IJI Masculinities Journal

MASCULINITIES

a journal of culture and society

Issue 15

Spring 2021

MASCULINITIES
a journal of culture and society

Issue 15, Spring 2021
ISSN 2148-3841

Masculinities is indexed and abstracted by
EBSCO
MLA
SOBİAD
ASOS INDEKS

EDITORIAL BOARD

Advisory Board

Güncel Önkal   *(Maltepe Univerty)*

Hande Eslen-Ziya   *(Glasgow Caledonian University)*

Hilal Onur-Ince   *(Hacettepe Univerty*)

Jonathan Allan   *(Brandon University)*

Jeff Hearn   *(University of Hanken)*

Joseph Vandello   *(University of South Florida)*

Maria Rashid   *(SOAS)*

Melek Goregenli   *(Independent Researcher)*

Mine Özyurt Kılıç   *(Ankara Sosyal Bilimler University)*

Murat Göç   *(Celal Bayar University)*

Murat İri   *(Istanbul University)*

Nejat Ulusay   *(Ankara University)*

Nevzat Kaya   *(Dokuz Eylül University)*

Nil Mutluer   *(Humboldt University zu Berlin)*

Nilgün Toker   *(Independent Researcher)*

Orkun Kocabıyık   *(Akdeniz University)*

Papatya Genca-Alkan   *(Celal Bayar University)*

Raewyn Connell   *(University of Sydney)*

Sandra Slater   *(College of Charleston)*

Selcuk Candansayar   *(Gazi University)*

Selim Sırrı Kuru   *(University of Washington)*

Serpil Sancar   *(Ankara University)*

Simten Coşar   *(Hacettepe University)*

Şahinde Yavuz   *(Karadeniz Technical University)*

Seref Uluocak   *(Onsekiz Mart University)*

Tingting Tan   *(Kyushu University)*

Ulaş Işıklar   *(Beykent University)*

Züleyha Çetiner Öktem   *(Ege University)*

Content

Introduction

When Masculinities Journal first started out, it aimed to address the 'masculinity crisis' as a main problem, to deal with the relations between masculinity and power, and to explore new solutions developed for the 'masculinity crisis'. Looking back from the 15th issue, it can be said that almost every issue of the journal corresponds to the different types of masculinity crisis in the context of the national and global agendas. Unfortunately, some phenomena, such as the climate crisis, forced migrations, epidemics (especially Covid-19 Pandemic), and regional wars continue to bring out various manifestations of masculinity, and new problems arising from these manifestations to our agenda.

The non-functionality of the programmatic structure of the modern paradigm shows itself here as well: It is almost impossible to make predictions for the current crisis without considering its irrational and undifferentiated components. Perhaps it can be said that we are no longer in the age of rational predictions. Although some philosophers call our age a post-truth era, we are actually experiencing the always-present dilemmas of the modern paradigm. The determining dynamics of life have shown us for centuries that we cannot explain either violence or male hegemony by purely rational arguments or predictions. Moreover, in the age we live, the only thing we can predict is that masculine violence will increase in such uncertain, fragile situations.

Nietzsche thought that instead of objectivity, universal criteria, and the dominative subject; uncertainty, fragility and precariousness would lead people to create the possibility of a genuine existence. However, it is clear that the state of insecurity and uncertainty we are in, has not yet given us such an existential opportunity. Increasing security concerns after the Covid-19 Pandemic paved the way for

authoritarianism, as well as exposing how isolation and introversion from the public sphere support masculine violence. On the other hand, the crises in the Middle East and the mass migrations that followed, have shown once again how important the influence of culture and religion are on the phenomenon of masculinity and violence, as we have seen in Afghanistan most recently. In addition to the militarization of culture, the confrontation of immanent masculine codes in culture which have strong ties with the authority and power, caused the consolidation of the masses and arbitrary acts of violence by regimes. For this reason, it is still vitally important to question the immanent masculine values in cultural codes. The rationalization of the irrational aspects of culture has proceeded, itself, with a practice of imposition and it is often accompanied by masculine violence. Admittedly, some of the key topics that can most clearly identify masculine violence in cultural production are sexuality, body, and sexual experiences with the exception of heterosexual relationships. Based on Thomas Savage's *The Power of the Dog,* Blake Allmendinger analyzes the novel under the influence of normative determinations and also focuses on its reproduction and interpretation through film adaptations. The article entitled *"Cattle Castration and Male Sexuality in Thomas Savage's The Power of the Dog"* also reveals some similarities between fictional Montana in the 1920s and the real-life West today. Thus, Allmendinger reveals that the productions which are inherent in culture have a counterpart in our lives, even though we cannot express them in a rational way.

Deniz Zorlu's article deals with the reproduction of cultural values from a point where popular culture and old myths intersect. Zorlu focuses on the Turkish TV series *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* and the *Magnificent Century* in his work entitled "*Hegemonic Masculinities in Popular Culture and the Appeal of Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Examination of Magnificent Century (2011-2014)* and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul (2014-2019)"* to explain how hegemonic masculinity in modern Turkey is reproduced in popular culture, by turning to the myths of the Ottoman period and how it is fed by cultural dynamics and historical

2

examples. The author also reveals the connection between such popular productions and authoritarianism.

The reproduction of masculinity is not just a phenomenon influenced by the specific characteristics of the culture. Nation-state processes, capitalist modes of production, post-colonial changes, political and economic factors etc. must also be taken into account. Kaushalya Ariyarathne, in the article entitled *"To be or Not to be Seen? Paradox of Recognition among Trans Men in Sri Lanka"*, expounds masculinity especially based on the life experiences of young trans men, analyses power relations in Sri Lanka, the post-war position of the country and its relation to the capitalist relations of production, and examines its effects on the perception of body and identity.

We have also a work-in-progress paper in this issue. Süleyman Bölükbaş and Zeynep Özgül deal with the macho culture of Colombian and Turkish cultures in the descriptions of Gabriel Garcia Márquez and Metin Kaçan, and claim that different, even opposite images of bullying produce a common hegemonic masculinity practice in a similar way. In their study "*A Comparative Criticism of Hegemonic Masculinities in Chronicle of a Death Foretold and Ağır Roman*", they also use Butler's concept of «performativity» as the basis and point out the ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity which is achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion, by referring to Connell and Messerschmidt.

In the last part of this issue, Şahinde Yavuz scrutinizes the book "*Türkiye'de Feminist Yöntem"* (Feminist Methodology in Turkey) edited by Emine Erdoğan and Nehir Gündoğdu as a critique of the "male subject" of traditional/positivist social sciences. In this book review, written in Turkish, Yavuz mentions the importance of this book by stating that translation and copyrighted works on feminist methodology are very limited in Turkey.

Masculinities Journal would like to thank all the authors who contributed to this 15th issue for their support and the readers for their interest. The supreme source of motivation of all ICSM members working on a voluntary basis and under difficult conditions is that you read the

journal with pleasure and share it with others. We would like to invite researchers working on relevant themes to submit their works to our journal, share this issue widely and give us feedback. Please visit the journal's website or send us an e-mail for more information.

Özlem Duva Kaya
On Behalf on the Editorial Board of
Masculinities: A Journal of Culture and Society

ARTICLES

Cattle Castration and Male Sexuality in Thomas Savage's *The Power of the Dog*

Blake Allmendinger[*]
University of California, USA

Abstract: Thomas Savage's novel, *The Power of the Dog* (1967), begins with a scene in which a rancher castrates cattle on a ranch in Montana during the 1920s. The scene was considered so graphic and disturbing that one publisher refused to publish the manuscript. Critics didn't discuss the scene in their reviews of the novel. Yet it introduces certain themes which preoccupied the author, including notions of masculinity and sexuality, especially pertaining to men living in the early twentieth-century American West. The rancher, Phil Burbank, tells his cowboys that eating the severed calf testicles will enhance their virility, alluding to the castration myth that existed in early cowboy poetry and ranching autobiographies. According to legend, the animals' genitals increased the men's sexual potency, which was necessary to compensate for the fact that cowboys were isolated from women in the sparsely inhabited West, working primarily in homosocial communities.

The myth presupposed that cowboys—and other male members of the range industry—were heterosexual, even though they were required to remain single while working for a cattleman, who was unwilling to provide housing for his employees' families and to pay these men higher wages. However, Phil, the novel's protagonist, is a closeted homosexual who tries to pass as a straight man, exhibiting certain character traits associated with "real" western men. He risks

---

[*] Professor, Department of English, University of California, Los Angeles
e-mail: allmendi@humnet.ucla.edu ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2684-1556

exposing his secret when his brother George marries a local widow, bringing Rose and her son Peter to live at the ranch owned by the two brothers. Like the bride who comes to Yellow Sky in Stephen Crane's short story (1898), Rose transforms a former homosocial community into a heterosexual space. Feeling threatened, Phil attempts to get revenge by seducing her son—a character whom some critics assume is also gay, even though the novel remains silent on this question. Peter is not a typical teenager with an emerging sexuality, but a symbol of violence and retribution: part avenging angel, part emotionless psychopath. He detects Phil's secret and plots to kill his stepfather's brother in order to save his mother's life. In the process, Savage depicts the passing of the early frontier and the arrival of a new era, in which men like Phil have become an endangered species.

In 2021, director Jane Campion will release her film adaptation of Thomas Savage's novel, *The Power of the Dog* (1967). The movie should renew interest in a work that has been neglected by scholars since its publication almost half a century ago.[1] *The Power of the Dog* tells the story of two middle-aged brothers who own a ranch in Montana in the 1920s. When George weds a local widow named Rose, Phil becomes jealous of the woman who has come between him and his brother. Phil, a repressed gay man, seeks revenge by seducing the widow's son, Peter, with tragic results. Savage accounted for the muted critical response to his work by suggesting that readers preferred "books that reward a belief in the happy ending and the pot at the end of the rainbow."[2] One publisher rejected *The Power of the Dog* after the author refused to eliminate a graphic description of cattle castration, as well as explicit references to the sexual orientation of one of the novel's main characters. Instead, reviewers referred to Phil and Peter's relationship as "a simplistic contest of good versus evil" (Savage, 1977, p. 278).

