rituals, Solomon-Godeau (1995) says masculinity is always in crisis only to rise again as "retooled and reconstructed for its next historical turn" (p. 40). Likewise, Tania Modleski (1991) points out that "male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it" (p. 7).[3]

From a different perspective, Brittan (1989) writes that despite the existence of crisis tendencies for some men at some levels in some historical contexts, what we experience today is not an overall crisis of masculinity but a "legitimation crisis" in the sense that male authority can no longer be taken for granted (p. 184). Yet, this does necessarily mean that the dominance of certain groups of men in society is destabilized (Brittan, 1989, p. 186). Questioning the epistemological status of "crisis" itself, Fintan Walsh (2009) states that crisis is rather a performative act in the Butlerian sense of the term, with "a reconstitutive dimension" to it, serving the "reestablishment of the temporarily agitated norm," (pp. 8-9), the dominance of white heterosexual masculinity. That is, as Sally Robinson (2000) has held, the popular rhetoric of masculinity crisis could be converted into an "identity politics" allowing dominant groups of men to represent themselves as wounded and victimized by their own power, by their responsibilities or by the gender order. And quite undoubtedly, as she notes, "there is much symbolic power to be reaped from occupying the social and discursive position of the subject-in-crisis" (Robinson, 2000, p. 9).

Contemporary Television and Its Conflicted Masculinities

Gürbilek (2008) remarks that literary narratives which sympathize with aggrieved persons, especially those that have a soothing effect due to allowing "victims" to ultimately triumph over their "ill fate," could fertilize the soil from which claims to oppressive authority spring (pp. 12-13). Particularly speaking, the status of victimhood could be performed as a masculine will to power, thereby reinforcing the very hierarchical gender order which allegedly "victimizes men" (Gürbilek, 2008, p. 109-11). Besides, in these narratives, the oppressed and emasculated male character usually signifies the larger society he belongs to, and, his pain and depression becomes the historical epitome of national victimhood (Gürbilek, 2008, pp. 89 -90).

Among all popular mediums of communication, television is the most suitable for such a task of translating a particular sign into a broader cultural one (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 35). Albrecth (2015) illustrates this point by relating the popularity of the American TV series *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013), the plot of which centered on a high school chemistry teacher who became a cooking meth after a cancer diagnosis to leave a nest egg for his family but, in time, appeared to enjoy his new job, to the allegorical representation of the 2008 financial crisis in gendered terms as "He-cession." He argues that the image of depressed, injured, and marginalized white masculinity united American audiences, both conservative and liberal, by alluding to their shared feelings and beliefs as the male protagonist's "crisis" was thought to correspond to that of the country. On the other hand, as Elliot Johnson (2017) points out, self-identification with America could make someone feel unrest as it entails a painful legacy of oppression, violence, and colonization. According to him, this televised narrative of male victimhood actually worked to reduce such instability of the national imaginary since it provided "moral alibis for the exceptional violence of America while simultaneously figuring white men as marginalized in their own right" (Elliott Johnson, 2017, p. 15), and offered audiences an opportunity to maintain "plausible deniability" (Elliott Johnson, 2017, p. 15) regarding their own otherwise morally problematical ideological stances, such as latent white racism. What is more significant, the widespread success of such a show representing the trauma of the white man as a typical example of the human condition revealed the "tacit understandings of what it means to be human" in society (Elliott Johnson, 2017, p. 25).

As "society's storyteller" (Gerner, 1993), television offers "a voluntary point of social cohesion, of being together while being apart" (Ellis, 2002, p. 176). And its stories bear the characteristics of the "consensus narrative" (Thornburn, 1988, pp. 56-62) in the sense that they articulate our common cultural myths and mythologies by transcending the boundaries of class,

life style, age, gender, and the like between us. This consensual nature of the content produced by television requires the medium to appeal to the lowest common denominator, on the one hand, which makes it apparently ill-suitable for the role of "defamiliarizing the established conventions of thought and perception" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 5). On the other hand, television is a multi-layered medium; it is simultaneously an industry, a technological means, a space for cultural and artistic production, a source of entertainment, and a socio-political institution. All these layers have their own exigencies, limitations, and opportunities that collectively set the premises of televised communication. What is more important, this process does not occur in a smooth manner. It rather entails the association of potentially contradictory elements (Mutlu, 2008, p. 28). Above all, as Macé (2009) puts it out, "television is a risky business driven by the tensions between the supposed profits associated with conservative programming… and the risks that it will end in unprofitable boredom" (p. 1). Thus, as Gitlin (1979) mentions, because of economic urges, the television ideology could occasionally amplify some forms of opposition, if they are not "too indigestible" for it (p. 263).

For example, examining the television news treatment of stay-at-home dads in the US in late 1990s as a case of "domesticating patriarchy," Varnus (2002) argued that despite featuring men who seemingly "internalized an adage from second-wave feminism-that men can be capable… as homemakers," what these representations offer does not go beyond "window-dressing" since they do not challenge any other aspects of the nuclear family ideal (p. 353). Instead, they reduce the threat posed by such a potentially subversive male image to the gender order by "normalizing [it] as properly masculine" (Varnus, 2002, p. 353).

To admit, the televised space tends to privilege "socially preferred" interpretations, yet "television is not a simple medium, with its meanings not communicated simply" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 91). Thus, as Fiske and Hartley (2003) suggest, instead of repeating the rather tautological conclusion that "those who are dominant must dominate," we should acknowledge that television "responds to and even embodies a contradictory set of ways of seeing" (pp. 91-92). In fact, popular television texts are abounded with moments of ambiguity and inconsistency that constitute a "symbolic excess" (Fiske, 1986, p. 213) "leaking through the boundaries of any 'preferred meaning'" (Turner, 2003, p. 95), which leads audiences to derive a number of unintended meanings and pleasures from them.

Still, the plurality of meanings does not mean a pluralism without any structure (Turner, 2003, p. 99), and television allow audiences to "entertain" heresy in a rather "safe" space (Ellis, 2002, p. 82) where major social conflicts and divisions are reduced into a matter of personalities and emotions (Mutlu, 2008, p. 11). Also, television necessarily "offers a way out" to tensions

and problems it stages (Mutlu, 2008, p. 115); it could not leave them unanswered as this would violate its "bardic function" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 64) of sustaining a sense of community unified around a common cultural center despite all its cleavages. Accordingly, the televised negotiation between seemingly irreconcilable ways of seeing the world almost always ends in a compromise, however precarious it is. That explains why a "happy ending" is a most frequent and even structural component of televised narratives. Television usually refrains from any moves that could make audiences' blood run cold. To clarify the point, in case it dramatizes a world haunted by pressures for cultural reorientation, it reassures audiences by having protagonists who, in the end, readily and willingly adapt themselves into the emerging world (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 141).

Besides, television "as a commodity art form" erases the traces of its production from sight via the illusion of reality it disseminates (Porter, 1977). To say it otherwise, it is characterized by a lack of the distancing effect in the Brechtian sense of the term (Petro, 1986, p. 15). Involving the use of techniques of estrangement, like actors stepping out of character to lecture and stage designs not corresponding to any locality, this effect aims at confounding audiences' affective involvement with the story and its characters and compelling them to employ their critical thinking capability instead to question how this fictional world is related to the real life ("Alienation Effect," 2000). Television, in contrast, is thought to lull audiences into a state of passive acceptance, depriving them of the intellectual distance required for critical control over the impact of the televised image (Petro, 1986, p. 16).

It is, in fact, no surprise that television and especially TV series, making up the greater part of its output since the early days of broadcast television, have usually been portrayed in pejorative terms by politicians, scholars, cultural critics, and even by media professionals themselves. More significantly, gendered metaphors were widely employed in critical evaluations about television, and particularly about television drama; television was considered to be "capable of emasculating its viewers posed as helpless" against its illusory effect (Joyrich, 1996, p. 69). This fear of feminization was also articulated via metaphors of consumption, used to imply passivity and a lack of creative thinking on behalf of audiences (Pearson & Simpson, 2000, p. 141).

From the late 1970s onwards, however, critical television studies began to challenge the idea that quality inheres with particular textual forms and television, not being one of them, was unworthy of scholarly attention. Today many media scholars, critics, and professionals are of the opinion that certain forms of television programming carry greater aesthetic value than others. Indeed, a turning point occurred in the overall societal discourse on the medium with

the so-called rise of quality television in the late 20th century. The emergence of quality television was related to contemporary technological developments that allowed for novel ways of TV reception, including the ability to time shift and the proliferation of high-definition TV sets in addition to the mainstreaming of cable television. Also, the decline in broadcast TV's audience share, in the face of the fragmentation of the television market and of the rapid growth of the internet as an alternative source of entertainment, was thought to account for this change (Fuller, 2013, p. 1; Albrecth, 2015, p. 6).

Indicating an out-of-ordinary style of television programming that searches for "valuable viewer demographics with disposable income" with its supposedly "superior" standards in form and content (Siegel, 2013, p. 67), quality television is said to undermine the conventions of television production by co-opting oppositional themes and formulas, involving the aforementioned techniques of estrangement. In fact, many studies on quality television liken its shows, especially its serialized drama content, such as *Sopranos* (1999-2007), *Wire* (2002-2008), and *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013), to name but a few, to more "respectable" forms of art, like literature and cinema. These shows are thought to provide television with its long-awaited license to "a sphere reserved for legitimated art forms" (Siegel, 2013, p. 67), making it ultimately able to enjoy the respect and prestige it has long been denied (Newman & Levine, 2012, p. 12).

Yet, as pointed out by some authors, these claims about quality television as being valuable for its unconventionality and sophistication actually reproduce the denigration of broadcast television for being a feminized medium (Newman & Levine, 2012, p. 3; Zimdars, 2018, p. 279). They have even wider repercussions as they confer on an elite class of audiences who are thought to possess the economic and cultural capital required for appreciating quality television the privilege of determining and defining the standards of taste in television viewing, thereby reinforcing the social structures of inequality this cultural practice is embedded in, including the gender order (Newman & Levine, 2012, p. 3; Siegel, 2013, p. 68).

Many recent studies on masculinity and television share the presumption that different kinds of television produce and disseminate distinctive notions of manhood, and they favor new distribution platforms such as cable television as communicating novel and even subversive masculinities in contrast to more conventional representations of masculinity broadcast television historically offered. For example, in her study *Cable Guys*, Lotz (2014) says that the male characters of the TV series originally produced by cable channels contradict old hegemonic masculinities and allow "a meaningful probing of the male identity," which broadcast television failed or avoided to do (pp. 32, 152). According to her, this stems from

cable television's "ability to derive commercial success by narrowcasting to smaller and specific audience niches" and, notably by targeting young, urban, affluent and liberal male audiences thought to be "eager for complex and sophisticated depictions of men's contemporary struggles" (Lotz, 2014, pp. 32-34).

Albrecht (2015) also affirms that quality television casts doubt on traditional notions of masculinity. Still, he does not readily accept the belief that quality television is "inherently superior" due to its narrative complexity and sophistication. He is rather of the opinion that "legitimating certain shows as quality carries with it certain gender implications" (Albrecht, 2015, p. 7). As he mentions it is more than coincidence that male protagonists and intricate representations of masculinity dominate quality television's serialized drama content (Albrecht, 2015, pp. 7-8). Apparently, "a powerful man grappling with the limits of traditional masculinity" became the formula for quality TV productions, as Amanda Marcotte (2011) writes. Feminist scholar Helené Cixous (1981) has once suggested that it seems as if "everything must return to the masculine," to "the realm of the proper, which functions… by the man's classic fear of seeing himself expropriated…. of losing the prerogative, a fear whose responses is all of History" (p. 50). The privilege and worth accorded to these shows against more "feminized" forms of television drama confirm that the "eternal return of the masculine" still haunts our theories of mass culture (Petro, 1986, p. 16). Accordingly, Feasey (2008) says that the growing weight of men as lead characters within contemporary television's serialized drama content actually reflects a will to remasculate the domestic sphere once thought to be reserved for women (p. 13).