---

[1] O. Alan Weltzien's recent biography, *Savage West: The Life and Fiction of Thomas Savage* (Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 2020), is the first book-length study of Savage's life and career. An excerpt from the book appeared five years prior to the book's publication. See Weltzien, "Thomas Savage's Queer Country." Western Writers Online February 2015. 4 pp.
http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/wwo/1/. Accessed August 14, 2021. Earlier studies of Montana writers frequently neglect to cite Savage and his critically acclaimed novel. See, for example, William Kittredge and Annick Smith, eds., *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1990); William W. Bevis, *Ten Tough Trips: Montana Writers and the West* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1990); Rick Newby and Suzanne Hunger, eds., *Writing Montana: Literature Under the Big Sky* (Missoula: Montana Center for the Book, 1996); and Ken Egan, Jr., *Hope and Dread in Montana Literature* (Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 2003).

[2] *I Heard My Sister Speak My Name* (Savage, 1977, p.3). Weltzien agrees that the author's focus on the "darker side" of western experience may explain his unpopularity. See "Just Regular Guys": Homophobia, the Code of the West, and Constructions of Male Identity, (Harrison, ed., 2009, p. 119).

Male same-sex relationships were common on the western US frontier.[1] However, after the term "homosexuality" became equated with sexual deviance in the late nineteenth century, representations of same-sex desire gradually began to disappear from regional literature. By the 1960s, attitudes about homosexuality were beginning to change. In 1960, University of Montana professor Leslie Fiedler, a resident of Savage's home state, published *Love and Death in the American Novel*, an analysis of male homoerotic relationships. Like Fiedler's study, *The Power of the Dog* examines definitions of masculinity and attitudes toward same-sex relations in the American West. Savage makes Phil's hidden sexual orientation known to the reader, describing an adolescent crush the rancher once had on a cowboy named Bronco Henry (Savage, 2001, p. 221). While Phil assumes that Peter is also gay, calling him "Miss Nancy" and "sissy" (Savage, 1967, p. 169), Savage never reveals Peter's orientation.[2] Phil disdains Peter because he exhibits stereotypical traits of the homosexual male: he is well groomed, introverted, and close to his mother. Elsewhere, however, the rancher compares Peter to the "Jews" (Savage, 1967, p. 60) and calls him a "Frog" (or a Frenchman), implying that the Midwestern transplant is merely different from the cowboys and ranchers who live out West. Because other characters believe Phil to be straight, his own assumptions about Peter's gayness may also be inaccurate. Ultimately, *The Power of the Dog* complicates its study of male sexuality by relating it to a unique culture of masculinity that existed in the early American West.

9

---

[1] For accounts of male same-sex relationships on the western frontier, see Blake Allmendinger, *The Cowboy: Representations of Labor in an American Work Culture* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992); Chris Packard, *Queer Cowboys* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: Norton, 2000); and Peter Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2011).

[2] One critic suggests that all three male characters are gay. Olson describes George's marriage as a "defection" to the enemy or the opposite sex. See West of Desire: Queer Ambivalence in Montana Literature (Harrison, ed., 2009, p. 107).

Cowboys, Homosexuality, and Male Virility

The novel begins with a grisly scene that takes place during a cattle roundup.

> Phil always did the castrating; first he sliced off the cup of the scrotum and tossed it aside; next he forced down first one and then the other testicle, slit the rainbow membrane that enclosed it, tore it out, and tossed it into the fire where the branding irons glowed. There was surprisingly little blood. In a few moments the testicles exploded like huge popcorn. Some men, it was said, ate them with a little salt and pepper. "Mountain oysters," Phil called them with that sly grin of his, and suggested to young ranch hands that if they were fooling around with the girls they'd do well to eat them, themselves. (Savage, 1967, p. 3)

Phil refers to the belief that eating calf testicles enhances a man's virility. In the late nineteenth century, cowboys began disseminating this myth to counter the perception that they were "metaphorically castrated when they were cut off from society, isolated from women and families, and forced to live with other single men on ranches out West." In cowboy vernacular, the verb "to cut" means to castrate a calf, as well as to isolate a head of stock from the rest of a herd.[1] After separating a calf from the group, the castrator deprives the animal of its sexual organs, thus distinguishing it from the reproductive cattle that remain in the herd. Eventually, the steer will be shipped to market and slaughtered, unlike the remaining bulls and cows on a ranch.

Historically, gay men have been criticized for not contributing to the propogation of the human species, thus "severing" themselves from the rest of society (Edelman, 2004, p. 5). In *The Power of the Dog,* Phil tries to prove that he is more manly than the cowboys who traditionally

10

---

[1] *The Cowboy* (Allmendinger, 1992, p. 51). The castration myth appears in numerous cowboy autobiographies published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as in cowboy poems such as The Oyster (Black, 1986, p. 28).

sever the calves' testicles. Unlike other ranch owners, who were more likely to supervise the rounding up, branding, and castration of livestock, Phil participates in the performance of these tasks. Instead of wearing gloves, like the cowboys, he wrestles the animals with his bare hands, occasionally cutting them with his pocket knife and exposing his skin to the flames that heat the branding irons (Savage, 1967, pp. 3-4). Yet Phil is unmarried and childless. By contrast, Peter is the product of heterosexual parents who move from Chicago to rural Montana, hoping to establish the husband's medical practice in "the Wild West" (Savage, 1967, p. 19). After his death, Peter decides to follow in his father's professional footsteps. While dissecting dead animals on his stepfather's ranch, the teenager learns how to cultivate the bacteria taken from a carcase and poison Phil with anthrax. The rancher's demise represents a victory for reproductive society.

The final scene featuring the two antagonists is also a potentially sexual act. However, because it involves two men, it leads to death instead of the creation of life. The moment Peter makes contact with his victim—handing Phil a piece of poisoned leather, which the rancher is braiding into a rope—is both deadly and intimate. The novel's opening scene is also violent and sexually graphic. A man grabs a calf's scrotum with his bare hand and slits the "rainbow" membrane, exposing its testicles (Savage, 1967, p. 3). A later roundup becomes eroticized when two cowboys remove their shirts before dragging calves into the branding chute, while dogs who have feasted on their organs watch in silent content, observing the orgy of "sweaty bodies" and dismembered genitals (Savage, 1967, p. 162). Phil encourages the cowboys to consume the products of their labor, alluding to the testicles' aphrodisiacal qualities. Instead of doing so, the men assert their masculinity by stripping to the waist, subduing and desexing the calves.

Although the cattle industry depended on the reproduction of livestock, it was considered impolite to refer to the sexual nature of this enterprise in western frontier society. People living in cowtowns "turned a collective blind eye to the fact that animal sex reproduction and pregnancy played roles in economically sustaining the human

world." The sex organs of bulls and the udders of cows were removed in pictures of cattle that appeared in business advertising, brand books, and newspaper ads. In 1869, a group of concerned citizens in Abilene, Kansas forced the owner of the Bull's Head Saloon to alter the logo of its "thoroughly masculine" namesake. They also persuaded the Bull Durham Tobacco Company to add a "fence plank to hide the testicles of their trademark printed on all packages of cigarette 'makings'" (Allmendinger, 1992, 59.) In *The Power of the Dog,* the townspeople in Beech, Montana are also prudish, refusing to acknowledge their own sexual appetites. When George and Rose host a dinner party, their guests are afraid "the talk might treacherously veer to the facts of breeding, to the purchase and worth of bulls and studs, delicately called gentleman-cows and he-horses, but suggesting all the same that there was more to life, more to marriage, than merely living in the same house together, and that every couple in that room was guilty of it—however far they now sat apart with wooden faces, however unresponsive." (Savage, 1967, p. 140)

12

Hypocritically, the town tolerates prostitutes because they keep cowboys sexually satisfied (8), thus preventing them from quitting their jobs, getting married, and leaving the range industry. The brothel serves as an occasional sexual outlet for the men, while simultaneously reenforcing their professional status as bachelors. Female cooks and servants eventually become discontent working at the Burbank ranch, realizing "that they could not marry a hired man, for there is no place on a ranch for a married man" to live (Savage, 1967, p. 122). Phil chooses to remain single because he isn't attracted to women. Unlike the formula western, which has a "persistent obsession with masculinity" (Mitchell, 1996, p. 3), featuring heterosexual males who are either married or single, Savage's non-genre novel questions stereotypical definitions of manhood. In *The Power of the Dog,* male sexuality is a construct, like the frontier society that is gradually imposing itself on the natural landscape. From a distance, Beech, Montana looks like "a mirage floating just above the horizon." On closer inspection, the town reveals itself to be both real and artificial, featuring "two false-fronted saloons" (Savage, 1967, p. 18).

The cowboys construct their own personas, imitating their favorite western movie stars and country singers. Phil also performs his identity, demonstrating that masculinity is "not simply a blunt biological fact," but "a cultural fiction that must be created" (McCall, 2001, 4). But Phil is a "real" westerner, not a dude. The rancher's old saddle and "plain" steel spurs suggest that the rancher isn't concerned with appearances (Savage, 1967, p. 5), unlike his hired hands, who blow their money on "silver mounted spurs," fancy "headstalls," and other showy gear for their mounts (Savage, 1967, p. 181). Yet Phil also has a taste for western finery, braiding leather and horsehair bridles, halters, and ropes. Paradoxically, in doing so, he not only constructs his identity as an authentic western male, he cross-identifies with an ostracized group in society, paying tribute to the ex-convict who taught him this "remarkable skill" (Savage, 1967, p. 220). Historically, inmates at western state and territorial prisons specialized in making handcrafted equipment for horses. At the time the novel takes place, in the 1920s, the prison in Deer Lodge, Montana had more than fifty inmates producing such goods (Martin and Martin, 2016, 14). Halters, bridles, and ropes controlled a horse's movement, while the prisons in which they were made prevented convicts from leaving their cells (Allmendinger, 1992, pp. 88-94). At the same time, convicts used their "fantastic artistry" to overcome the "despair" caused by incarceration (Savage, 1967, p. 220), immersing themselves in their craft until they became "unaware of their surroundings" (Martin and Martin, 2016, 31).

Phil correctly guesses that the man who taught him is an ex-convict. The rancher's "shrewd sense told him all he needed to know" (Savage, 1967, p. 220). Both men fear being outed by people who might guess their secrets. Like the ex-convict who remains imprisoned by his past, Phil lives in a figurative closet.[1] His hiding place is also a performative space. The rancher escapes to his room to avoid listening to Rose play the piano, then mocks her singing by adopting "a chillingly

13

[1] For more on the closet as a metaphor for the "secret" of homosexuality and the oppression of gay men, in particular, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).

accurate female falsetto" (Savage, 1967, p. 100). Phil assumes a campy persona while parodying his sister-in-law. On another occasion, he retreats to his room "with a quick, light, high-arched step on his rather small feet." As the rancher begins playing the banjo, Rose realizes that "he was playing precisely what she was playing—and better." When Phil stops playing, she becomes even more upset. "[S]o pointed was his silence she could no longer practice at all until she knew he was out of the house" (Savage, 1967, pp. 123-24). Phil experiences the "nonresidence" of queer bodies, a sense of disorientation or not "feeling at home" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 170). With George's marriage, and the transformation of the brothers' home into the dwelling of a heterosexual couple, Phil must take refuge in his bedroom or leave the house altogether.

The "west" can refer to a geographic region, a cardinal direction, or a point of orientation. It also alludes to a genre whose typical protagonist is a heterosexual male, working in homosocial environments. On the early frontier, homosexual men were seldom acknowledged to live and work in these same-sex environments, and depictions of the naked male body were considered taboo. Savage departs from this tradition, examining the blindness and silence associated with the male anatomy and sexual desire. The brothers share a bedroom before George's marriage. "Never had [they] appeared naked before each other; before they undressed at night they snapped off the electric lights." George bathes once a week, "entering the bathroom fully clothed, locking the door behind him" (Savage, 1967, pp. 7-8), while Phil goes once a month to a watering hole, known only to the brothers and the late Bronco Henry. "The spot was precious, and must never be profaned by another human presence. Luckily, that spot could only be approached through a single passage in the willows, so grown over that you had to stoop and crawl." (Savage, 1967, p. 171)

Phil fell in love with Bronco Henry before the term "homosexuality" became associated with sexual deviance.[1] Thus, he remembers the watering hole as a space associated with "innocence and purity."[2] But it has since become a place of shame and secrecy, another version of the closet, requiring him to "stoop and crawl" in order to enter the hideaway. Peter accidentally intrudes on this spot as Phil gazes into the water, "strangely moved by his own naked reflection." As the rancher curses him, Peter runs like a deer, "leaping back into the sheltering bush" (Savage, 1967, pp. 170-71). Savage compares Peter to nature, suggesting that the homosexual man disturbs the environment with his presence. In a later scene, Peter also looks in a reflecting surface. But when he sees himself, he thinks about the rancher he plans to kill. He combs his hair, while standing in front of his bedroom mirror, dragging "his thumb across the teeth of the comb. His lips formed a single word. 'Phil…'" (Savage, 1967, p. 216)

The title of the novel alludes to a passage from Psalms: "Deliver my soul from the sword,/My darling from the power of the dog" (22:20). Initially, Phil is the man with a sword, the cattle castrator, the man who persecutes his brother's effeminate stepson. But the two characters eventually reverse roles. The reader learns that Phil is gay and that the wounds on his hands make him vulnerable to Peter, the novel's ultimate predator. As Peter looks in the mirror, he plays with the "teeth" of the comb, as he handles the scalpel that he uses to skin and dissect dead animals (Savage, 1967, p. 211). Peter becomes an *homme fatal,* using the knife to transfer anthrax onto the leather, then seducing Phil with a promise to watch him braid the rope. After making this promise, he

15

---

[1] The term first appeared in Charles Gilbert Chaddock's 1892 English translation of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis. The Power of the Dog* takes place in the 1920s, sometime after the election of Calvin Coolidge in 1923. Since the rancher is now a middle-aged man, it is likely that his romance with Bronco Henry occurred more than twenty-one years ago, before *Psychopathia Sexualis* was published.

[2] This phrase recalls Fiedler's statement that American writers are obsessed with "death, incest, and innocent homosexuality." See *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960, p. xi).

"turned and walked back to the wagon, his stiff new levis going snip-snip-snip, like scissors." (Savage, 1967, p. 229)

Westerns dramatize conflicts between different racial and ethnic groups struggling to control the frontier. In Savage's non-genre novel, however, two white men battle for psychological dominance in a region where the internal frontier is the only terrain left to explore. Questions about Phil's sexuality and Peter's motivations for committing murder transform *The Power of the Dog* into a work of inward reflection. Phil sees the image of a dog on the hillside, chasing its unknown prey (Savage, 1967, p. 67). Although he identifies with the predator, he is also a future victim—a closeted gay man ultimately undone by his secret passion and self-loathing. Savage's protagonist is a sexually complicated male character and unconventional western figure, like fictional males in other regional works that were published in the same ten-year period, including John Herlihy's *Midnight Cowboy* (1965) and John Rechy's *Sexual Outlaw* (1977). Peter is the novel's antagonist, as well as Phil's successor. He declares that the "dog is dead" (Savage, 1967, p. 275), then takes its place at the end of the novel. During Phil's funeral, an animal attaches itself to Peter. "It was the first of the dogs to adore him. His first friend." (Savage, 1967, pp. 272-73)

Peter's orientation remains unknown. Instead of portraying him as an adolescent with sexual desires, Savage transforms him into a character who is part avenging angel, part emotionless psychopath. Peter delivers his "darling" mother from the power of the dog (Savage, 1967, p. 275). But instead of fighting bullies at school, he studies them with the cool detachment of a serial killer. Peter knew that "he must oppose them on his own terms, not theirs. And he knew it was not only they for whom he harbored this novel, cold, impersonal hatred" (Savage, 1967, p. 34). Later, he wrings a rabbit's neck in a ruthless manner that "Phil couldn't help but admire" (Savage, 1967, p. 259). In the formula western, a man kills "cleanly and purely at a distance through the magic of his six-gun," covering "the nakedness of violence and aggression beneath a skin of aesthetic and moral propriety" (Cawelti, 1984, p. 88). In *The Power of the Dog*, however, the rabbit scene foretells how Peter

will kill Phil with his hands, wearing gloves, unlike Phil, to avoid becoming poisoned by anthrax (Savage, 1967, p. 242). The fact that *The Power of the Dog* isn't a conventional western becomes apparent in the opening scene, as Phil cuts through the "skin" of propriety, shocking readers with a graphic depiction of cattle castration. Whereas killing a man with a gun from a distance conceals the intensity of the male characters' feelings for each other, the opening scene reveals the cattle and Phil's nakedness and vulnerability.

The castration scene also reveals the relationship in the novel between sexuality, power, waste, and recycling. Whites who migrated out West in the nineteenth century greedily consumed the region's natural resources, littering the landscape with their refuse. The pile of scrotums in the branding corral represents the conquest of the West and the harvesting or destruction of the natural world (Savage, 1967, p. 3), recalling similar scenes in western American literature: the slaughter of a buffalo herd, a field of tree stumps, abandoned mine shafts, a pyramid of animal skulls (White, 1994, p. 241). Phil removes the testicles because steers don't breed. He leaves them for the dogs and the cowboys because he is a superior male, the owner of "the biggest ranch in the valley [who] could afford any damned thing he wanted" (Savage, 1967, p. 5). Characters who lack such power recycle the parts of nature that people like Phil reject, thus giving their lives beauty, meaning, and sustainability. Rose is an artist who makes a flower arrangment out of weeds growing next to the fence in the horse pasture. When Phil makes fun of her, it reminds George of a Christmas years earlier, when he tried on a present from his mother, putting over his clothes "a dressing gown of blue silk and funny slippers to match" (Savage, 1967, pp. 133-34). In that moment, George becomes a comical cross-dresser, the victim of his mother's emasculation and infantilization.[1]

---

[1] Schmidt writes about ideologies that "phobically associate mass culture…with female and queer bodies," in *The Poetics of Waste: Queer Excess in Stein, Ashbery, Schuyler, and Goldsmith* (2014, pp. 4-5).

The castration process transforms a calf's fertile sexual organs into sterile waste, while the slaughter of beef cattle results in the accumulation of hides that no one in the novel uses. One of the wealthiest, most powerful, and biggest consumers in the region, Phil disposes of items that others who are less fortunate recycle.[1] Rose sells the hides to buy alcohol, drinking to mask the pain caused by Phil's psychological and verbal abuse. She rationalizes her decision by claiming that if Phil sold the skins, he would add the money "to a sheaf of other uncashed checks she had seen in a cubbyhole in George's office.... Were such checks, like the hides, at intervals ritually burned?" (Savage, 1967, p. 248). Phil refuses to sell the hides to local Jews, whom he compares to scavengers. "Jews after hides, Jews after junk, Jews with the eye on the quick buck, bargaining for rusty iron, mowing machine frames, rake frames, lengths of pipe and so forth that collects on a ranch" (Savage, 1967, pp. 137-38). *The Power of the Dog* features other kinds of scavengers, as well. Magpies "pick at the sores" on livestock "and eat [their] living flesh" (Savage, 1967, p. 68), while a pile of fence posts becomes a sanctuary for the gophers that Peter kills and for other "small living things" (Savage, 1967, p. 252). Everyone in the novel is either a scavenger, a predator, or prey.

Initially, Peter is a socially marginal and powerless character, the ideal prey for a bully like Phil. Later, he becomes the hunter who disposes of Phil. Until then, unlike the effeminate teenager, the older man has succeeded in hiding his weakness—his difference from the other men who work on the ranch. Phil downplays his college education and his family's social standing in the community, assuming an anti-intellectual, egalitarian attitude that makes the cowboys respect him as one of their own kind. But other characters realize that Phil doesn't belong in rural Montana. They perceive him as a person living a useless existence. "Some who knew Phil said, 'What a waste!' For ranching was no demanding or challenging occupation, once you had the ranch, and

---

[1] Thompson argues that one "indication of status" is measured by the number of objects a person can afford to discard. See *Rubbish Theory: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (1979, pp. 1-2).

required brawn but little brain. Phil, people marveled, might have been anything—doctor, teacher, artisan, artist." (Savage, 1967, p. 9). Although he mocks Peter's artistic accomplishments (Savage, 1967, p. 40), Phil is also a craftsman, braiding a rope out of leather. Like Rose, he transforms castoff materials and unappreciated objects into works of art. The same talent enables him see "this thing his heart called The Hound on the Hill." (Savage, 1967, p. 137). When Peter also identifies "the running dog," Phil fears that the younger man is now stalking the rancher (Savage, 1967, p. 259).

Unlike natural goods and waste products, which can be recycled or eaten, the detritus of civilization is permanent trash, a reminder of the non-indigenous presence of white people and a by-product of industrialization. While trailing cattle to market, the cowboys notice the land "where years before a man like them had failed; where the road wandered near a barbed wire fence, a rusty sign peppered with bullet holes urged them to chew a brand of tobacco that no longer existed" (Savage, 1967, p. 13). A neighbor has repurposed an "abandoned log shack," turning it into a loafing shed for horses seeking shade. But the metal sign no longer serves a purpose. It merely comments on the passage of time and the vanity of human endeavors.