Lotz (2014) uses the term "male-centered serial" to define quality television's serialized narratives that delve into the inner negotiations men engage in while performing contradictory scripts of contemporary masculinity (pp. 9, 15). To open up a parenthesis, the features which were thought to characterize drama productions of quality television, such as being unusual in style and content, having a literary appeal, focusing on controversial issues, and aspiring for realism (Thompson, 1997), to name but a few, have now more or less spread to any television drama, broadcast or otherwise. Thus, like Zimdars (2018), who draws attention to the representational similarities in the ways two seemingly disparate American channels, namely "traditional" CBS and "boundary-pushing" HBO, deal with contemporary juvenile masculinity in their serialized drama content, I believe that we should not let the notion of quality television over-determine how we understand representation (p. 291). Instead, we need to analyze it across television distribution platforms and channels. Still, Lotz's (2014) detailed discussion on the

generic features of the male-centered serial provides critical insights to the historical transformation of the way masculinities are represented on television.

According to Lotz (2014), this emergent genre is mostly distinguished by its offer of a depth of characterization previously unavailable on television, which is ensured by narrative techniques that help to probe the character's inner self beyond the limits allowed by the realist space of the story, like using first person voice-over or staging dreams and hallucinations (pp. 10, 56).[4] What also makes contemporary male-centered serials distinct is that they draw quite a rich and multi-dimensional picture of the public and private lives of their male protagonists, whereas conventional television drama used to foreground only one of these spheres, especially the public one when male characters were concerned (Lotz, 2014, p. 15). Indeed, in these shows, the boundaries between the two spheres have been rendered quite ambiguous, with the male protagonist being "turned into a single entity in which the separate spaces of home and office are merged" (Feasey, 2008, p. 18). Still, the ongoing tension between these spheres makes male protagonists, almost all of whom are characterized as fathers with a "complicated" marital status, embody conflicted masculinities. Certain unconventional roles that they are expected to perform, like being an involved parent and treating women as their equals, contradict with the residues of traditional patriarchy, which involve maintaining hierarchy in the family and bringing home the bread, among other things. More often than not, this conflict becomes the excuse for male protagonists' involvement with illegal affairs.

Indeed, having male protagonists "going off the rails" is another noticeable characteristic of these male-centered drama productions (Lotz, 2014), of which crime series make a great part not surprisingly. For years, we felt certain that male protagonists on TV would ultimately choose the "right way" when faced with a moral conflict. However, we are now left devoid of such a safety valve with contemporary male protagonists oscillating between the good and the evil (Lotz, 2014, p. 51).

Admittedly, despite not being "good guys" in the conventional sense of the term, these male protagonists portray desirable images in many respects; they are "flawed protagonists" (Lotz, 2014, p. 63) attracting us with their despair, failures, faults, moral dilemmas, and wounds. And most of the time, their "flaws" could be traced back to their controversial relations with their fathers. Intergenerational changes in gender scripts result in their uneasiness with "the name of the father" in the Lacanian (2013) sense of the term. Having been born into a world in which the pattern of masculinity dominant during their fathers' times has now become obsolete, they worry about not being able to "man up" as properly as expected by their fathers (Lotz, 2014, p. 73). On the other hand, they try hard to establish a much closer relationship with their

children than the one their fathers had with them in the past. In fact, what they feel against their fathers is not simply guilt but also anger and frustration since they accuse their fathers of not leaving behind a sustainable legacy.

Although these narratives highlight the pressures changing gender scripts inflict upon men, their discourse should not be regarded as part of the "backlash against feminism," according to Lotz (2014), since they do not put the blame for the "man's crisis" on female characters defying the established gender roles, unlike what television serials did in the 1990s. Rather, economic changes that cause men trouble and traditional notions of masculinity that fail to suggest a way out of it are charged with contemporary crisis of masculinity. This has encouraged Lotz (2014) to use the adjective of "post-second wave" to qualify these shows. She believes that these narratives are characteristic of "a world responding to the critique and activism of second-wave feminism" (p. 12). For her, they could even be described as "utterly feminist" in many respects. Nevertheless, ironically enough, women show up only as "supporting characters" in them (Lotz, 2014, pp. 187-88).

In fact, while these TV shows incorporate "feminist masculinities," they also retain some aspects of traditional patriarchy, with continuing tensions between the two. For the male protagonist, the family still preserves its mythic appeal,[5] albeit with its flaws now being acknowledged. He often struggles to rehabilitate his disrupted family ties or to prevent his family from complete disintegration. More significantly, heterosexuality retains its status of being the norm par excellence. These shows frequently display male-only enclaves where one can be a "real man" away from the outside world, which supposedly expects him to compromise with feminism's call for gender equality. Still, these spaces are almost always rife with tensions due to their potential of rendering the boundaries between homosexuality and homosociality ambiguous, which sounds even "more threatening" today with gay the identity having attained more public visibility and acceptance. In turn, these narratives usually do not feature any gay characters in order to make their male characters' heterosexuality incontestable (Lotz, 2014, p. 132-35).

Lastly, these male-centered serials actually propagate a new form of hegemonic consensus, albeit one lacking a "peaceful compromise," in contrast to classical television. The masculine drama they stage on screen does not indicate a way out of crisis. Admittedly, they depict a world in which any return to more decidedly patriarchal masculinities seems improbable, despite their more or less nostalgic appeal. Yet, the question of how to move away from this conflict-ridden world is left unanswered either. Rather, with their confounding endings, they cast doubts on whether it is ever possible to do so.

Scope and Methodology

Peberdy (2001) reiterates that each performance of male instability does not automatically serve the rehabilitation of hegemonic masculinity; some might rather help to unfold its traumatic impact on men (p. 29). In fact, as Lotz (2014) alerts, in television studies, building our conceptual framework on the notion of hegemony might lead us to find a pragmatic act of tolerance by the dominant behind any victory of the subordinated. If we are to avoid such a pessimism trap, (Lotz, 2014, p. 41) we should look at the interplay between "social texts" and "social audiences," as the School of Cultural Studies suggest that we do (Buckingham, 1993, p. 10).

The School of Cultural Studies is against the idea that all texts operate in the same manner no matter who their particular audiences are, and accepts people as "active and knowledgeable producers of meaning" rather than as passive consumers of culture (Barker, 2012, p. i). Culture, defined by Raymond Williams (1983) [1958] as "a whole way of living" which manifests itself in popular practical attitudes, tactics, uses, and compromised positions, is thought to offer its members the capacity to reinterpret mediated messages, and even to withstand their dominant meanings (Hall, 1980). To cite a well-known example, in his research *The Nationwide Audience*, David Morley (1980) demonstrates that individual readings of media texts are complicated, unpredictable and even self-contradictory, depending on viewers' "interpellation" by various and potentially inconsistent discourses activated by their social, cultural and institutional experiences, which renders any textual determinism untenable. Besides its insistence on the transformative capacity of media decoding practices, the School of Cultural Studies also shows a tenacious effort to historicize the interaction between a text and its audiences. In this sense, Bennett and Woollacott's (1987) study on the fictional hero James Bond goes even beyond Morley's observations and shows that different historical and social conditions might cause diverging readings of a popular media text to arise and to become prevailing.

This study compares and contrasts two broadcast TV series *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* and *Poyraz Karayel* by drawing on these insights. Accordingly, I try to develop a three-partite analytical approach. First, I reflect on the particular socio-historical, cultural, and political conditions for the rising appeal of an emergent genre of crime series centering on the "man's crisis" in Turkey. Then I critically attend to the tensions in these media narratives and search for any redundancy of meaning within them, giving them a potential to be received in diverging ways. Lastly, I explore real audiences' distinctive modes of reading and reinterpreting

them, and discuss how these might be related to the social, cultural and political structures they are involved with.

The study particularly discusses ways these shows dramatize the contemporary "crisis" of masculinity and portray the cultural negotiation between dominant and unconventional masculinities. In this regard, it critically analyzes these texts to see what or who is held responsible for this "crisis" and what solutions are suggested to it in them. It also asks what changes in the larger society the images of conflicted masculinities they depict indicate. Besides, the study aims to provide insights to the defamiliarizing potential of television as a popular cultural form. To do so, it turns to young male audiences of these shows and explores how they make sense of these controversial portrayals of masculinities.

Young people, indiscriminately identified as the post-1980 generation, are usually thought to be "individualistic," "depoliticized," and "indifferent." Lüküslü (2015) states that this pessimist belief about the contemporary youth is a "myth" perpetuated by our conventional understandings about politics. Admittedly, young people do not constitute a culturally homogenous whole at all. However, we frequently observe a common inclination for "passive resistance" against the status quo among them, with a potential of being converged to actual opposition (Lüküslü, 2015, pp. 14-17). In particular, some distinct characteristics of university students, like remaining relatively away from social production, exhibiting a collective presence in school, being still "open" to learning, and having plenty of free time to get involved in various social and political activities (Savran, 2015, p. 64), could historically turn them into an important player in the political sphere.

In this sense, the study aims to examine whether the meanings and pleasures young male university students derive from these media texts could imply such a state of "passive resistance" on their behalf. With this purpose in mind, the participants were asked what attracted them the most in these series and to which male protagonist they felt closer. Their attitudes to the portrayals of masculine violence in these series were explored, as well. Also, the study questioned what they found "political" in these texts and how they received it. Accordingly, the participants were asked if they regarded these narratives as subversive of or compromising with the status quo and whether this influenced their involvement with them.

The focus group discussion, held on November 6, 2016 with me, the author of the study, as the moderator, took one and a half hour, and was tape-recorded. The all-male participants of the discussion included one recent graduate, three undergraduate and one master's student from Yeditepe University, Faculty of Communication, Ataşehir, İstanbul. Before the discussion, the participants were required to fill in a short questionnaire about their demographic

characteristics, their general political affiliations, and their television watching habits. Also, I had a semi-structured list of questions in my hands to ask during the discussion. However, I did not oblige the participants to answer all of them. They were welcomed to not respond to a question if they did not feel themselves involved with it. Because my aim was to have a grasp of their own meaning making practices as regards these narratives and the representations of masculinities in them, I did try not to be excessively controlling over the course of discussion. Yet, I intervened as the moderator when the focus of the discussion diverged from the general research interests.

Admittedly, the absence of female participants in the discussion was not something intended. Undoubtedly, it would be more helpful to see whether these series are open to oppositional readings, particularly regarding the gender order, if female students had also been involved. Unfortunately, no female student from the faculty responded to the call for participation in the focus group, which had been announced many times before both in class and through social media. It came out that few had been watching *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* regularly enough to participate in the study, whereas a non-ignorable number of them expressed their admiration for *Poyraz Karayel.* How the male participants made sense of this gendered differentiation of taste as regards television viewing will also be discussed in the following pages.

Behzat Ç. and Poyraz Karayel: Aggrieved Male Protagonists on Broadcast TV

Being adapted from Emrah Serbes' novels *Her Temas İz Bırakır* (2006) and *Son Harfiyat* (2010), *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* centers on the personal story of Police Chief Behzat Ç., who leads the Homicide Desk of the Ankara Police Force. Each episode of the series typically dramatizes an individual case of homicide waiting to be solved by Behzat Ç. and his team, with the accompany of Prosecutor Esra, who became Behzat Ç.'s second wife later in the story. Yet, it also features various character arcs and an over-arching mystery gradually being disclosed throughout the course of each season.