The non-biodegradable offal of white society has been a concern for writers in western American literature since the beginning of the settlement period. One of the first great works in Montana literature, Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), features an early scene in which the narrator, an eastern tenderfoot, enters the town of Medicine Bow. It resembles similar towns that "litter" the frontier, "from the Columbia to the Rio Grande, from the Missouri to the Sierras…. Houses, empty bottles, and garbage, they were forever of the same shapeless pattern." The narrator finds no useful meaning in the "shapeless" sight that greets his eyes. Eventually he looks away from the town, noting that above its "foulness swam a pure and quiet light, such as the East never sees" (Wister, 2002, p. 9). In *The Power of the Dog,* however, the landscape has no redemptive features. Even the most pristine view of the Montana frontier makes cowboys yearn to return to white civilization. "The new

sun rising above the eastern hills showed a world so vast and hostile to individual hope that the young cowhands clung to memories of home, kitchen stoves, mothers' voices, the cloakroom at school and the cries of children let out at recess" (Savage, 1967, p. 13). Savage's West is a place where almost no one feels at home. Peter's late father regrets bringing his wife and son to Montana (Savage, 1967, p. 21). Rose becomes an alcoholic during her second marriage to George, the only character who seems rooted in the novel. Phil is dis-oriented because his sexual orientation makes it impossible for him to live in the homophobic ranching world; to feel comfortable in his own skin. In his autobiographical novel, *I Heard My Sister Speak My Name* (1977), Savage wrote that he moved to Maine in order to get as far as he could "from the ranch in Montana where I grew up, and where my mother was unhappy" (Savage, 1977, p. 7). Like most of the characters in *The Power of the Dog,* the author felt unhappy living out West. However, he returned to his home state in his imagination, seeking to rewrite the past.[1] The fact that he did so repeatedly suggests that he never succeeded in banishing the ghosts of his childhood, or that the attempt eventually became an obsession. Annie Proulx speculates that having his teenage surrogate defeat the fictional version of the man who abused his mother must have given Savage vicarious satisfaction. According to Proulx, every time someone reads the novel, "the child that was Thomas re-kills him as surely as the fictional Peter Gordon removed his mother's nemesis" (Proulx, 2001, p. 273).

Western American writers often examine the ways in which the region shapes a person's destiny. But Savage's characters feel disconnected from the West, their homes, and their families. *The Power of the Dog* features interior spaces of refuge: real and metaphorical closets, outdoor retreats, and mental landscapes where characters seek to outwit their enemies. The novel becomes a material manifestation of one of these interior landscapes: the product of an author's mind. In the

20

---

[1] Savage's novels set in Montana include *The Pass* (1944), *I Heard My Sister Speak My Name* (1977), also known as *The Sheep Queen,* and *The Corner of Rife and Pacific* (1988).

process of writing the novel, Savage rearranges the past, making his own sexuality—and Phil's—more explicit. The author reveals his heterosexuality, dedicating the novel to his wife. He also makes it clear that Phil is the sexual other. In *I Heard My Sister Speak My Name,* Savage describes the man who inspired the character as "a bachelor by profession, a woman-hater" (Savage, 1977, p. 273). In *The Power of the Dog,* Phil is not only a bachelor and a misogynist, but an actual homosexual male. Savage problematically equates the three terms (bachelor=misogynist=homosexual), while simultaneously refusing to explain what constitutes a "professional" bachelor.[1] He never suggests that Peter—like the author—is gay. But he makes the reader question whether the author's animosity toward his stepfather's brother is based solely on the man's actions or on assumptions Savage makes about the sexual orientation of Phil's real-life counterpart.

Tied to the land, but feeling alone, Phil turns to the past. He tells stories about the early range industry and his hero, Bronco Henry. He collects arrowheads, although he despises the Indians who made them (Savage, 1967, p. 179). His version of western history begins with the arrival of white US explorers. Phil tells Peter that he once discovered the date "1805" carved on the side of a cliff in one of the back pastures on his ranch. "Must have been some fellow from the Lewis and Clark expedition," he says, adding, "There were real men in those days." He also tells Peter about a trail of rocks he discovered that lead into the mountains. "What say maybe sometime just you and me might look for 'em again? Follow 'em to the end?" (Savage, 1967, p. 236) Phil imagines the early frontier as a homosocial space inhabited by white explorers, ranchers, and cowboys. He would like to return to this era by disappearing with Peter into the wilderness, following in the footsteps of "real men" such as Lewis and Clark.

---

[1] The cowboys in the novel are also referred to as members of a "profession." But they are also portrayed as heterosexual. In the bunkhouse, they lust after "the pert women who modeled corsets and underwear" in the Montgomery Ward catalogue (Savage, 2001, p. 5).

By the 1960s, western American writers were beginning to depict the experiences of characters who lived in a region that was inhospitable to sexual minorities. Although most of these works are set in the contemporary mid-twentieth century, they suggest that not much has changed since the 1920s, when Savage's novel takes place. In Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966), Perry Smith murders a family on their Kansas farm in order to prove his manhood to his heterosexual accomplice, Dick Hickock. In Larry McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* (1966), a coach in a small Texas town struggles with his attraction to his male athletes. In "Brokeback Mountain" (1997), *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), *The Laramie Project* (2000), and *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* (2012), male and female sexual minorities become victims of persecution and violence. Although these works "courageously insist on the need for change," they don't necessarily offer their characters hope. For these men and women, "the hope becomes the dread, the dream the nightmare, the belief the despair."[1]

Life Imitates Art

Although I was born in the West, and have worked as a professor in the field of western literature for thirty years, I didn't discover Savage's novel until 2010. My mother had died the year before. In the meantime, I had reconnected with my estranged father and stepmother in Colorado Springs. That summer I visited them in their townhouse on the south end of town, not far from the ranch where our family had lived before my parents' divorce.

One day I met the woman who lived in the upstairs unit. Her name was Linda, and she was one of those neurotic types most people enjoy in small doses. My dad and stepmom thought Linda drank. Sometimes she came to visit them without phoning first—showing up at their door, inviting herself inside, and proceeding to babble about

---

[1] Ken Egan, Jr., *Hope and Dread in Montana Literature* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003), xviii.

whatever was bothering her at the time. My stepmom thought Linda had problems in her marriage and needed to get a job. My father had suffered a stroke that had left him partially paralyzed, and my stepmom had MS. For Linda, it must have been like having a captive audience.

After my dad told Linda I was gay, she tried to bond with me. "I think my son's gay too," she confided as we drove to the liquor store. We had to hurry before her second husband got home from work. He was a policeman, as well as a minister, which wasn't surprising since a lot of people in Colorado Springs were born-again Christians who opposed gun control.

I don't remember why Linda thought her son was gay, but after meeting his stepfather I began to share her concern. When we got back home, he was sitting on a couch in the living room. There was a Bible on the coffee table and a gun on the arm rest next to him.

Linda must have realized that her second husband hadn't made a good first impression. The next time she saw me, she tried to redeem him in my eyes by telling me that one of his relatives was a writer. She and her husband hadn't read his work, but after a couple minutes she remembered his name. When I returned to Los Angeles, I did some research and discovered that Thomas Savage had died in 2003. Most of his novels were out of print, though Amazon had a used copy of his most admired work, *The Power of the Dog*.

After reading the novel, I was struck by the similarities between fictional Montana in the 1920s and the real West almost a hundred years later. The mother who drank, the son who might or might not be gay, the forbidding male authority figure, and the ever-present potential for violence.

A decade later, director Jane Campion is poised to release her film adaptation of Savage's novel. In the American West, the LGBT community continues to fight for equality. Campion may have chosen to adapt *The Power of the Dog* because of its contemporary relevance, and she will undoubtedly treat the themes in the novel with particular

sensitivity, given the focus of her previous films. Campion's best-known film, *The Piano* (1993), concerns a widow who remarries and moves to the New Zealand frontier with her child. In addition to sparking interest in a long-neglected work, especially among specialists in queer studies and regional literature, *The Power of the Dog* should appeal to scholars who situate their work within transnational contexts—particularly in New Zealand, where the production is currently filming. Campion's movies often feature psychologically complex female characters, suggesting that her upcoming adaptation may also position Rose as a central figure, unlike Savage's novel, which treats her as a secondary character. In either case, it will contribute significantly to the growing body of work of one of the world's most esteemed filmmakers.

Works Cited

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: orientations, objects, others.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Allmendinger, B. (1992). *The cowboy: Representations of labor in an Axmerican work culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bevis, W. (1990). *Ten tough trips: Montana writers and the west.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Black, B. (1988). *Croutons on a cow pie.* Benson: Coyote Cowboy Company.

Boag, P. (2011). *Re-dressing America's frontier past.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cawelti, J. (1984). *The six-gun mystique.* Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Edelman, L. (2004). *No future: Queer theory and the death drive.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Egan, K. (2003). *Hope and dread in Montana literature.* Reno: University of Nevada Press.

Fiedler, L. A. (1960). *Love and death in the American novel.* New York: Criterion Books.

Johnson, S. (2000). *Roaring camp: The social world of the California gold rush.* New York: Norton.

Kittredge, W., and Smith, A. (Eds.), (1990). *The last best place: A Montana anthology.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Martin, N. and Martin, J. (2016). *Horsehair bridles: A unique American folk art.* Nicasio: Hawk Hill Press.

McCall, L. (2001). Introduction. In Basso, M., McCall, L., and Garceau, D. (Eds.), *Across the great divide: Cultures of manhood in the American West.* New York: Routledge.

Mitchell, L. (1996). *Westerns: Making the man in fiction and film.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Newby, R., and Hunger, S. (Eds.), (1996). *Writing Montana: Literature under the big sky.* Missoula: Montana Center for the Book.

Olson, K. (2009). West of Desire: Queer ambivalence in Montana literature. In Harrison, B. (Ed.), *All our stories are here: Critical perspectives on Montana literature.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Packard, C. (2005). *Queer cowboys.* New York: Palgrave.

Proulx, A. Afterword. (2001). In Savage, T. *The power of the dog.* (pp. 277-93). New York: Back Bay Books.

Savage, T. (1977). *I heard my sister speak my name.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Savage, T. (2001). *The power of the dog.* New York: Back Bay Books.

Schmidt, C. (2014). *The poetics of waste: Queer excess in Stein, Ashbery, Schuyler, and Goldsmith*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *The epistemology of the closet.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thompson, M. (1979). *Rubbish theory: The creation and destruction of value.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Weltzien, A. O. (2015). Thomas Savage's queer country. *Western writers online.* http://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/wwo.

Weltzien, T. (2009). "Just regular guys": Homophobia, the code of the west, and constructions of male identity. In Harrison, B. (Ed.), *All our stories are here: Critical perspectives on Montana literature.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

White, R. (1994). Animals and enterprise. In Milner, C., O'Connor, C., and Sandweiss, M., (Eds.), *The Oxford history of the American West.* (pp. 237-74). New York: Oxford University Press.

Wister, O. (2002). *The Virginian.* New York: Signet.

Thomas Savage'ın *The Power of the Dog* Romanında Öküz Hadımı ve Erkek Cinselliği

26

Öz: Thomas Savage'ın *The Power of the Dog* (1967) romanı, bir çiftçinin 1920'lerde Montana'da bir çiftlikte bir öküzü hadım etmesiyle başlar. Sahne o kadar ayrıntılı ve rahatsız edicidir ki bir yayıncı bu romanı basmayı reddetmiştir. Eleştirmenler romanı ele alırken bu sahneyi tartışmamıştır. Ancak, bu sahne, erkeklik ve cinsellik gibi, özellikle Amerikan Batı'sında erken yirminci yüzyılda yaşayan erkelerle ilgili olarak yazarı meşgul eden bazı temaları takdim etmektedir. Çiftçi Phil Burbank, erken dönem kovboy şiirlerinde ve çiftçi otobiyografilerinde görülen hadım mitine göndermede bulunarak, kovboylarına buzağının bölünmüş testislerini yemenin onların erkekliğini arttıracağını söyler. Yerleşimin az olduğu Batı'da, kadınlardan izole bir şekilde, çoğunlukla homososyal toplulukların bir parçası olarak çalıştıkları gerçeğini telafi etmek için gerekli olan bu mite göre, hayvanların genitalleri erkeklerin cinsel güçlerini arttırmaktadır.

Her ne kadar çalışanlarının aileleri için kalacak yer sağlamaya ve erkeklere daha fazla maaş vermeye niyeti olmayan sığır sahipleri için çalıştıkları sürece bekar kalmaları gerekse de bu mit, kovboyların —ve hayvancılık sektörünün diğer erkek üyelerinin de— heteroseksüel olduğunu varsaymaktadır. Ancak romanın baş kişisi Phil, "gerçek" Batılı

erkeklerle özdeşleştirilen bazı özellikleri sergileyerek heteroseksüel bir erkekmiş gibi kabul görmeye çalışan, henüz kendisi hakkında dışarıya açılmamış bir eşcinseldir. Erkek kardeşi George kasabadan bir dul ile evlenip, Rose'u ve oğlu Peter'ı ikisinin birlikte yaşadığı çiftlik evine getirince, sırrı tehlikeye girer. Stephen Crane'in kısa öyküsündeki (1898) gelinin Yellow Sky'a gelmesindeki gibi, Rose homososyal topluluğu heteroseksüel bir mekâna dönüştürür. Tehdit altında hisseden Phil, —kitap bu konuda sessiz kalsa da bazı eleştirmenlerin eşcinsel olduğunu varsaydıkları—oğlunu baştan çıkararak intikam almaya çalışır. Peter cinselliği gelişme aşamasında tipik bir genç değildir. Bir şiddet ve cezalandırma sembolüdür: yarı intikam meleği, yarı duygusuz psikopat. Phil'in sırrını keşfeder ve annesinin hayatını kurtarmak için üvey babasının kardeşini öldürmeyi planlar. Bu süreçte, Savage ön saflardaki değişimi ve Phil gibi erkeklerin tehlike altındaki türlerden olmaktan giderek uzaklaştığı yeni bir dönemin gelişini resmeder.

Anahtar kelimeler: Erkek cinselliği, homoseksüellik, öküz hadımı, Amerikan Batı'sı

Hegemonic Masculinities in Popular Culture and the Appeal of Authoritarian Rule: A Comparative Examination of *Magnificent Century* (2011–2014) and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* (2014–2019)

Deniz Zorlu[*]

Izmir University of Economics, Turkey

Abstract: This article examines the connections between the representation of hegemonic masculinities in Turkish popular culture and the rising tide of political authoritarianism in Turkey by comparatively examining two historically-based TV series produced in the 2010s, *Magnificent Century* (2011– 2014) and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* (2014 – 2019) with a focus on the representation of two central male characters in these series: Prince (Şehzade) Mustafa and Ertuğrul. *Magnificent Century* was recurrently condemned by high-ranking government figures for its alleged demeaning misrepresentation of Turkish history. The fourth season of *Magnificent Century* coincided with the Gezi Park protests of 2013, and during this time, the series started to get a more critical perspective towards governmental power abuses and oppression. It is also during this fourth season that Prince Mustafa emerged as the central character of the series until his death and his scene of execution has become one of the greatest media events of recent Turkish television history. The series' portrayal of Prince Mustafa draws extensively from left-wing memories of loss and repression in Turkey, and the series' criticisms of power abuse implicate the contemporary Turkish government as well. For instance, Ottoman people who protest Prince Mustafa's murder are referred to as "çapulcu," "marauders" several times

---

[*] Ph.D., Department of Cinema and Digital Media, Izmir University of Economics
e-mail: deniz.zorlu@izmirekonomi.edu.tr

in the series, which is the same expression used to disparage Gezi Park protestors. In contrast, *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* was screened by state channel TRT with endorsements from government officials, who publicly praised the series on multiple occasions. *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* tells the story of Ertuğrul, a tribe chieftain, who resurrects the glory of a polity in disarray in the early beginnings of what would later become the Ottoman Empire, paralleling the contemporary Turkish governments' emphasis on revival and resurrection. In the portrayal of Ertuğrul and his men, Islam is recurrently presented as the ultimate marker of national identity. However, the close-textual analysis showcases that, despite their thematic and ideological dissimilarities, both series converge in positing the male leader and his loyal militarist men as the building blocks and guardians of the national polity. Additionally, in the portrayal of Ertuğrul and Prince Mustafa, we find a paradoxical embrace of militaristic, authoritarian displays of power, but also an emphasis on rebelliousness to established authority, and male victimization, which, I argue, constitute the essential constituents of contemporary hegemonic masculinity in Turkey. Hence, I argue that some of the essential components of hegemonic masculinity we encounter in political discourse can be traced to the arena of popular culture where it is reproduced and magnified.

29

Introduction

The central objective of this article is to assess the role of popular culture in providing an impetus to increased levels of political authoritarianism in Turkey through an examination of hegemonic masculinities in contemporary television series. I comparatively examine two historically based TV series that are screened in the 2010s, *Magnificent Century* (2011-2014) and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* (2014-2019). Both these historical series broke rating records respectively, yet they are diversified by aspects of their thematic content. *Magnificent Century* received repetitive condemnation from high-ranking government officials (Toksabay 2012), as well as getting backlash from conservative factions of the society (Basaran, 2011). The last season of *Magnificent Century*, screened in 2013-2014, coincided with the Gezi Part Protests of 2013, which significantly shaped the series' thematic orientation towards a more critical perspective. On the other hand, *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* (2014-2019) was screened in the state channel TRT and was openly supported and praised by government officials. In comparatively examining these two series, I aim to demonstrate that pro-governmental and critical popular cultural products ultimately combine in creating a ripe socio-cultural atmosphere for the rise of authoritarian politics, as they collaborate in supporting and maintaining hegemonic masculinities.

I comparatively examine the portrayal of two central male characters in these two series; Prince Mustafa (Şehzade Mustafa) from *Magnificent Century* and Ertuğrul from *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* with an intention to highlight and discuss the representation of hegemonic masculinities in Turkish popular culture. This study is based on the idea that it is through examining popular cultural texts that we can identify the linkages between hegemonic masculinities in popular culture and popular authoritarianism in Turkey. Both these historically-based series project contemporary political concerns to the distant past and speak to the contemporary age through the ways in which they represent history. In that regard, their textual analysis reveals more information about the present age and the contemporary issues of Turkey than the historical

episodes they are narrating. In other words, thematically speaking, they tell us more about the present than the past.

I believe this comparative examination sheds light on how oppositional voices and pro-governmental propaganda are structured similarly on the sacralization and adulation of male leaders of the past. At the most basic level, the future of the polity in both series depends on the success of its male leader and his followers. Both series converge in their reliance on the male hero and his circles of militaristic male followers as the cornerstones of the national polity. In the last season of the *Magnificent Century*, it is Prince Mustafa's early death that becomes the main reason for the subsequent decline and eventual fall of the Ottomans. In *Resurrection*, we are repeatedly told that it is only through Ertuğrul's guidance that the polity can hope to revitalize and thrive.

I argue that this comparative close textual analysis of Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul's representation uncover some of the core features of hegemonic masculinity in the way it is operationalized in contemporary Turkey. The specific content of their characterization draws from different ideological frameworks; Şehzade Mustafa's representation shows close parallels to left-wing discourses in Turkey, and in narrating his story, the series takes a critical lens towards the contemporary political situation in Turkey. On the other hand, in Ertuğrul's portrayal, Islam is identified as the central component of the national identity, and the series often appears to be created for overt pro-governmental propaganda.

Despite such significant discursive differences in their portrayal, we can detect notable overlapping points when it comes to the representation of their masculinity, which constitutes the focus of this article. Both Mustafa and Ertuğrul combine a paradoxical image of being powerful and powerless, their characterization is marked by rebelliousness to unjust authority and the glorified display of their own authoritarian deeds and forceful use of power. They both are positioned as outsiders fighting against an established regime of corruption and decadence and yet are also presented as the essential guardians of the established polity. I believe the paradoxical representation of these two

central male characters approximates and matches the self-portrayal of the contemporary Turkish ruling elite; thus, we can detect the linkages between popular cultural representations of hegemonic masculinity and the operation of popular authoritarianism in contemporary Turkey.

<div align="center">

Popular History and Masculinity:
Magnificent Century and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul*

</div>

Magnificent Century is often considered as the internationally most successful Turkish TV series at a time when Turkish series' global popularity reached its apex (Bhutto, 2019). Even though its international appeal was geographically more limited, *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* also obtained significant international fame especially in the Middle East and East Asia, as well as among Muslim minorities living in Western Europe (Khan, 2020). Even though various aspects of these two series have been discussed extensively both in academic research and journalistic accounts, not enough attention is given to the political implications of these two series' construction of hegemonic masculinities., which is a central objective of this article.