Being constructed within a dialogue with *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* by Oğuz Atay (1973), a pioneering figure of the modern Turkish novel (Akınerdem & Sirman, 2017), *Poyraz Karayel,* on the other hand, tells the story of a police officer who was unjustly suspended and lost his son's custody after being found guilty of a crime he did not commit. Striking a secret deal with Police Chief Mümtaz in order to get his son back, Poyraz Karayel begins to work for the strongest mafia in Istanbul, led by Bahri Umman, as an undercover policeman. Meanwhile, he

falls in love with Bahri Umman's daughter, Ayşegül. The plotline revolves around the ebbs and flows of Poyraz Karayel's relationships with Ayşegül and with Bahri Umman and his mob.

Behzat Ç. is a "short-tempered and unpredictable" character "disdainful of authority figures [and] plagued by personal demons" ("Series/Behzat Ç.," 2018). Despite having graduated from the police academy, he was not able to advance in his career unlike his fellow colleagues due to various suspensions and reprimands. Still, he is usually indifferent to the legal procedure and conventions at work and exhibits a penchant for violence. Also, he has an apparent a weakness for drinking alcohol and does not look after himself well. His record as a husband and a father is not pleasant, as well. In contrast to Behzat Ç., Poyraz Karayel is an involved and good-natured father, albeit with a failed marriage. He is actually portrayed as a compassionate, intellectual, modest, attractive, and rightful man (Akınerdem & Sirman, 2017, p. 226). Despite such "desirable" features of his, he contends with many grievances, like Behzat Ç., which makes him an emotionally inconsistent and frustrated character with an aggrieved self. Most significantly, he tries to cope with the traumatic memory of having been abandoned by his father as a child. In fact, as the story proceeds, he begins to take Bahri Umman for his disappeared father, which renders the relationship between the two much more complicated, especially after his biological father, the main villain of the second season, appeared to have an enmity with Bahri coming from the past.

These crime series, which dramatize their title characters' anxieties and dilemmas, their backing and filling between the spheres of work and family, and their struggle to survive in a world where they feel like outsiders, have many important similarities making them eligible for a comparative analysis of modern televised masculinities and of their reception. First of all, both display certain features that are thought to inform quality television. In addition to being character-driven literary fictions, they address various controversies and conflicts in society via their unconventional narrative styles, demanding intellectual involvement from viewers. Accordingly, they appeal to a niche market mostly composed of urban, affluent, and educated young people, yet they also try to hook a larger mass of audiences as national broadcast TV productions. Indeed, this tension between by "being on television" and "being unlike television" (Yörük, 2012) constitutes a significant a source of the inconsistencies and ambiguities of meaning in these texts.

Besides, both shows were aired within the particular socio-historical context of the 2010s, when the rapid and excessive growth and the highly competitive environment of the television drama sector made it a necessity to search for small but specific and well-defined audience markets, and, thus, to cover previously unspoken topics and themes and to experiment

with new narrative styles.[6] In doing this, television especially fed itself on cinema, considered more welcoming to difference and novelty due to its industrial and artistic particularities. In Turkey, narratives about conflicted masculinities, indeed, first appeared in cinema in the second half of the 1990s and became widespread in the following decade with films like *Mustafa Hakkında Her Şey* (2004),[7] *Yazı-Tura* (2004),[8] *Barda* (2007),[9] *Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun* (2009),[10] and *Çoğunluk* (2010),[11] to name but a few. Their rather tamed appropriation by television occurred later in the 2010s, a decade which became the scene to the popularization of a sense of crisis among the urban secular middle classes.

Throughout the 2010s, Turkey's incorporation into the world capitalism has been reinforced under the auspices of the Islamist AKP government, which became ever more authoritarian particularly after it took a large step away from the separation of powers after the 2010 referendum on the constitutional amendments with a particular focus on the judicial institutions of the country. Today the political authority, the agent of neoliberal agendas, acts on the pretension that it could only survive through a regular destruction of anything around, whether material or moral, so as to reestablish it upon more conservative and market-oriented premises. With all its values, beliefs, and institutions, the representational regime of the Republic has also been unsettled within this state of "perpetuated vigilance" engendered by the government (Yaşlı, 2017). This results in an intensified feeling of aggrieved entitlement in the urban secular middle classes in the sense that they now regard themselves as unduly suspended from the cultural core of society, which they once believed to be reserved for them.

As Gürbilek (2008) writes, in the popular culture, irony has emerged as a key cultural strategy the contemporary secular middle classes employ to cope with this sense of disillusionment. For Kierkegaard (1989), who wrote about irony and its relation to morality, irony as "infinite absolute negativity" is a comprehensive state of disengagement from society: "It is not directed against this or that particular existing entity at a certain time and under certain conditions but… the totality of existence" (p. 254). From the perspective of those who take such a stance everything in their given "actuality" appears vain. As "everything becomes nothing," they become alienated because reality loses "its validity" for them (Frazier, 2004, pp. 419-21).

In the contemporary post-modern world, as it is called, which seems to have deprived of all its reference points with the ties between the reality and its representation being severed, ridiculing any truth claims in a cynic manner has become a general habit of mind characterizing the members of these classes This happens because their recognition of various incongruities in their social environments gives them a critical distance, in the first instance. But, more significantly, "pure ironists," according to Kierkegaard, desire to be unconstrained by the

obligations and long-term commitments treating one's roles against society seriously entails (Frazier, 2004, p. 421). In this regard, Sirman and Akınerdem (2017) relate the rise of a new type of TV crime series which centers on subtle games of mind played by characters alternating between benevolence and malignancy, with relatively weaker ties to previously popular melodramatic forms that almost always ended with the unquestionable victory of the good over the evil, to this overall atmosphere of cynicism in which the stability of the old public regimes of representation has been upset, and a new generation of secular middle classes who desire to live like pleasure-seeking game players rather than self-sacrificing missionaries has risen (p. 226).

For the urban secular middle classes, nostalgia is another key cultural strategy to get through a world that seems to have its boundaries unsettled. According to Sirman (2006), Turkish society discovered "memory" when the middle classes witnessed a crisis of the Republican values (pp. 33-34). For some, the crisis emerged as a result of the globalization process which threatened the principle of national sovereignty. The ascendancy of Islamist politics, bureaucratic corruption, ethnic and sectarian cleavages, economic depression, and ossification of urban poverty also triggered this sense of crisis. All these developments nurtured the yearning for the old Republican times, which was deemed a "mythic golden age" dominated by an ethos of self-devotion and belonging they now find themselves to be lacking. Thus, she maintains, "This discourse [of nostalgia] … acquire[d] its power by displacing the crisis narrative from being a problem of the social to being a crisis of the [viewing] subject" (Sirman, 2006, 45).

By using various signs, symbols, and literary techniques, these two series show audiences the dismantling of a world where great narratives had mattered, on the one hand, and stimulate their feelings of nostalgia for that world, which has now disappeared without any possibility of return, on the other. Actually, it is no accident that the male protagonists of these series come from an urban, secular, and educated middle class background. What audiences of these series watch on the screen is not simply the crisis of hegemonic masculinity as such but their own "crisis." Yearning for the "old Turkey" and yet conceding that there is no way back, they relieve the thereby-generated sense of frustration usually through irony and nostalgia.

The series *Poyraz Karayel* particularly resorts to irony for maintaining distance from the Republican representational regime. In one exemplary scene from the first season, in which Poyraz Karayel tries to help his son Sinan with his homework about "the things of the Republic," Sinan asks him: "*You know that we had lagged behind… Then, the republic came, and we went forward. You see… The most important things in it… I wrote the sultanate was*

abolished, and democracy came. But what was the most important among them?" Poyraz replies back, "*The most important one is the adoption of the Gregorian calendar*." And he continues as follows:

> *We had been using the Islamic calendar; that is, we used to live in the 1300s. Then, the calendar changed. We just woke up one morning, and we are in the 20th century. You have come six hundred years forward in just one night… But you take a look and see that everybody still wears fezes, and things like that… Is it possible? Of course, it is not. You just enact the hat law… You advance one way or another.*

A similar sense of irony is also found in Poyraz Karayel's tirades, in which he temporarily steps out of his character and acts out his worries about apparently disappearing social values, such as altruism, neighborliness, solidarity, and cooperation, against absent audiences or socially marginalized and stigmatized persons like mental patients or nursing home residents. Despite being usually performed in a sarcastic manner, these tirades bear a strong sense of nostalgia. Actually, at these spectacular moments, by retrieving various figures of memory from the Republican past, he maintains distance from today. The tirade he performed for the "death of the humanity" in front of a huge portrait of Atatürk at a nursing home clearly illustrates this:

> *My beloved oldie friends… We all wait for death… Unfortunately, the final straw of the humanity we had was sold by Grocer Fuat Effendi to retired Turkish teacher Lady Nebahat by charging it to her account, so we have cleaned of the humanity now. It all ended. Even the part of the humanity which had been expired and gone off... We all loved it. It became our partner, our friend, our son… We starved but fed it… Even if the humanity does not stroll among us now, its legacy will live in our hearts. Our children will learn from us that the humanity had been alive for once.*

In the series, Retired Colonel Cevher, Poyraz's neighbor, stands as a metonym for a disappearing world in which people wholeheartedly believed in the Republican ideals and embodied them within a sense of discipline and hierarchy. In some scenes, Poyraz Karayel makes fun of the colonel's rather naïve loyalty to the Republican past. However, at times when he feels desperate, he visualizes the colonel and pours out his grief only to him but no one else. In one sense, he seeks in the Republican past a way out of his crisis.

In *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi,* on the other hand, the male protagonist's deceased father, a senior military officer, is a used as an allegory for the past, to which Behzat Ç. is related in a much more complicated way. He had an authoritarian and oppressive father, trying to sustain traditional patriarchal norms and values and transfer them to his two sons. Although his father wanted Behzat Ç. to be a military officer like him, Behzat Ç.'s rebellious character

made him fall behind his father's expectations; having been expelled from the military school, he became a police officer instead as his father deemed it as the second-best option for his son's career. He has, in a sense, made a compromise with the name of the father (Lacan, 2013), which was itself based on the rather fragile ground of patriarchy since his mother, out of her insatiable desire for power and status, abandoned his father to marry a higher-ranking military officer. That is why we, as audiences, had never a chance to learn Behzat's surname in full except for its abbreviation, Ç. This single letter signifies Behzat's unsettled paradox of being deemed impotent by a father who was already castrated (Akıl, 2017). He tries to cope with this paradox by setting up a paternal bond with his team members. Acting like an enduring and self-sacrificing father towards them, which led some researchers to think that the character still retains some dominant codes of masculinity despite his non-compliant nature (Özsoy, 2017), he himself represents a past world, albeit one with which he has not settled his accounts yet.

The generation gap between these two male protagonists might be a reason why Behzat Ç. has an ambiguous relationship with that very old world for which Poyraz Karayel feels a strong sense of nostalgia. As a member of the post-1980 generation, Poyraz Karayel longs for a disappearing world he is too young to have known in its entirety while Behzat Ç., who is in his 40s, is old enough to have been closely acquainted with it. This generation gap between the title characters also affects the manner in which they communicate with others. As a romantic young guy with literary appreciation skills, Poyraz Karayel is good at communication, particularly with the opposite gender. He also has a strong sense of empathy for those around him such as his neighbors. Indeed, he materializes the contemporary change in hegemonic masculinity towards incorporating more "feminine" ways of conduct. On the other hand, neither showing an inclination to disclose his inner thoughts and emotions nor empathizing with others except for certain melodramatic climaxes in the plot, Behzat Ç. seems closer to conventional patriarchy, although he has problems with its norms and values. To give a simple example, he frequently scolds those asking him how he has been by saying "Do not talk nonsense," an expression which almost became his trademark.