Despite its many problematic aspects, *Magnificent Century* has also been praised for opening up to debate the questions of power, sovereignty, and oppression, especially in its last season (Atay, 2014). The last season coincided with the Gezi Park demonstrations of 2013, which significantly altered the series' representation of 16th-century Ottoman history. The troubling events of the distant past are used as subtexts to take a critical perspective on recent developments in Turkey. The most dramatic event of the last season is the execution of Prince Mustafa, who emerged as the main character in this last season until his death. His scene of the murder, besides breaking rating records, has arguably become the most talked-about popular cultural event of recent Turkish television history. Turkish press reported that hundreds of people visited his long-forgotten tomb in the morning after his execution was screened ("Two Thousand Visitors" 2014; Arslan & Tezcan, 2014).

In the persona of Prince Mustafa and his execution, the series metaphorically condemned not only the monarch Suleiman who ordered the killing, but also the powerholders of Turkish history with implications for the contemporaneous Turkish government, which has likewise been criticized for engaging in power abuses. As a basic example, the Ottoman people who protest the execution of Prince Mustafa ware called several times as "çapulcu," marauder, the same expression used by the Turkish Prime Minister against Gezi Park protestors in those days. Prince Mustafa has emerged as the innocent and youthful victim of repression, striking a chord with the young people who have lost their lives during Gezi Park demonstrations, as well as other youthful activists who died in the Turkish Republic's history, while high-ranking government officials are disparaged as the source of villainy.

Resurrection: Ertuğrul started to be screened a few months after the ending of the *Magnificent Century* in 2014 and ended with its last episode on May 29, 2019*.* It was openly praised by government officials who even visited the filming set on several occasions. President Tayyip Erdogan referred to *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* as "a series that our people watch in great admiration" ("Resurrection Ertuğrul is the Greatest Answer", 2017). *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* narrates the early beginnings of what would later become the Ottoman Empire by focusing on the life of Ertuğrul, who is the father of Osman, the namesake of the Ottoman Empire. In focusing on the early beginnings of Ottoman imperial power, the series draws a close parallel between the historical period that it narrates and the contemporary self-portrayal of the Turkish government as the redeemer and resurrector of the national polity's historical greatness. Just like lionized Ertuğrul is on the path to bring together and resurrect the old glory of a dissipated polity with his fellow men, so does the contemporary Justice and Development Party with its leader. Hence, the series blatantly and repeatedly uses the past in a propagandistic fashion to elevate the public image of the contemporary Turkish government.

33

In this article, I specifically focus on the textual representation of Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul. These two historical characters appear to be portrayed with different purposes; there is a discernible intention to raise political criticism through Prince Mustafa's portrayal, whereas Ertuğrul is depicted as to serve the interests of the contemporary Turkish government. We can also observe clear thematic and ideological differentiations in the way historical events are portrayed in these series. In the article, I first emphasize these ideological differentiations between the two series, and later pinpoint their commonalities in the way they portray Prince Mustafa's and Ertuğrul's masculinity. I argue that it is these commonalities amidst ideological differentiations that allow us to pinpoint the central components of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Turkey with implications for Turkey's downward path towards political authoritarianism.

Theoretical Background

The hegemonic masculinity is sometimes misconstrued as certain universal and static characteristics about men, instead, it should rather be seen as contextual and strategic acts and representations that give men a position of power over women and nonhegemonic masculinities, thus serving to legitimize unequal relations between gender (Messerschmidt, 2019, p. 88). In the words of Connell, "hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the… currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees… the dominant position of men" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). The defining characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are its relationality and contingency; it is formed in relation with, or juxtaposition to certain forms of femininity and non-hegemonic masculinity, and that it is subject to change over time (Messerschmidt, p. 58). The specific content of hegemonic masculinity, thus, goes through cycles of adaptation, and such change is acceptable so long it ensures continuing male dominance over women. This also means that hegemonic masculinity can incorporate elements that belong to marginal and subordinated masculinities in its

drive for the reproduction of patriarchy (Demetriou, p. 349). Such hybridization of components tends to produce better results in ensuring patriarchal dominance (Arxer, 2011, p. 391).

The patriarchal hegemony works to the extent that it can persuade groups of people who are subjugated by it, necessitating some degree of compliance and consent from women and nonhegemonic masculinities (Talbot and Qualy, 2010, p. 256). Hegemony can be seen as a soft form of power that works primarily by gaining the consent of a significant number of women and men through seemingly mundane ideas, everyday practices, and representations (Hearn, p. 52-53). The fact that men in general do not embody hegemonic masculine ideals, at least not on a continual basis, does not harm the ideological hegemony of masculinity, as these men continue to uphold and exalt these ideals in a complicit form (Connell, 1987, p. 183). Conceptualizing hegemonic masculinity as a cultural ideal, rather than a routinely experienced aspect of men's lives, it should also be stressed that media images play a vital role in the promulgation of these ideals (Demetriou, p. 342).

Popular cinema and television reflect and shape "wider socio-cultural and political structures," in fact, they are a constitutive part of political processes, as well as cultural reproduction and change (Hall, 1980, p. 129). In that regard, hegemonic masculinity is often reinforced especially through "exemplary life stories," which are frequently encountered in media productions (Spector-Mersel, 2006, p. 72). Hence, emotionally charged narratives provided by popular culture in general, and popular television series in particular work as significant tools in the construction and sustenance of hegemonic masculinities. Even when they are laden with nationalist imaginaries and symbols, the depictions of hegemonic masculinity are easily marketable commodities in the global mediascape (Balaji and Hughson, 2013, p. 208), which explains Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul's substantial international appeal. However, Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul's portrayal plays a particular role in the specific cultural context of Turkey, as we can associate their representation with the rampant political authoritarianism in the country, which constitutes the focus of this article. In the context of this

study, popular political authoritarianism can be defined as greater public investment in the leadership ethos and belief in the leader's unique attributes and capabilities to the detriment and curtailment of civil liberties, accompanied by the erosion of the system of checks and balances and separation of powers in the country as necessary ingredients of a healthy democracy (Yılmaz & Turner, 2019, p. 691).

Male images on popular culture offer the audiences "cultural types," and at any period, we can observe overlapping and rival cultural types, which are contesting versions of appropriate manhood in a struggle for cultural hegemony (Spicer, 2001, p. 2). In the representation of Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul, we can likewise come across a range of differences and similarities. For instance, Prince Mustafa's portrayal clearly draws from left-wing imaginaries, whereas Islamic discourses are more clearly emphasized as part of Ertuğrul's identity. The central commonality is that both characters are paradoxically denoted as powerful and powerless, exalted in their display of power, and yet are also celebrated as the embodiments of the underdog and the representatives of powerless.

Possession of power is a central pillar of hegemonic masculinities (Kabesh, 2013, p. 111). Hegemonic masculinity often corresponds to "a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power" (Kimmel, 2004, p. 184). This certainly does not mean that men in real life are always already in a position of power, but power and the desire to be in possession of power is a commonly encountered aspect of men's social relations and actions (Hearn, 2004, p. 51). In this vein, militarism, militarist male heroes, and the showcasing of their power have historically been attributed paramount significance in the construction of hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1995, p. 232). This is where hegemonic masculinity and nationalism coalesce and find ideological support in each other. As Joane Nagel (2005) argues: "the culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism" (p. 401). In both series that I examine, we frequently encounter displays of power performed by the two leading characters. Especially victorious combat and war scenes we

regularly encounter in these series give the audience a sense of being superior to the nation's foes, especially that of Western Europe. Such scenes can be seen as a projection of male desire to feel powerful, but more importantly, they encode the nation as a powerful man, reflecting the lead character's prowess to the nation, thus, they nationalize his power, portraying the nation as a man in charge.

Despite the frequent attention to showcase their power, a paradoxical point of emphasis in the portrayal of these two male characters is their lack of power, their being disenfranchised, misunderstood, and mistreated. I argue in this article that this paradoxical representation is the central aspect of the operation of contemporary hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Turkey. Hence, the public appeal of popular authoritarianism is rooted in this paradoxical aspect of hegemonic masculinity, that it is associated with being powerful and powerless, which portrays the ideal man as a purveyor of change through his power and the representative of the downtrodden in his powerlessness, who is an authoritarian leader and yet also a rebel to authority.

Donovan points out that the contradictory emphasis on sensitivity and toughness better reinforces the power hierarchy that privileges men among certain groups in America (Donovan, 1998, p. 826). In the same vein, we can detect a contradictory emphasis on power and powerlessness in the construction of hegemonic masculinity in contemporary Turkey. Mustafa and Ertuğrul's power, or the display of their power, serve to identify them as the location of hope from future days when they will set things straight, on the other hand, the paradoxical emphasis on their lack of power makes them guiltless in the face of social ills and problems that yet remain unresolved in their polity. I argue that what renders this paradoxical nature of hegemonic masculinity particularly significant is that it constitutes the central aspect of contemporary Turkish ruling elite's performance of masculinity, who is often presented as strong but harmed and wounded, authoritarian but a rebel to established sources of corrupted authority. Hence, based on the literature on hegemonic masculinity, this article

traces the interlinkages between portrayals and enactments of hegemonic masculinity in popular culture and political discourse.

Methodology

This article relies on the comparative close textual analysis of *Magnificent Century* and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul*. This methodological preference is informed by the desire to unearth latent meanings of these two texts, as well as their connections with each other and the contemporary socio-cultural atmosphere of Turkey. Popular cultural texts are typically multilayered constructions, and that we can observe the traces of multiple discourses in them. Furthermore, as audience/reception studies indicate, there is a range of different interpretative frames within which specific groups and individuals make sense of the texts they encounter, thus they can attribute differing meanings to what they watch. While acknowledging the insights provided by reception studies, it should nonetheless be stated that these studies, for the most part, focus on verbally expressible and easily articulable aspects of the texts they examine (Phillipov, 2013). Thus, they tend to overlook aspects of the texts that are laden with implicit meanings, which can be disclosed by simultaneous detailed attention to the texts and the socio-political world that these texts are a constitutive part of.

There has been an ongoing tension between textual approaches and audience research in the field of media studies (Creeber, 2006, p. 82; Havemann, 1999, p. 5-6). For those who defend a textual approach, such as Elfriede Fürsich (2009), it is primarily through textual analysis we can "elucidate the narrative structure, symbolic arrangements and ideological potential of the media content" (p. 239). While not privileging one methodological approach over the other as providing a more correct type of information, it should still be stressed that there is much to uncover through a detailed and closed examination of the textuality of popular cultural products in regard to their ideological functioning. Thus, comparative textual analysis is preferred in this study because it is

through close attention to these two texts that we can uncover their overlapping points and divergences, while also investigating how these resonate and interact with broader socio-cultural phenomena in Turkey.