Another difference between the two title characters is seen in the way they are related to other men. Notwithstanding his tendency to withdraw himself when he is buried in the deep hole of depression, Behzat Ç. is the paternal leader of a men's world. In contrast, despite going in and out this world, Poyraz Karayel does not become a full-fledged member of it. For example, he does not sit at the raki table as properly as required by its manly etiquette. He looks like closer to the post-second wave masculinity, which entails a blurring of the boundaries between

gender roles, according to Lotz (2017). Yet this renders him a stranger to homosocial enclaves where men socialize with each other to man up.

In spite of these differences in their characterization, both are flawed protagonists with clearly anti-heroic manners and attitudes. According to Louis Begley (2000), we could classify anti-heroes into two, both of which are identified with a deep sense of hopelessness with one important difference, though: Whereas the first type distrusts common values and seems unable to commit to any ideals, the second type unrelentingly strives to overcome his grievances, yet he drifts into chaos again and again. Behzat Ç. and Poyraz Karayel are actually located somewhere in between these two types. More often than not, they act with suspicion towards social norms and values and show a tendency to not dedicate themselves to any greater cause. Still, they do not give up their hopes for a better future, and, the conflict they experience in themselves between these two sets of anti-heroic characteristics is employed as a frequent source of tension in both series. Yet, the consensual nature of television drama usually leads to a compromise: Behzat Ç. returns to his post at the Homicide Desk after every step he takes towards walking off his job against the state of deadlock engendered by the conventional judicial system. Similarly, Poyraz Karayel is brought on the brink of insanity after his every failed struggle against a villain(e) but returns the game as he cannot simply put away his paternal commitments.

As middle-class career men from a professional culture shaped by masculine values like physical strength, prowess, and hierarchy, they carry certain footprints of hegemonic masculinity, albeit not as steadfastly as found in classical television drama. Most significantly, in these representations, one could rarely come across the traces of neoliberal subjectivity, which underlines the emergently hegemonic form of masculinity today with its extreme individualism and materialistic structure of feeling and mentality (Özbay, 2013). The sense of frustration that stems from his failure in adapting himself to this new pattern of subjectivity is usually acted out in Poyraz Karayel's tirades. On the other hand, in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*, it is frequently translated into a state of surrender and withdrawal on behalf of the male protagonist of the series.

An important source of these men's "crisis" is their fathers, who left an uneasy legacy behind them.[12] As mentioned above, Behzat Ç. is a liminal character who does not fully comply with the name of the father but is unable to directly challenge it either. Poyraz Karayel also has difficulty coming to terms with the figure of the father. After he starts to treat Bahri Umman like his father, he suffers a dilemma between his desire to take refuge under the patriarch's authority and his fear of turning into the kind of merciless and though man who could kill

someone without blinking an eye as sanctioned by this authority. He tries to deal with this dilemma by the help of his love for Ayşegül. From a psychoanalytical perspective, Poyraz Karayel seeks reunion with the mother's body in Ayşegül's arms. And the dark green armchair in the male protagonist's apartment, in which he usually immerses himself when he feels depressed, is employed as a metaphor for the mother's womb in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*. Indeed, it is the only furniture he took with himself to Esra's apartment, where he moved after he married her.

In these series, the distrust of the patriarchal authority extends to the state institutions involving the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the police. In the face of the corruption and decay within them, Poyraz Karayel finds a new locus of power which allows him to restore justice, Bahri Umman and his mob. Compared to him, Behzat Ç. is not that much lucky, as it were. Despite lacking confidence in the judicial system of the country and carrying a personal sense of justice instead, he does not totally abandon the name of the father represented by the political authority until the very last scene of the final episode, in which he ultimately gives up his career and embarks on a journey alone into uncertainty.

Putting the greater part of the blame on traditional patriarchy for contemporary men's crisis, these texts could be qualified as "post-second wave" in the sense Lotz (2014) uses the term, but the ways they depict the male protagonists' relationships with women render their engagement with feminism highly controversial. To give a few examples, throughout the course of the plot, Poyraz Karayel assumes the mission of reconciling Ayşegül with her father Bahri Umman, with whom she had an uneasy relationship as she held him responsible for her mother and little brother's deaths. Bahri Umman's daughter-in-law Songül's desire for emancipating herself from the constraining atmosphere of Bahri's family and attaining a public identity as a career woman is tamed through the grievances she experiences due to a secret love affair. And in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*, what falls to the share of the female characters challenging conventional gender codes is usually death, as in the cases of Prosecutor Esra, who was killed by order of a ruling crime syndicate that controlled "business" in Ankara, and of Narcotics Chief Suna, who committed suicide after she was discovered to be a serial killer taking revenge on behalf of women raped and killed by men.

Furthermore, in both series, the male characters usually relieve their existential crises in male-only environments where they do not have to deal with women demanding empowerment and sexual equality. Actually, the fact that men are finally comfortable getting close with each other seems a progressive step forward, but that may not be "liberating and socially positive for women," as a recent study on bromantic relationships suggests (Robinson, White, & Anderson,

2017). In these homosocial islets of masculinity, Behzat Ç. and his team frequently employ dirty male talk, humiliating female sexuality and despising anything associated with femininity and with the gay culture. This is thought to reinforce the series' claim to represent a genuinely masculine world. Similarly, a member of the Homicide Desk Cevdet is not accepted as "man enough" to gain full admission to this male-only world due to his negative attitude to violence. In *Poyraz Karayel*, too, we typically see the male actors in homosocial environments where dirty male talk appears as the accepted way of conduct, however to a lesser extent than in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*. The male characters disclose and communicate their innermost thoughts and emotions, particularly their feelings of despair and frustration, mostly in these homosocial spaces, where they do not feel the need to pretend to be self-sufficient, strong-minded, and powerful men.

Despite such parallels in their articulation of the "man's crisis," a palpable difference exists between the two series' narrative styles: While *Behzat Ç.: Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* keeps its loyalty to the conventions of realism, *Poyraz Karayel* looks like a game to entertain with weaker ties to the reality it simulates.

As already indicated by Özsoy (2011) and Yörük's (2012) studies, the success and popularity of *Behzat Ç.: Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* mostly stemmed from its resemblance to the cultural reality. It employed Ankara, the urban space where almost the entire plot took place, not simply as an ahistorical decorative material but as a constitutive component of its cinematography, along with the characters using local jargons and dialects (Yörük, 2012, p. 249). Besides, the series sustained its claim to cinematic realism by using certain aesthetic formulas such as off-screen sounds and natural lighting.

On the other hand, Sirman and Akınerdem (2017) point out that the narrative style of *Poyraz Karayel* alternated between melodrama and game (p. 214). At first glance, it was a melodramatic narrative displaying stereotypical characters with their exaggerated conflicts and emotions and reducing highly complex and controversial matters into binary oppositions between the good and the evil. Still, at moments when the sense of heroism this melodramatic appeal entailed seemed like losing its persuasiveness, audiences were reminded that what they watch on the screen is just a fiction, implying that there is no place for such heroism in the real world. This was achieved through the creation of the Brechtian distancing effect via techniques like sudden pauses and camera movements going out of the fictional universe of the story as well as the male protagonist temporarily abandoning his role and stepping into the audiences' world to lecture them (Sirman & Akınerdem, 2017, p. 218).

A second important difference between the narratives of *Poyraz Karayel* and *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* could be found in the manner they are involved with contemporary politics. *Behzat Ç.: Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* incorporated many controversial political topics of the time into its plot, such as Armenian journalist Hrant Dink's assassination, the death of the Nigerian refugee Festus Okey in police detention, Saturday Mothers, arrested journalists, and the increasing rates of femicide, which were rarely addressed in the TV series that came before. Besides this intratextuality, which further strengthened the series' claim to represent the reality, it adopted a clearly oppositional political stance on matters like male violence, gentrification, torture, and ethnic discrimination. Indeed, to differentiate itself from conventional television, it released into circulation various signs that defied the established codes of television drama. In contrast, despite making occasional allusions, *Poyraz Karayel* usually avoided explicit references to contemporary politics. However, with Poyraz Karayel killing the son of the Russian consulate in order to save Ayşegül from captivity, the narrative openly referred to the then-current disagreement between Turkey and Russia over the Syrian Civil War in the final episode of the second season. In the following season, it continued to address to that war and its outputs like the rising frequency and extent of Islamic terrorism in Turkey. As Emre Çetin (2014) states, in response to the contemporary transformation in Turkish television informed by the expansion of television market and political challenges to the freedom of the press, a process of politicization of television dramas took place in Turkey (pp. 2463-64), to which *Poyraz Karayel* was not immune, just as most other TV series of the time.

More direct political pressures were exerted on *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*, in the face of which the series ended sooner than expected, according to its scenarist ("Emrah Serbes açıkladı," 2017). Erdal Beşikçioğlu, the actor starring as Behzat Ç. in the series, similarly said, "There were times some political circles did not enjoy the notion of justice the series created in itself since it crossed their path" (Deniz, 2018). In the series' finale, the only solution made available to the male protagonist was to abandon a world he could not cope with instead of coming to terms with it. Undoubtedly, *Poyraz Karayel* also lacked a happy ending in the sense of eventually relieving audiences after causing disturbance in them. By the wording displayed on its very last scene "Every ending is not a beginning or so but just an ending," it further reinforced the sense of the impossibility of a peaceful compromise. And with Poyraz having lost his mind after Ayşegül's unexpected murder by a villaine, audiences were left no other choice than conceding that there is no way out of crisis in a cultural atmosphere where the cunning mind prevails over heroism and melodrama.

Reading Television's Conflicted Masculinities: Focus Group Discussion

According to the findings of the preliminary survey conducted before the focus group discussion, the participants' ages changed from 22 to 24. Three of them were born in Istanbul, while one in Sivas and the other in Denizli, and all of them lived in Istanbul at that time. At the time the discussion was held, the master's student worked as a research assistant at university, and one of the undergraduate students wrote posts for a popular web site about television series, whereas the other two were not in the active labor force, and the last one had been unemployed for six months since his graduation from college. All categorized themselves in the middle-income group and placed themselves on the left of the political spectrum, while only one, the master's student, was actively involved in politics as a member of a leftist party. Their responses to the question of how frequently they watch TV ranged from once a week to every day, and they happened to watch their favorite TV series mostly through internet sites, social media, digital portals, and Youtube.

The focus group discussion revolved around the questions concerning the participants' ideas about the gendered differences of taste as regards watching television, about the portrayals of masculine violence in the series and the male protagonists' conflicted relationships with their fathers as well as their affinity with the male protagonists and their opinions about the political nature of these title characters, each of which will be dealt separately below.

Participants' Ideas about the Gendered Differences of Taste in Television Viewing

At the beginning, the participants were asked to reflect on the possible reasons for the absence of female participants in the discussion, and their replies were listed below:

Barış[13] (recent graduate, born in Istanbul, aged 22, unemployed for six months): "*I did not expect that.*"

Hüseyin (master's student, born in Sivas, aged 24, politically active within a leftist party, working in university): "*I actually guessed it. That is to say, I did not see too many women watching Behzat, to tell the truth.*"

Hasan (undergraduate student, born in Istanbul, aged 21, not working): "*I think that results from the thing… In the series [Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi], there is not a male character that could be considered as very handsome.*"

Ali (undergraduate student, born in Istanbul, aged 21, not working): "*And there is one more thing. For example, while I was discussing this matter, I explained it to all… Usually, women responded like, 'You mean that character whose hair looks as if licked up by a cow?'"*

Haydar (undergraduate student, born in Denizli, aged 22, writing blogposts about television): *"That is what Emrah Serbes already says. We are ugly guys, and we will, of course, place ugly guys in."*

As the discussion continued, Hüseyin added that [the male characters in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*] looked like "bumpkins," to which Hasan responded, "*The local inhabitants of Ankara are already bumpkins; this is a constant."* Referring to Poyraz Karayel, on the other hand, Hüseyin argued, "*Such characters get now popular… Those who quotes from books, poems… Probably more with women… This might sound a sexist attitude, but it is as if such characters who are more intellectual and better at communication seem more attractive [to women]."*

As their sentences imply, the participants were generally of the opinion that female audiences watch a TV series mainly for the physical attractiveness of its male protagonist. Also, some assumed that contemporary female audiences are more involved with male characters with better intellectual and communication skills. However, most of them found "ugly" male characters closer to the reality and tended to empathize with them even if they seemed like "bumpkins" (used to denote unsophisticated and unintelligent people who are thought to come from the cultural periphery). As Bourdieu (1984) writes, as "social subjects classified by their classifications," (p. 6) they distinguished themselves from the opposite gender with the distinctions they made as regards the way they relate to fictions and the realities they simulate, and through these distinctions, they re-enacted the established gendered understandings about television viewing as a cultural practice, with one important reservation, though. Apparently, they acknowledged the sexist implications of their negative attitude to the pleasures and meanings women derive from watching television. That is, they expressed their ideas about the gendered differences of taste in television viewing within a dialogue with feminism and feel themselves compelled to respond to its possible critiques.

Participants' Ideas about the Male Protagonists' Relations with Their Fathers and the Depictions of Masculine Violence in the Series

The figure of the father in both series was among the main symbols used to signify a past with its disappearing masculine ideals. And the male protagonists' conflictual relations with their fathers indicated how they managed the tensions generated by changes in gender scripts. In this regard, the participants were asked about their opinions on the similarities and differences between Behzat Ç. and Poyraz Karayel's relations with their fathers. Haydar's answer was as follows:

> *Both Poyraz and Behzat are gradually returning to their fathers. Behzat already has a father. Poyraz does not have a father at the beginning. Later he establishes a father-son relationship with Bahri… Then, his real father appears… He is totally a jerk, and Poyraz becomes a killer because of him.*

Hüseyin added, "*He is trying to make Poyraz like himself*." Then, Haydar continued, "*All fathers try to make their son like themselves, after all. And they succeed*." Barış stepped in and opposed that he frequently quarrels with his father due to the generational gap between them:

> *We have thirty years between us with my father. It is impossible for us to think in the same way. I am trying to explain [him] that. Indeed, I am trying to explain how good it is that we could argue with each other. It is going well, you know. I can shoot someone someday.*

As Barış's sentences implied, reconciliation with the name of the father is a challenging and painful process. Indeed, that is not the way how the crises of the male protagonists were finally resolved in these shows. Unlike in classical television drama, neither series offered a solution to the son's conflict with the father and the old world he signified. But, both narratives portrayed a negotiation with the patterns of masculine behavior that had been deemed normative in that lost world, with violence being one of them.

Concerning the portrayals of violence in the shows, most participants regarded Poyraz's acts of violence as justified by his suffering. For instance, Haydar said the following:

> *His is highly reasoned violence. Before the episode in which he killed a guy for the first time, he suffered and had the audiences suffer, too, so intensive pain that even I, as someone against violence, felt my heart sinking when he happened to shot that doctor [who curetted Ayşegül against her inclication].*

He continued, *"Poyraz was justified in one way or another. You do not need to make violence seem aesthetic after that point. That man was a good guy until then. If you were in his shoes, you would experience the same thing."* Hüseyin agreed with him, *"Everybody eventually said 'aha.'"* The violence depicted in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* was also usually interpreted as enacted on behalf of justice. For example, Ali said the following:

> *I believe that any kind of violence should be inflicted on people deserving it. Alright, there is the law; there is the justice system. But, let's say, in cases of rape, there are Behzat's treatments of criminals. They reflect what we desire.*

But some participants thought that *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* portrayed more casual violence than *Poyraz Karayel*. For instance, Hüseyin held, "*A thief comes in. He does not think one second. He just beats the guy. He does not give a hoot. But in Poyraz, as my friend*

said, you actually take revenge." For Barış, *"since Behzat and his team are nasty guys already,"* their use of violence did not need any reason to be justified. Then Hüseyin explained the difference between the two series in terms of their depiction of violence as follows, *"It is like… Behzat is real; Poyraz is a fable."* That is, "ugly guys" commit violence just like Behzat Ç., not for any wider cause as in classical TV series.

Still, as the narrative style of *Poyraz Karayel* oscillated between melodrama and game, there was a place for casual violence in it, too. Male characters were frequently displayed as making jokes to each other in scenes of armed conflict. As Haydar said, "*They shoot, on the one hand, and they laugh, on the other."* It was only Hasan who was against any portrayals of violence for making it seem sympathetic and motivating audiences to use firearms. *"Alright, let's all bear arms and kill men,"* he said, criticizing also the legitimatization of mob justice in *Poyraz Karayel.* Except for him, the participants generally approved masculine violence, especially if enacted on behalf of a just cause.

Participants' Affinity with the Male Protagonists

As seen in their replies, the participants usually sympathized with the kind of "nasty" male characters that apparently do not fit into modern ideals of masculinity. To get further insights to this preference of theirs, the participants were asked why they felt closer to a particular male protagonist. Ali said that he felt an affinity with Behzat Ç. since he seemed a more "realistic" character not pretending to have the power to overcome unhappiness: "*Alright; Poyraz is a romantic, popular, handsome, high-valued character. But in one scene… for example, Behzat says, 'I am ready for unhappiness with you. Let's be unhappy.' He behaves in an absolutely realistic manner."*

The manner in which a male protagonist performs certain behaviors like drinking with other men and using dirty male talk influenced the participants' perceptions about the character's manliness and, accordingly, their affinity with the character. For instance, Barış said the following about Poyraz Karayel's and Behzat Ç.'s respective ways of engagement in the masculine drinking culture:

> *There is a certain drinking culture in both Poyraz and Behzat… but the way they drink… For example, there is always a poetic situation in Poyraz. Behzat just takes vodka as such… without the need to thin it. He directly bottoms up… I am just saying, what does he do when he suggests drinking? He hangs around with his undershirt and socks. We are all like that. We are actually he. That is the thing which renders Behzat attractive to us.*

In contrast, Poyraz Karayel, in Haydar's words, *"does not sit at the alcohol table. He just drinks if someone else in the setting is drinking."* In addition, Hasan admired Behzat Ç. and his team's frequent use of slang for reinforcing the series' claim to represent a truly masculine habitus: *"It is because [slang] also has a place in life. I wish it did not exist. But you reflect this in the series in one way or another. That is, he has created a man's world."*

The particular socio-cultural conditions audiences inhabit also affected their attitudes to the series and their male protagonists. In Barış's case, his feeling of depression due to his prolonged unemployment after graduation and his coming from a stigmatized urban area known for high rates of crime and violence informed his respective ideas about Poyraz Karayel and Behzat Ç. To the question about which character he found closer to himself, he gave the following answer: *"Poyraz is like what we want to be. He communicates better with women… Poyraz makes people laugh; he somehow carves a place for himself."* But, he stated, "*I cannot be like Poyraz. I may pretend to be like him to a certain extent. But, as I said I have been unemployed for six months. I am going nuts."* Then he added:

> *I seriously find Behzat Ç. quite close to myself. It is because of the conditions in which I grew up and the stuff like those… I grew up in Gaziosmanpaşa. You probably know that it is a very nasty place. I used to fight on my own when I was eleven. You are a child. They pushed the thing in… I still have its scar on my waist. They gunned a man down just beside me while I was walking when I was 14. Just in street as you know… I am not exaggerating that.*

Hüseyin gave a similar reply to the same question, "*Behzat is what we are; Poyraz is what we desire to be,"* and explained that "*We all actually want to kill the bumpkin inside us and to communicate better with women."* Yet, he wanted to be a "*combination of the two*." In his words, *"Sometimes I wish I did not care about anything, just went somewhere on my own and rested my head like Behzat Ç. On the other hand, I really wish I gathered people around me and lectured them like Poyraz."*

Haydar also found the image of Behzat Ç. closer to the reality. He said, *"[Poyraz] is not a realistic character in today's world. We do not have a chance to go to a police station and come across a character like Poyraz in there. But we could find Behzat Ç."* Hüseyin confirmed him by quoting from his own life experiences:

> *I have been in* [the police headquarters in] *Gayrettepe once in my life. I went to the Homicide Desk there, and I felt afraid. You would confuse those men with drug dealers if you saw them in street. It is just like that, for sure. Maybe, his life stories are really like that.*

However realistic a character he seemed to be, Behzat Ç. represented the past for the participants. For instance, to Hasan's objection that it is not possible to find police chiefs like Behzat in contemporary Turkey, Haydar responded, *"Let's say ten years ago, before political polarization has increased that much in the country, before this spoils system has expanded that much, we might have found Behzat."*

Yet, his answer to the question about with which male protagonist he had an affinity differed from the others':

> *Behzat is actually a very powerful character. He might be a desperate loser, but he is a powerful character. It is difficult to become someone like him. To remain so powerful, to be able to stand against everything so powerfully… But Poyraz is not a character like that. Alright, he is very intelligent. Alright, he is very good at communication, but he is a weak character. Generally speaking, we are not that much powerful, and maybe [Poyraz] shows us a way out.*

But what is this "way out" exactly? In Hüseyin's words, it is "ridiculing himself and his own pain." He stated, "*One says that I wish I suffered like him."* Then he drew the following analogy: "*Four or five years ago, I was watching a wedding show with my brother. The spectators are dancing on the stage… The song says, we have received a nasty blow from everyone. And they are belly dancing. For me, Poyraz's pain resembled this a bit."*

Actually, most participants stated that Poyraz Karayel's sense of irony and his ability to confound audiences with his unexpected twists were what attracted their attention the most in the series. For instance, Hasan said that he started to watch the series because Poyraz Karayel was *"very good at telling lies,"* and added, *"No one expects him to say something definite. For example, no one expects him to say, 'Will you marry me?' We always have that thing in our mind… We feel that he will make a sharp turn while he is going straight."* In this regard, Hüseyin mentioned a scene from the 71st episode, in which one morning Bahri Umman finds out that Ayşegül, then married to someone else, and Poyraz spent the night together: *"His father comes, scours, and rants against them, 'You cannot be together now; you are married!' The only thing the man said, 'Dash it, the soujouk has been wasted!'"* Likewise, Haydar gave the following example: *"For instance he once went to the pharmacy and replied the question 'What's your problem?' as 'I do not have an Ayşegül.'"* In addition, referring to the last scene of the 41st episode, in which Poyraz proposes to Ayşegül by pretending to suicide, he said, "*You know he was letting himself down… I seriously felt that… Poyraz might have attempted suicide. That is, I would not have been surprised if he had committed suicide."* Indeed, Hasan's following words as regards this particular scene implied that the participants did not expect Poyraz Karayel to reach a happy ending, unlike the heroes of classical television drama: *I think*

the series would have ended at its height if he had done so. People could have talked about it all through a season." And the series' finale actually confirmed their expectations.

Participants' Ideas about the Male Protagonists' Political Nature

In contrast to Poyraz, making fun of himself and his own "crisis," thereby maintaining a distance with melodrama, the way Behzat Ç. dealt with his suffering sounded more lifelike to the participants. For instance, Ali said that Behzat and his team "*come together in the evening at one's apartment, set up the raki table, and put out their grief to each other. It is so realistic that I wish I were there."* And while they were talking about how the male protagonists managed their "crises," a spontaneous discussion erupted about the similarities between arabesque as a popular cultural form and the respective narrative styles of the two series.