Rick Iedema (2001) argues that to examine the socio-cultural implications of media productions, the analysis should focus on the essential contours of the conflicts and encounters in the studied texts, as well as the central characters who are caught up and act on these conflicts. It is often the case that the text makes political commentaries and activates political discourses through the portrayal of its leading characters, thus, we can better evaluate the political subtexts of the examined text when our focus remains on the central characters' representation. Since the purpose of this study is to investigate the construction of hegemonic masculinities, the emphasis is given to the representation of the two leading male characters. The nature of the conflicts Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul are engaged in, their activities, as well as the depiction of their allies and foes, best illustrate the key constituting elements of their masculinity.

The selected scenes are taken as examples of recurringly occurring phenomena in these two series; thus, they are illustrative instances to thematically emphasized aspects of the examined texts. My textual examination is primarily based on finding answers to these questions that focus on the representation of Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul: Who are the central character's enemies, what are the causes of conflicts, how the male hero is distinguished from his enemies? What is the nature of his relationship with his close male companions? Are there notable differences between his representation and the leading female characters' portrayal? Are his personal deeds associated with the national polity's past and future, how? How do his activities and representation resonate with prevalent political discourses in contemporary Turkey? In the following sections of this article, I answer these questions by simultaneous attention to narrativization of Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul's life stories, their specific verbal expressions, and the textual fabric of these two series, which lays bare implicit, latent

meanings of these audiovisual texts in regard to hegemonic masculinities.

Magnificent Century: Hegemonic Masculinities in Political Criticism

Magnificent Century is a composite narrative text that combines and weaves together many disparate thematic elements and ideological statements, but one aspect that remains constant throughout is that the series is about magnificent men. In its earlier seasons' majority of the screening time is devoted to palace women, yet, it is ultimately militaristic men who are positioned as the essential national subjects and backbones of the polity. In the series, the national polity thrives on the shoulders of its virile men and falls in their absence. This latter point was more directly stressed by the fourth and last season when the series becomes more directly involved in the contemporaneous politics of Turkey and adopted a more critical tone. As Gezi Park demonstrations of 2013 and growing authoritarianism of the Turkish government coincided with the third season, the series started to criticize aging Sultan Suleiman's power abuses and the overall corruptness of his government officials as subtexts to comment on the contemporaneous political situation in Turkey. The series' main approach of opposition is based on recalibrating and re-imagining patriarchy rather than opening it up for debate. In fact, the more it got politicized the more the series started to rely on young male heroes as the central characters, showcasing to us that the politics in Turkey are often done through a focus on male bodies and by emphasizing male deeds.

By its 4th season, the series goes through a thematic re-orientation to emphasize Prince Mustafa as its central character, who is portrayed as the youthful hope for a better polity and later a benevolent victim of repression. Episode 124 featuring Mustafa's funeral broke rating records in Turkey. Reportedly, hundreds of people flocked to the tomb of this long-forgotten Ottoman prince the day after his execution was screened. I would like to demonstrate that painful memories of Turkey's recent history are transferred to Prince Mustafa, who has emerged as the

40

embodiment of especially young people who have lost their lives through Turkey's troubled years from the 1960s to the present. His representation corresponds with the collective memory practices of left-wing activists from the 1960s and 1970s, but also with the more recent memory of young people who lost their lives during Gezi Park protests of 2013, which occurred about a year before his scene of execution got broadcasted on television. In one of the clearest references to the contemporaneous political situation in Turkey, the Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire repetitively refers to the protestors who are agitated by the killing of Prince Mustafa as "çapulcu," referring to the labeling of Gezi Park activists with the same adjective by government officials.

Construction of hegemonic masculinity in juxtaposition to femininity

A major similarity between *Magnificent Century* and *Resurrection* is that both series portray respectively Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul as the militaristic leaders of a militarist community. Prince Mustafa's execution is represented as the root cause of the decline and eventual fall of the once-powerful Ottoman Empire. *Magnificent Century* posits that the national polity can only survive the ordeals and grow under the leadership of virile men. For instance, in episode 133, standing in front of Prince Mustafa's tomb, the monarch Suleiman is chastised for setting the downward path of the Ottoman dynasty by executing the young Prince, as Mustafa's mother utters: "Look, Suleiman, our sun is down, our future is sunk into darkness… right here lies the future of the Ottomans."[1]

On several occasions during the last season, Suleiman is represented as demasculinized for being immersed in relentless tides of palace intrigues. He is depicted as spending an inordinate amount of time in the palace, which is primarily marked as the feminine domain. There are firm divisions as masculine versus feminine, indoors versus outdoors, the city versus the province in the series, and Suleiman's days in the indoors spaces of the palace play a vital role in his gradual

---

[1] "Bak güneşimiz battı, istikbalimiz karanlığa gömüldü…iyi bak Süleyman…iste burada, tam burada, Osmanlı'nın, hanedanımızın istikbali yatıyor."

demasculinization. This duality is expressed in a visually striking manner in episode 90. Suleiman tries to solve another line of intrigues taking place in his palace. The last shot of this scene is a medium close-up to his desolate face; his days in the palace rendered him dysfunctional and devoid of masculine energy (fig.1.1).

The next shot is a provincial town surrounded by a green, natural environment where the young prince lives, subtly indicating that hegemonic masculinity resides neither in the city nor in the palace with its power games and intrigues but belongs in the province with its authentic atmosphere (fig.2.2). Then, we have a close-up of a soldier resting his hand on his sword as a phallic object of power, and the action-packed music starts playing (fig.3.1). A few shots/seconds later, Prince Mustafa enters the picture, under the symbolic cover of the swords raised above for his passage (fig.1.4). As the current patriarch is being consumed by the palace, in contradiction, Prince Mustafa emerges as the ideal phallic hero; he and his military men are positioned as the nation's best hope for the future.

Fig 1.1-1.2-1.3-1.4 *Juxtaposition of Sultan Suleiman sitting debilitated on his throne and Prince Mustafa as the rising phallic hero.*

Hegemonic masculinity is maintained through homosocial relations and gatherings that stress masculine unity (Bird, 1996, p. 121). These militarist male bonding practices allow an easy demarcation of masculinity from femininity, in which what is considered masculine is valued over what is presented to be feminine (Duncanson, 2015, p. 235). Such portrayals of militarist men and their close bonding practices designate them as embodiments of hegemonic masculinity, in which nationalism and male hegemony are co-constituted and reinforced, gaining strength and validation from each other (Mostov, 2000, p. 89).

The narrative and visual elements of the series provide insight into how the series' construction of hegemonic masculinity operationalizes through its juxtaposition to femininity and foreignness. In another notable scene, Mustafa's half-brother Cihangir, who is portrayed as an exceptionally benevolent but emotionally vulnerable person, passes away, not being capable to heal from the pain of losing his beloved Mustafa. Nurbanu, a central female character of the last season, who is originally a Venetian slave, receives the news of Cihangir's death in her bathtub. She is the only person who uses a bathtub, which she acquires despite many protests. Hamam, the so-called Turkish bath, is a communal place allowing several people to wash, in contrast, the bathtub is the private property of an individual. Nurbanu is told that she

should let go of the bathtub as a relic from her previous life, yet she never listens to these counsels.

Nurbanu continues to carelessly enjoy herself in her bathtub after she hears about Cihangir's death in a scene that emphasizes her apathy towards kind and caring Cihangir. (fig.4). Her indifference and self-interestedness are directly linked to her foreignness and femininity through the bathtub, as the bathtub is signified in the series as both a foreign object and a tool of the feminine quest for beauty. Foreignness, femininity, individualism, and egocentricity all are lumped together, interconnected, and condemned subtly through the focus on Nurbanu and her bathtub as the natural opponents of the national subject. While Prince Mustafa and his fellow men are marked by their selfless dedication to each other and the well-being of their polity, women in the series, especially in its last season, are frequently portrayed as power-hungry and egoistical. It can also be said that the series depicts sexualized femininity as foreign and harmful to the national subject. Hence, hegemonic masculinity operates through finding its other in sexualized women, who are associated with egocentrism and are depicted as foreign.

Fig.3.1. *Foreignness and femininity as the binary others of the national subject.*

As argued by R. W. Connell (1987): "hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women" (p. 183). The subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities, foreigners and women is the main channel through which male power is asserted and maintained (Charlebois, 2011, p. 32). Masculinity needs its other against which to define itself in hegemonic form, and it builds the figure of the denigrated women and "feminized" men as its natural opponents (Kabesh, 2013, p. 91). Similarly, in the case of *Magnificent Century*'s portrayal of Prince Mustafa, the series upholds masculinity in a hegemonic status by juxtaposing him to female characters and "feminized" men.

Left-wing discourses in Prince Mustafa's representation

In the series' narrative, Prince Mustafa is portrayed as an island of purity and innocence in a growingly corrupt world marked by power games and intrigues at the highest echelons of the state hierarchy. A potent visual symbol of his ethical uprightness comes in episode 116 when Mustafa is shown to be the only standing figure surrounded by fallen others, depicted by the fallen leaves that surround him. The camera first shows us the leaves on the ground for a couple of seconds (fig.2.1). Then, it starts moving up slowly to reveal Mustafa who marches towards the camera/ audience (fig.2.2). The camera then continues to film him from various angles, situated in a sea of fallen leaves. This imagery is supplemented by a matching story told by one of Mustafa's closest friends in parallel editing. Prophet Ibrahim is condemned to death, and a giant fire is put in place to burn him alive. A small ant, however, sets to work to rescue him. Carrying a tiny water blob in its mouth, it walks towards the execution arena. An eagle mocks the ant, telling that no good can come from such a feeble attempt. The ant replies: "So be it, at least they would know which side we were in for."[2] At his point, the camera finally rests on Mustafa's face in a close-up shot. The moral lesson of the

45

---

[2] "Kartal gülmüş, senin bir damla suyun ona ne yapabilir ki. Su taşıyan karınca mağrur, olsun demiş, hiç olmazsa safimiz belli olur."

story is that one should do what is right irrespective of the circumstances or the personal risk involved in his actions, just like Prince Mustafa and his followers are doing in *Magnificent Century*.