As Meral Özbek (2008) has suggested, arabesque, denoting a popular cultural form of art with Arabic influences which focuses on themes like longing, melancholy, strife, and unrequited love, simultaneously carries complex and contradictory frames of rebellion and surrender, which could be historically articulated with diverging and conflicting political discourses (pp. 210-11). She discusses that when arabesque, particularly in music and cinema, achieved widespread popularity in the country throughout the 1970s, its subversive ideological discourse interpellated popular classes living on the margins of the urban culture; these classes embraced arabesque as a means to express their conflictual responses to the modernization process. However, in the 1980s and afterwards, with the breakup of the socio-political frames that engendered this interpellation, most particularly with the decline in the power and status of the left, arabesque was incorporated into the new conservative/liberal hegemony, with its elements implying an oppositional "class consciousness" having been cleared away (Özbek, 2008, pp. 211-12).

Hüseyin likened the narrative style of Poyraz *Karayel* to the form arabesque took in the 1980s: *"He sings and entertains continuously… It sounds like the transformation of arabesque films in the 1980s."* Haydar agreed with him: *"Behzat's is more like the arabesque of the 70s."* Similarly, Barış criticized *Poyraz Karayel* for domesticating the rebellious potential of arabesque: "*There is a figure called Halil Sezai. He [incorporated] arabesque into the popular culture. Poyraz Karayel makes a kind of arabesque similar to Halil Sezai's. But Behzat goes to the bottom."*

According to Hüseyin, *"Behzat Ç. actually reproaches the system, not the God*." On the other hand, the "mentality" in *Poyraz Karayel* appeared more fatalistic to him: "*Do not count for anything much, but reproach the God."* That is, from his standpoint, while Poyraz Karayel

is a figure tracing his grievances back to his ill-fate, Behzat Ç. is a much more political character who opposes and struggles against "the system." In this regard, he argued the following:

> *You could… see the period of the 1970s, the then-current conditions in Turkey, I mean the political conditions, in Behzat Ç. He loses his daughter; he does not have a family; nobody likes him; he tries to wage a struggle within the police; he gives a psychological struggle inside. But that does not exist in Poyraz. He has divorced his wife; he has problems with his father-in-law. But, that's all.*

To Hasan's objection *"You do not have a family; you are within the mafia; you lie at first because the woman you love will not believe in you; she will say you came in here on purpose,"* Hüseyin replied back by referring to the finale of *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi: "For instance, why does Behzat Ç. gives up doing police work, after all? It is because he could not fight against the system anymore. But, there is not such a thing in Poyraz."* In the eleventh episode of the first season, it came out that Poyraz's father-in-law Ünsal bribed Police Chief Mümtaz to plot against him in order to get him arrested and to take his son away from him. Referring to this, Hasan continued with his argument, *"His affair with his father-in-law is also a rebellion. Think about it! Would not you get upset in such a situation?"* Yet, Hüseyin insisted, *"Of course, he is aggrieved, too. But one's is more personal, and the other's is system-originated. To tell the truth, I did not see in Poyraz an attitude against the system much."*

Then Haydar stepped in the discussion and argued against Hüseyin:

> *That is not the only thing about Poyraz's struggle against the system, though. For instance, at the beginning of the second season, while he was still a police chief, he has Bahri and his mob arrested… without proper evidence, however. They themselves also know that they are guilty. But since Poyraz has had them arrested without evidence, they are released.*

In turn, Hüseyin maintained the following:

> *But, his struggle against the system is not kept in sight much. Take a general look to Behzat… That entire system, that secret organization within the police… you could recognize it in one way or another. But, there is not such a thing in Poyraz. For instance, an illegal organization is being established, an organization which attempts to have his son murdered… He actually attempts to struggle against it. He tries to do something which we do not know exactly. They try to make a hero out of him, in my view.*

Indeed, according to him, Poyraz is more like a classical hero than a modern anti-hero. He replied the question of whether Poyraz is an ideal character or a "loser" as follows:

> *You might say he is a loser. But… he is in the mafia, liked by the mafia. He was a policeman once. He was fired but returned to his post later. Now, he has become an intelligence officer. He has a beautiful woman around him. He has a*

> *child. He has a very cute child. But there is not such a thing in Behzat Ç… If he had not had his brother, he would have had nothing.*

Haydar's response to Hüseyin's words was as follows, on the contrary:

> *Behzat's actual struggle is against the system. I do not object to that. But, for me, Poyraz also wages a struggle against the system. After a point, particularly throughout the first season, he actually struggles against the system. It is because he fights against Mümtaz, someone from within the system in the simple sense of the term... He fights against those who have had him fired. He strives to come back. He has someone from within the system, from its heights, against him.*

Still, Hüseyin argued that Poyraz Karayel is a self-centered character:

> *But it all turns out to be about personal interest. There is not such a thing in Behzat. Even his thoughts are highly self-interested. Behzat sets the thames on fire if someone from his team is harmed. But what did Poyraz do when Sefer* (a character from Bahri's mob) *was killed? Nothing! He just became Bahri's first man after then.*

To his argument, the other participants objected that Poyraz has not become a full-fledged member of the masculine world of Bahri's mob. For instance, Hasan said, *"For Poyraz, doing something for [Bahri's mob] is not something that much significant. It is not like this for Behzat, though."* In a similar vein, Haydar stated, *"Sefer could not be considered as someone from Poyraz's team. In fact, Poyraz does not have a team in the series. He was never able to enter that world completely."*

According to Haydar, Poyraz strives to restore justice against a spoiled system, like Behzat Ç, albeit in a different way, that is, by joining the Bahri's mob, despite not being fully involved in its traditional masculine habitus. He claimed, *"The mafia he enters is against injustices."* At that point, Hüseyin agreed with him:

> *When Bahri first appeared, it was against the system. You could accept Bahri as an anti-system figure, indeed. What does the system want? It wants selling drugs, for example. But he does not want that. Why? He actually struggles against it since his own son died because of drugs.*

Nonetheless, he did not accept the idea that Poyraz waged a war for social justice similar to Behzat Ç.: *"Poyraz really does something only for his son and Ayşegül but nobody else."*

It appeared that Hüseyin, the only politically active member of the group, adopted a more negative attitude to the individualistic tendencies the title character of Poyraz Karayel exhibits. His ideas about Poyraz Karayel might imply a resistance, on his behalf, to come into terms with neoliberal subjectivity, which entails focusing primarily on individual survival

(Switcher, 2013), whereas the others found more affinity in the title character's personal drama and read it as a political struggle. To put it briefly, Hüseyin and his peers differed in their understandings about the nature of politics: Whereas it meant being part of a community acting on behalf of larger causes such as restoring social justice for Hüseyin, one's individual contestation with wider societal forces sounded quite political to the other participants. However, that does not necessarily mean that they readily adopted the neoliberal discourse of individualized responsibility into their self-concepts. Rather they negotiated with it: they did not embrace neoliberalism's "governing logic" that "shifts responsibility for… social problems onto the shoulders of individuals" (Switcher, 2013, p. 153). After all, each participant pinpointed the "system" as the cause of Poyraz's crisis.

Actually, all the participants recognized that *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* made more explicit references to contemporary political issues and debates, such as the increasing rate of femicide in the country and the spoils system in the bureaucracy, and regarded these as attesting to the series' claim to represent the cultural reality. On the other hand, the impact of the politicization process of the TV drama sector on *Poyraz Karayel*, as seen in its coverage of the then-current disagreement between the Turkish and Russian governments over the Syrian Civil War in a manner favoring the official policy, was evaluated by the participants in negative terms. For instance, for Hasan, it was the reason for his declining interest in the series: *"I think the problem was in there. It did not need to relate to those."*

Still, all of them found subversive political meanings in *Poyraz Karayel*, particularly in Poyraz's tirades and in the scenes showing him trying to help Sinan and his neighbor's son İsa with their homework. For example, Hasan said, despite not being as overtly articulated as in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*, *"Poyraz Karayel has also an ideology as clearly understood from his tirades."* To the question what they regarded as subversive in these performances, Hüseyin, who actually considered Poyraz Karayel as a character not involved with politics, gave the following reply:

> *He criticizes the education system and the family a lot. The manner in which a child is raised… He does not raise his child in that manner, after all. There is one sentence that could stick to our minds. He asks his son, "Have I ever told you a lie?" The child replies, "Always."*

When he was asked which one(s) from among such scenes in which Poyraz criticized the status quo he remembered the most, he said, "*In my view, the most beautiful was the one in which he proposed to Ayşegül,"* and interpreted it as follows:

> *It was somehow a more emotional scene. He was actually saying something different. I mean his address to the neighborhood residents… The disappearance*

> *of the neighborhood… He seemed like alluding to it a bit. He addressed not to a particular marriage but to the disappearance of the institution of marriage. It is not like 'Let's get married, establish a family, have children…' He was referring to the family as a disappearing value.*

In this regard, Ali similarly maintained the following:

> *For example, when he goes to a hospital, when he sees the care area for patients, for old people, he goes there and addresses them all. That is a very significant detail, in my view. In terms of retrieving some disappearing things… I think he performs a beautiful act of recall on behalf of society. I was mostly impressed by those scenes.*

Some participants even said that they happened to perform tirades like Poyraz Karayel in public spaces. Hüseyin attempted to lecture people around him while he was distributing political leaflets in Istiklal Street. Haydar tried to do the same at once in the train. Barış also took a similar step as he described it in detail:

> *I once tried it in the bus. There was a young girl. She had shouted at a Syrian child selling napkins. When she yelled at the captain, "Why do you admit those into the bus?" I could not help myself. I made a small touch there. Generally, people around me gave positive responses… Particularly the middle-aged ones… The young males advocated the girl, though. It was a kandil night. I concluded my address by saying "May your kandil be blessed." That was why the middle-aged ones were happy with my speech, I think.*

We could argue that the use of a nostalgic appeal in both narratives attracted these young male audiences, regardless of whether they were active in politics or not, on the basis of their shared assumptions and beliefs about the past and its disappearance, whereas they disagreed on the political nature of their male protagonists. While the male protagonist himself represented the past, however in a conflicted manner, in *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi*, it was the spectacular tirades of Poyraz Karayel what mobilized the audiences' feelings of nostalgia.

Conclusion

By employing the methods of critical textual analysis and focus group discussion in tandem, the study examined two contemporary TV crime series, *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* and *Poyraz Karayel*, aired in the 2010s, and asked the following questions: How does the contested transformation in hegemonic masculinity, which some interpret as "the crisis of masculinity," get reflected on screen? What kind of a cultural negotiation takes place over dominant masculine ideals via televised representations of masculinities? What changes concerning the wider society the portrayals of conflicted masculinities on television signify beyond those in the dominant notions about masculinity? That is, whose "crisis" is it that we

actually watch on TV? How do young male audiences receive these narratives of crisis? What attracts them the most in these shows? What social and political discourses do they refer to in reading them? And, do they regard these narratives as subversive of or as complicit with the status quo? Could we find any potential for an oppositional political stance in their decoding practices? And what do their readings say us about the way they relate themselves to neoliberal subjectivity?

Adopting R. W. Connell's idea that hegemonic masculinity is a resilient socio-cultural construct rife with internal tensions, the study criticized the implications of interpreting contemporary transition in hegemonic masculine ideals as the symptoms of a crisis of masculinity. It argued that crisis itself is a performative act with a will to the reconstitution of masculine power. Yet, it should not be underestimated that mediated representations of conflict-ridden masculinities could also reveal the precariousness of the gender order and the traumatic impact of dominant notions of manhood on men themselves, as the study maintained.

What renders hegemonic masculinity flexible and rather fragile is that it involves a negotiation between feminism and patriarchy, and television is among the main cultural spaces where this negotiation takes places. The study held that television is a medium of communication abound with internal contradictions. Some argue that, as a cultural industry, it can by no means have a defamiliarizing discourse. However, as suggested in the study, considering the content produced by television as simply serving the status quo and accepting audiences as helpless and passive against its illusory effect leads one to bypass the rebellious, oppositional and subversive moments that potentially exist in it. In particular, its unremitting need to hook a rather fragmented mass of audiences in the face of the rising competition in the market, its lack of a secure formula for profit-making renders television open to differentiation and uncertainty so much so that certain eccentric cultural images and significations could historically be "clawed back" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 65) into its formulaic structure. Indeed, the distinctness of television as a popular cultural form is a product of this dialectics between uniformity and difference (Mutlu, 2008, pp. 101). Yet, the negotiation on the televised space between different and event contradictory ways of looking at the world usually ends in a compromise, as television is tasked to recite consensus narratives to a large mass of audiences by transcending cleavages among them.

However, as the study pointed out, with the ever-heightened competition in the market and the technological developments accompanying it, something has recently changed in television. We, as audiences, have attained the opportunity of watching more "quality" productions on screen. Particularly speaking, the serialized drama content of quality television

has been usually dominated by stories about men grappling with a crisis in traditional notions about masculinity.

The study did not suggest that in these male-centered serials, television has now found a remedy to its "feminized" nature, allowing it to achieve a more qualified state deserving scholarly attention. Instead, it highlighted the gendered understandings implicit in this idea and its wider repercussions for society in the sense of perpetuating gender hierarchy.

Besides, the study argued that what we actually view in these "quality" shows is not simply the man's crisis but the crisis of society as a whole. That is, in these narratives, with its flaws however being acknowledged, masculinity is still depicted as a universal norm binding on all. Besides being straight men, the male protagonists of these shows usually come from white middle classes, the "cultural center" of society. These are the characters for which audiences are expected to employ their ever precious human capacity to empathize.

Having been adopted from cinema, these portrayals of masculinities in crisis first emerged in alternative distribution platforms like cable television and became popular representations propagated by the television industry as a whole in a rather short time. Series that centered on the man's drama were available on screen before the 2010s, in Turkey, to admit. Nonetheless, in our current decade, televised images of manhood have incorporated some "eccentric" changes, similar to the ones Lotz (2014) discusses in detail in her study *Cable Guys*. Most particularly, in these shows, the greater part of which is constituted by crime series, lead male characters are usually flawed protagonists not acting in accordance with conventional norms of masculinity.

As contemporary male-centered, *Behzat Ç. Bir Ankara Polisiyesi* and *Poyraz Karayel* certainly differed in their narrative styles: While the former adopted the formulas of cinematic realism and distinguished itself from classical television drama in this way, the latter experimented with the Brechtian alienation effect, and employed irony as a means to keep distance from any truth claims. Still, the shows had many similarities rendering them eligible for being categorized as quality television, like defying generic conventions, having a literary appeal, and focusing on controversial issues, aside from displaying male protagonists "walking all around with a halo over their heads as if they were agents of existentialism" (Özdaş, 2018). Besides all, both mobilized a sense of yearning for a disappearing world in audiences. Yet, the male protagonists had conflicted relationships with that lost world and the name of the father representing it. The dilemma they suffered between their desire to seek protection under a patriarchal authority in a conflict-ridden world and their weakening predisposition towards symbolic identification with a given cultural collective signified something beyond a transition

in dominant understandings about being a man. For the urban secular middle-class audiences of these shows, what they felt nostalgia for was actually the "old Turkey" as a mythical past, and a sense of irony, entailing critical disengagement from contemporary society, albeit with no particular existing entity to struggle against, appeared for them as a means to cope with their feeling of frustration in the face of the emergent Islamist hegemony and to render their it more bearable.

However, as acknowledged in the study, when the notion of hegemony is employed as the main framework of analysis in a study about television, a pessimism trap potentially threatens researchers. In order not to get stuck in it, the study looked at another significant dimension of televised images of contemporary masculinity: audiences as socio-historically situated producers of meaning.

The study focused on young male audiences, who have more or less lost their chances to attain those social positions of which they previously regarded themselves as deserving, who have been faced with the ever-growing problem of unemployment, and who suffer conflicts with their fathers due to the pressures changing gender scripts inflict on men. It was found out that they read these series mostly within a negotiation with feminism, as seen in their attitudes to the gendered differences of taste in television viewing and to the depictions of masculine violence in them. Furthermore, they found Behzat Ç. close to themselves since he is a "realistic" character with all his faults and wounds being disclosed. On the other hand, they enjoyed watching Poyraz Karayel since he showed them a means to deal with a world where they felt like strangers: ridiculing one's own suffering within a sense of pure irony.

As their ideas about the political implications of these narratives centering on conflicted masculinities indicated, an important difference existed among the participants in their understandings about the nature of politics. While the only participant who is active in politics had a notion about politics as being a collective struggle for wider societal ends, most of them regarded an individual's fight against "the system" as political. But, the study maintained, this does not mean they do readily and willingly incorporate neoliberal ideals into their self-concepts. Regardless of whether they prioritized individual survival or not, all of them still pinpointed a larger entity, "the system," however amorphously defined, as the source of the man's problems. And as a cultural medium reducing controversial and complex matters into a matter of individualities, television seemed highly suitable for translating this contested engagement with neoliberal subjectivity into a narrative of crisis, apparently not ending in a peaceful compromise, though, unlike in the past. Last but not least, a sense of nostalgia was what united all the participants, regardless of the divergences in their notions about politics. By

references to a disappearing world, these series kept the audiences' hopes for the possibility of another world alive, however much they deterred any "return" to it.

References

Akıl, S. (2017, September 8). Odipus Behzat ve babanın adı Ç. *Eleştirel Kültür*. Available at http://www.ekdergi.com/odipus-behzat-ve-babanin-adi-c/

Akınerdem, F. & Sirman, N. (2017). Melodram ve oyun: *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* ve *Poyraz Karayel*'de bir temsiliyet rejimi sorunsalı. *Monograf: Edebiyat Eleştirisi Dergisi*, 7: 212-245.

Albrecht, M. M. (2005). *Masculinity in contemporary quality television*. London: Ashgate Publishing, Co.

Alienation effect (2007). *Encylopedia Britannica*. Retrieved from https://www.britannica.com/art/alienation-effect

Atay, T. (2004). *Çin işi Japon işi: cinsiyet ve cinsellik üzerine antropolojik değiniler.* İstanbul: İletişim.

Barker, C. (2012). *Cultural studies: theory and practice*. London: Sage.

Baştürk Akça, E. & Ergül, S. (2014). Televizyon dizilerinde erkeklik temsili: Kuzey Güney dizisinde hegemonik erkeklik ve farklı erkekliklerin mücadelesi. *Global Media Journal Turkish Edition*, 4(8): 13-39.

Baştürk Akça, E. & Tönel, E. (2011). Erkek(lik) çalışmalarına teorik bir çerçeve: feminist çalışmalardan hegemonik erkekliğe. In İ. Erdoğan (Ed.), *Medyada hegemonik erkek(lik) ve temsil* (pp. 11-41). İstanbul: Khalkedon.

Begley, L. (2000, May 15). Anti-heroes. Retrieved from https://www.salon.com/2000/05/15/begley/

Bennett, T. & Woollacott, J. (1987). *Bond and beyond: the political career of a popular hero*. London: Routledge.

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

Brittan, A. (1989). *Masculinity and power*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Cixous, H. (Autumn 1981). Castration or decapitation? (Trans. A. Kuhn) *Signs* 7(1): 41-55

Connell, R. W. & Messerschmidt, J. W. (December 2005). Hegemonic masculinity: rethinking the concept. *Gender and Society*, 19(6): 829-859.

Connell, R. W. & Wood, J. (April 2005). Globalization and business masculinities. *Men and Masculinities*, 7(4): 347-364.

Connell, R. W. (1997). Gender politics for men. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 17(2): 62-77.

Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. California: California University Press.

Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power: society, the person, and sexual politics*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Deloitte (August 2014). Dünyanın en renkli ekranı: Türkiye'de dizi sektörü. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/tr/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/tr-media-tv-report.pdf

Demetriou, D. (2001). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity: a critique. *Theory and Society*, 30(3) 337-361.

Edwards, T. (2006). *Cultures of masculinity*. London: Routledge.

Elliot Johnson, P. (2017). Walter White(ness) lashes out: *Breaking Bad* and male victimage. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 34(1): 14-28.

Ellis, J. (2002). *Visible fictions: cinema, television, video*. New York: Routledge.

Emrah Serbes açıkladı: Behzat Ç.bu sahne nedeniyle bitirildi (2017, 30 August). *ABC gazetesi*. Retrieved from https://www.abcgazetesi.com/arsiv/emrah-serbes-acikladi-behzat-c-bu-sahne-nedeniyle-bitirildi/haber-62935

Emre Çetin, K. B. (2014). The "politicization" of Turkish television dramas. *International Journal of Communication,* 8: 2462-2483.

Erkılıç, S. A. D. & Erkılıç, H. (2008). *Barda*: şiddet bağlamında barın içi ve dışı. *Selçuk İletişim*, 5(3): 205,219

Eyüboğlu, A. (2018, April 15). Televizyon izleme sürelerine RTÜK el atmalı. *Milliyet Cadde*. Retrieved from http://www.milliyet.com.tr/dizi-surelerine-rtuk-el-atmali-/cadde/ydetay/2648083/default.htm

Farrell, W. (1993). *The myth of male power*. New York: Berkley.

Feasey, R. (2008). *Masculinity and popular television*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Fiske, J. & Hartley, J. (2003). *Reading television* (2nd ed). London: Routledge.

Frazier, B. (Winter 2004). Kierkegaard on the problems of pure irony. *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 32(3): 417-447.

Friedan, B. (1963). *The feminine mystique*. London: W. W. Norton Co.

Fuller, S. (October 2013). "Ouality TV:" the reinvention of US television. Retrieved from https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/bitstream/2123/9556/1/fuller,s_thesis_2013.pdf

Gerbner, G. (1993). Society's storyteller: how TV creates the myths by which we live. *Media & Values*, 61: 8-10. Available at https://www.medialit.org/reading-room/societys-storyteller-how-tv-creates-myths-which-we-live

Gitlin, T. (February 1979). Prime-time ideology: the hegemonic process in television entertainment. *Social Problems,* 26(3): 251-266.

Deniz, C. (2018, January 18). Gogole kafa tutan Behzat Ç. *Hürriyet*. Retrieved from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gogole-kafa-tutan-behzat-c-40714532

Gürbilek, N. (2008). *Mağdurun dili*. İstanbul: Metis.

Goldberg, S. (1993). *Why men rule? A theory of male dominance*. Illinois: Open Court.

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language: working papers in cultural studies* (pp. 128-138). London: Hutchinson.

Hanke, R. (1992). Redesigning men: hegemonic masculinity in transition. In S. Craig (Ed.), *Men, masculinity, and the media* (pp. 185-198). California: Sage.

Harvey, D. (March 2007). Neoliberalism as creative destruction. *ANNALS, AAPSS*, 610: 22-44.

Horrocks, R. (1994). *Masculinities in crisis: myths, fantasies, and realities*. London: Palgrave McMillan.

Joyrich, L. (1996). *Re-viewing reception: television, gender, and postmodern culture.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (1989). *The concept of irony with continual reference to Socrates, together with notes on "Schelling's Berlin Lectures."* (Trans. H. V. Hong & E. H. Hong). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kimbrell, A. (1995). *The masculine mystique*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Kimmel, M. (December/January 2017-2018). Trump's angry white men. *The World Today*. Retrieved from https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/twt/trump-s-angry-white-men

Kimmel, M. (2004). Masculinity as homophobia: fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In P. F. Murphy (Ed.), *Feminism and masculinities* (pp. 182-199). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kimmel, M. (1996). *Manhood in America: a cultural history*. New York: Free Press.

Lacan, J. (2013). *On the names of the father* (Trans. B. Fink). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lea, D. & Schoene, B. (2003). Masculinity in transition: an introduction. In D. Lea & B. Schoene (Eds.), *Posting the male: masculinities in postwar and contemporary British literature* (pp. 1-6). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Lüküslü, D. (2015). *Türkiye'de "gençlik miti:" 1980 sonrası Türkiye gençliği*. İstanbul: İletişim.

Lotz, A. D. (2014). *Cable guys: masculinities in the 21st century*. New York: NYU Press.

Macé, E. (2009). Hegemony and counter-hegemony in the television performances of racial differences in France. *Contemporary French Civilization*, 33(2): 1-17.

Marcotte, A. (2011, July 9). How to make a critically acclaimed TV show about masculinity. Retrieved from https://jezebel.com/5837945/how-to-make-a-critically-acclaimed-tv-show-about-masculinity

Mutlu, E. (2008). *Televizyonu anlamak*. İstanbul: Ayraç.

Modleski, T. (1991). *Feminism without women*. New York: Routledge.

Newman, M. Z. & Levine, E. (2013). *Legitimating television: media convergence and cultural status*. New York: Routledge.

Morley, D. (1980). *The nationwide audience.* London: BFI.

Oktan, A. Türk sinemasında hegemonik erkeklikten erkeklik krizine: *Yazı-Tura* ve erkeklik bunalımının sınırları. *Selçuk İletişim*, 5(2): 152-166.

Özbay, C. (2013). Türkiye'de hegemonik erkekliği aramak. *Doğu-Batı*, 63:185-204.

Özbek, M. (2008). *Popüler kültür ve Orhan Gencebay arabeski*. İstanbul: İletişim.

Özdaş, G. (July-August 2018). Ahlat Ağacı erketir. *Gzone*. Retrieved from http://gzone.com.tr/ses-getiren-filme-farkli-bakis-ahlat-agaci-erkektir/

Özsoy, A. (2011). Yerli televizyon dizilerinde hegemonik erkek(lik): Bir Ankara Polisiyesi Behzat Ç. Örneği. In İ. Erdoğan (Ed.), *Medyada hegemonik erkek(lik) ve temsil* (pp. 125-160). İstanbul: Khalkedon.

Patrice, P. (1986). Mass culture and the feminine: the "place" of television in film studies. *Cinema Journal*, 25(3): 5-21.

Pearson, R. E. & Simpson, P. (2000). *Critical dictionary of film and television theory*. London: Routledge.

Peberdy, D. (2013). *Masculinity and film performance*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Porter, D. (April 1977). Soap time: thoughts on a commodity art form. *Mass Culture, Political Consciousness, and English Studies*, 38(8): 782-788.

Robinson, S., White, A., & Anderson, E. (2017). Privileging the bromance: a critical appraisal of romantic and bromantic relationships. *Men and Masculinities*, XX(X): 1-22.

Robinson, S. (2000). *Marked men: white masculinity in crisis*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

Sartre, P. & MacCombie, J. (Autumn, 1964 – Winter, 1965). Black Orpheus. *The Massachusetts Review*, 6(1): 13-52.

Savran, S. (2015). Sınıfları haritalamak: sınıflar birbirinden nasıl ayrılır? In K. Tanyılmaz, E. A. Tonak, S. Savran (Eds.), *Marksizm ve sınıflar: dünyada ve Türkiye'de sınıflar ve mücadeleleri* (pp. 25-57). İstanbul: Yordam Kitap.

Siegel, B. (Spring 2013). [Review of the book *Legitimating television: media convergence and cultural status* by Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine.] *Spectator*, 33(1): 67-70.

Series/Behzat Ç. (2018.). TV Tropes. Retrieved from https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Series/BehzatC

Sirman, N. (Spring 2006). Constituting public emotions through memory: interviewing witnesses. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 34: 32-46.

Solomon-Godeau, A. (1995). Male trouble. In M. Berger, B. Wallis, & S. Watson (Eds.), *Constructing masculinity* (pp. 69-76). New York: Routledge.

Switcher, K. (2013). Neoliberal subjectivity – difference, free choice and individualized responsibility in the life plans of young adults in Switzerland. *Geographica Helvetica*, 68: 153-159.

Şenel, N. (August 2017). From hegemonic masculinity to masculinity crisis: the exploration of the failure of idealized masculinity on the white screen. *Masculinities: A Journal of Identity and Culture*, 8: 19-36.

Thompson, R. J. (1997). *Television's second golden age: from Hill Street Blues to ER*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.

Thornburn, D. (1987). Television as an aesthetic medium. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 4(2): 161-173.

Thucman, G. (1978). Introduction: the symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media. In G. Thucman, A. Kaplan Daniels, & J. Benét (Eds.), *Hearth and home: images of women in the mass media* (pp. 3-38). New York: Oxford University Press.

Turner, G. (2003). *British cultural studies: an introduction* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Varnus, M. D. (2002). Domesticating patriarchy: hegemonic masculinity and television's "Mr. Mom." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19(3): 352-375.

Walsh, F. (2010). *Masculinity and the performance of crisis*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Williams, R. (1983) [1958]. *Culture and Society 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia Press.

Yaşlı, F. (2017, October 15). Türkiye bir kabile devleti midir? *Birgün*. Retrieved from https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/turkiye-bir-kabile-devleti-midir-184510.html

Yörük, E. (2012). Televizyonda nitelik sorunu hakkında bir tartışma: Behzat Ç. Örneği. *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 67(3): 219-263.

Yücel, F. (2018, September 22). İtiraf ve yüzleşme de eril bir gövde gösterisi olabilir. *Bianet*. Retrieved from https://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/198277-itiraf-ve-yuzlesme-de-eril-bir-govde-gosterisi-olabilir

Yüksel, E. (2013a). Bir savaş anlatısı olarak *Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun* ve hegemonik erkekliğin krizi. *Fe Dergi*, 5(1): 15-31.

Yüksel, E. (2013b). Babalar ve oğullar: 2000'ler Türkiye sinemasında erkeklik krizi. *Sinecine* 4(2): 41-67.

Zimdars, M. (2018). Having it both ways: Two and a Half Men, Entourage, and television's postfeminist masculinity. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(2): 278-293.

NOTES

[1] The notion of "crisis tendencies," borrowed from Habermas, actually indicate social systems' innate, self-generated, structural tensions and inequalities that could put them into turmoil (Baştürk & Akça, 2014, p. 19).

[2] Özbay (2013) highlights two more changes in hegemonic masculinity in neoliberal Turkey: Men in their middle ages, being deemed on the peak of their physical strength and mental health, are accepted to have a hegemonic status in the hierarchal order of masculinities, particularly in contrast to rather "impotent" and, thus, marginalized old men, who had enjoyed, however, prestige and respect in traditional patriarchy. And, whereas, in the past, the boundaries between the public and private spheres also separated masculinity from femininity, with the world outside home considered as the man's prerogative, today we see that an increasing number of men in cities spend time at home and engage in domestic chores (pp. 191-93).

[3] Kimmel (1987) makes a similar point by arguing that the contemporary crisis of masculinity is anything but new, igniting responses of the similar kind in men against feminism in since its rise in the second half of the 19th century. According to him, men usually show anti-feminist reactions to any widespread challenge to traditional gender conventions, as seen in the "nostalgic, pessimist, and regressive" misogyny of the "white angry men" supporting Trump's presidency (Kimmel, 2017/2018), whereas some could adopt a pro-feminist stance embracing women's demands for empowerment, and still others might take a pro-male position whereby they argue for the creation of new homosocial institutional spheres as "islands of untainted masculinity and purified pockets of virility" (Kimmel, 1987, p. 262), which would allow men to socialize together so as to learn to "become a man" and supposedly act as a buffer against the so-called emasculation of culture and society.

[4] Feasey (2008) points at a similar change in contemporary TV series; they now have male characters who challenge dominant understandings of masculinity by manifesting their innermost thoughts, feelings, and emotions not just through action and aggression, as it was usually expected, but also through talking to each other (p. 10). Yet, disclosing one's inner world still requires a melodramatic climax to realize, when it comes to male protagonists. As Yücel (2018) writes, male actors almost dominate any "spectacular" performances of self-disclosure in contemporary media narratives. He relates this desire for confession to the masculine fear of being put on trial and judged by others. According to him, male protagonists want to make sense of their life-experiences themselves and to prevent others from penetrating into their inner worlds. Thus, their self-criticism, performed within a sense of self-defense, is actually a masculine display of power. In a similar vein, Yüksel (2013a) states that having "melancholic" and frustrated male protagonists speaking up their rather painful emotions without hesitation helps to frame men's "emasculation" as an injustice asking for audiences' sympathy.

[5] As Fiske and Hartley (2003) suggest, in conventional television drama, the family is made into a myth. This helps the medium address a diversified mass of audiences, while simultaneously drawing on conflicts and cleavages between them. Illustratively, even a series manifestly about the property-owning class could "succeed as television" because it makes this class appear just "like us" in the form of a family (p. 84).

[6] As of 2018, there are 19 national broadcast TV channels in Turkey, in addition to 12 regional and 166 local ones. Television watching times, 330 minutes a day, have reached a global record (Eyüboğlu, 2018). Related to this, television retains its greater weight in companies' advertisement investments with a share of 50%, still higher than the global average (Deloitte, 2014, p. 6). The share of those watching domestic TV series increases regularly each year, in which television channels' growing and diversifying serialized drama portfolios have played a critical role. To illustrate, as of the 2013-2014 season, serialized dramas had attained a share of 60 to 65 % among all the prime-time broadcasts of the six leading national television channels (Deloitte, 2014, p. 8). All this results in a highly competitive environment in which a myriad of large and small production companies, most of which are based in Istanbul, via for the limited broadcast times of just a few broadcast companies.

[7] For a close exploration of the troublesome story of the male protagonist of *Mustafa Hakkında Her Şey* (2004), see Şenel (2017).

[8] For a discussion on *Yazı-Tura* (2004) as a case of dramatizing the contemporary crisis in masculinity, see Oktan (2008).

[9] For a discussion on the notions of violence, justice, law, and the other portrayed in the film *Barda* (2007), see Erkılıç & Erkılıç (2008).

[10] For a discussion on *Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun* (2009) as a narrative of war and of masculinity crisis, see Yüksel (2013a).

[11] For a discussion on how *Çoğunluk* (2010) explores social changes and traumas via male characters' existential anxieties, see Yüksel (2013b).

[12] In contemporary television narratives about conflicted masculinities, the dissolution of family is usually blamed on the figure of a father who is featured either as irresponsible and unmindful or as extremely authoritarian and grumpy. For example, in broadcast TV series *Kuzey-Güney* (2011-2013), the plot of which revolved around the contemporary conflicts and struggles between different modes of masculinities, the story of the male protagonist Kuzey starts with his revolt against his excessively dominant father, whom he had once regarded as a hero. Yet, he finally makes a compromise with his father, who has changed his character throughout the course of the plot by giving up masculine values like dissimulation, toughness, and domineering (Baştürk & Akça, 2014).

[13] For ethical purposes, the real names of the participants were substituted with pseudonyms.