Fig.2.1-2.2-2.3 *Prince Mustafa as the only upright figure in a sea of fallen leaves.*

This central aspect of his personality as the lone hero in a forest of corrupted people is closely associated with the collective memory practices of left-wing activists in Turkey. In a notable scene, the prince is depicted as planning and progressing with land reform in his city Manisa. A peasant explains Mustafa's plans: "His Highness the Prince said that he is going to give fields to anyone who demands it...Whatever is needed will be provided by him. We are going to do the work of cultivating the field, some will be ours, and the rest will be given to state

treasury."[3] The project sounds proto-socialist in its aims, giving lands and all needed pieces of equipment to those who demand it for free. In Mustafa's vision, thus, we see a land reform that is often voiced by the leftist activists, especially in the 1960s and 1970s (Ulus, 2011, 57).

The episode featuring his execution introduces a new song to the series' soundtrack: "*Zahit Bizi Tan Eyleme*," which accompanies Mustafa's last steps to his death and is later played at his funeral. This is a recent cover of an old anonymous song that has been popular among the leftist circles in Turkey, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.[4] The song is also played in another recent popular Turkish series, *Remember Lover (Hatirla Sevgili)* (2006-2008) in the episode featuring young left-wing activist Mahir Cayan and his friends' deaths at the Kizildere town in 1972, associating Mustafa' representation with the history of slain youth activists in Turkey's history. Melancholic tunes of the song are complemented by the lyrics that stress the heart-wrenching loss and pain, but also the resilience to continue the struggle: "We cannot be counted by fingers, we will not go extinct by breaking/killing."[5] In the same episode, on more than one occasion, people who protest against his murder are labeled as "çapulcu" by high-ranking government officials. Memories of loss from the 1960s and 1970s, as well as 2010s are thus converged to create a national subject position by the focus on unjustly treated, harmed, and murdered male body, which points to state officials as power abusers who are blamed as the chief causes of troubles in the society.

Mustafa's execution on the orders of his father Sultan Suleiman is caused by a multitude of reasons, but we are shown repeatedly that the prince had enough support to overthrow the monarch if he so desired.

47

---

[3] "Şehzade Hazretleri isteyenlere tarla vereceğini söylemişler...Ne lazımsa temin edilecekmiş..., biz ekip biçeceğiz, bir kısmını biz alacağız, gerisi de hazineye gidecekmiş."

[4] For instance, a left-wing activist mentioned in an interview that as they used to look for villages to spend the night, they singed "Zahit Bizi Tan Eyleme." (Gece vakti konaklayacak köy arar, 'Zahit bizi tan eyleme' diye türkü söylerdik.) (*Okuz*, 1998, p. 3).

[5] "Sayılmayız parmak ile, tükenmeyiz kırmak ile."

Ultimately, he gets executed because he prefers to die as an honorable man rather than getting his morality compromised by betraying and overthrowing his father. He puts an envelope on his chest that his father reads in episode 124, as his dead body is carried on the shoulders of his loyal soldiers who weep exhaustively (Fig.3.1-3.2-3.3). The letter pays homage to all "oppressed peoples" of history, pointing out Prince Mustafa as their embodiment and representative:

> My Sultan, my dearest father… I leave you this cruel world where a father kills his son, as I would prefer to die as a victim of oppression than become a man who murders his own father for power and prosperity… Historians may write that I was a traitor and a rebellious prince… Let them write so. One day, the story of the oppressed peoples would also be told, perhaps years, even hundreds of years later, somebody would tell my story… and that day, justice would be served for the persecuted.[6]

The series invites the audience to identify with a victim of oppression and mourn for all the oppressed peoples through him. In that regard, Mustafa's death is tinted with "left-wing melancholia" (Traverso, 2016, p.2), which "perceives the tragedies and the lost battles of the past as a burden and a debt" (Traverso, p. xv). In Prince Mustafa's murder, "the present gives its meaning to the past," (Traverso, p. 7) in the sense the melancholic mood emanating from recent losses is projected into the distant past of the Ottoman 16th century. Unjustly treated, suffering, and dispossessed male subjects emerge as the embodiment of national

---

[6] "Ey hünkarım… Size bir babanın evladına kıydığı bu zalim dünyayı bırakıyorum…Zira ikbal ve iktidar uğruna babasının canına kast etmiş bir zalim olarak yaşamaktansa bir mazlum olarak ölmeyi yeğlerim… bir hain ve asi bir Sehzade olduğumu yazacak vakanüvisler. Varsın ole yazsınlar…bir gün gelir mazlumların hikayesi de anlatılır, belki yıllar, belki de yüzyıllar sonra, biri benim hikayemi anlatır…iste o gün mazlumun hakki mazluma teslim edilmiş olur."

subjectivity, and the national history is framed as one of national victimization. To put it differently, the series nationalizes victimhood by its emphasis on Prince Mustafa as the representative of all those who suffered in the hands of a brutal state apparatus.

Fig.3.1-3.2-3.3 *Prince Mustafa as the innocent victim of oppression in his all-white clothing.*

This male-centric political criticism towards Turkey's political history, as well as the present-day political situation, is constructed at the expanse of sidelining and even vilifying female characters of the story. Even though the series already had many issues regarding the representation of women in its earlier seasons, it was still primarily about the life of palace women, especially of Hurrem Sultan, from whose eyes much of the story was narrated. Besides the fact that most central female characters are directly or indirectly implicated in Prince

Mustafa's murder, the overall representation of women throughout this last season grew significantly more problematic. Thus, the series' political criticism is achieved by sacralizing the victim male bodies and decidedly sidelining the stories of women in Ottoman history.

Prince Mustafa's overall portrayal draws from various memories of loss, distant and more recent. Our subjectivities are often constituted "by those we grieve for" (Pribram, 2012, p. 123), and in this case, we are grieving not only for an executed prince, but we are invited to mourn for all the young men who have lost their lives in fighting for a good cause in Turkey's history, and the nation itself, which is depicted as harmed irretrievably by their loss. In other words, the series portrays not only Mustafa but the entire nation as a victim of oppression. In its last season, *Magnificent Century* redefines and re-signifies masculine ethos, rather than engaging in a thoroughgoing criticism of it, as a result, the criticism of the contemporaneous authoritarian political climate falls short of touching its major breeding ground. While condemning the ruling elite for its abuses of power, the series identifies the suffering male body as the constitutive essence of national subjectivity. Hence, the nation remains defined essentially as "the community of men" (Mosse, 1985: 176), this time connected, not in glory, but shared suffering. Hegemonic masculinity, thus, is constituted through a paradoxical mixture of militaristic, authoritarian leadership and a narrative that draws from left-wing memories of loss and persecution of innocence.

Ertuğrul: A Rebel and Authoritarian Leader

The televisual broadcasting of *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* follows suit *Magnificent Century*. The series' very existence appears to be a result of the government initiative to take control of the remembrance of Turkey's Ottoman past and, in that regard, it can be seen as a direct response to *Magnificent Century.* Thus, *Resurrection* supplies the Turkish government with the desired image of Turkey's Ottoman past. Indeed, on several occasions, high-ranking government officials visited the filming set and praised the show. The primary aim of this section is to showcase that

there is inadvertent cooperation between government-backed and critical discourses in Turkey, as this collaboration reflects itself in the way government-backed popular TV programs work in tandem with purportedly critical popular productions in creating a rife environment for authoritarian politics.

Due to its popularity with the audiences, *Resurrection* appears as the most successful fruit of the Turkish governments' desires to project its own constructed image into the past. The series promises "resurrection," paradoxically to an empire that is yet to be born: The Ottoman Empire. It thus identifies the present-day moment of JDP (AKP) rule as the commencement of the oncoming age of national prominence, a moment of resurrection. The series' rendition of the late 13th century and JDP's vision of contemporary Turkey amalgamate, as they both rest on the promise of restoration and revival.

The central character Ertuğrul is a bold chieftain, who, relying on his equally virile and loyal men, fight for the survival of his small tribe. He is both a leader to a rising polity, but also a rebel to the established order of clashing imperial powers and a corrupt governmental apparatus that tries to stop him or even kill him. It is this mixture of being a militaristic leader to a rising polity and yet a rebel to the established world order that constitutes the character's charm, and which closely reckons President Erdogan's constructed public image in Turkey. As Turkey has started to face growing international pressures for the escalating trend of authoritarianism and human rights abuses, in addition to severe economic difficulties, government-backed media have started to rely extensively on conspiracy theories to diffuse external and internal criticisms of government policies. Ertuğrul*: Resurrection*, likewise, represents a mirror image of this narrative; Ertuğrul is surrounded by multiple foreign enemies from the west to the east and hidden internal traitors who are together bent on the destruction of his polity. Ertuğrul is positioned as a virile leader whose orders should be followed unquestioningly for the good of the nation, as well as being a dissident and nonconformist who oppose the powerful forces of unjust

world order, which closely approximates contemporary Turkish government's self-representation.

Ertuğrul's speeches are an assortment of mottos that emphasizes violence as a necessary way to lead a polity against its multiple foes. He says in episode 137: "Here, I come to face your power, roaring like a lion"[7] against a mighty Mongolian military commander. He also asserts in the same scene that: "Henceforth, all the decisions that serve to oppress would be nullified by the shedding of blood."[8] When offered a high position for his submission to Mongolian authority, he replies that "ropes that hold foxes by the neck cannot hold the wolves."[9] Hence, Ertuğrul is constantly positioned as a nonconformist who disrupts the plans of powerful oppressors and leads his polity to better days through his violent actions. Violent exercise of power is repeatedly legitimized as the only way for the national polity to survive its enemies.

Just like in *Magnificent Century,* male bonding is a recurrent leitmotif of *Resurrection*. On various occasions, we see Ertuğrul and his loyal men come together in emotionally intensified scenes, such as when Ertuğrul is thought to be dead but returns to his tribe to the extreme jubilance of his loyal soldiers. His men start shaking in happiness as they find it hard to believe that their leader is still alive and approaches from afar. Later, Ertuğrul hugs one by one all these men who cry and laugh at the same time from exuberance (fig.6.1-6.2-6.3). As I suggested before, the main function of the male homosocial interactions and bonding in the series is that it defines the national community as the close gathering of militarist men.

[7] "Kudretine aslanca kükreyerek geldim."

[8] "Bilesin ki, bundan böyle zulümle verilen hükümler kan ile bozulacaktır"

[9] "Tilkilerin boynuna geçen kement, kurtların boynuna işlemez."

Fig.6.1-6.2-6.3 *A conventional scene of emotionally intensified male bonding, reminiscent of Prince Mustafa's close bonding with his men.*

Islam as the central marker of national subjectivity

As a significant narrative difference of *Resurrection: Ertuğrul*, it is often the Shamanistic Mongolians and their Turkish allies who are the main opponents of Ertuğrul and his tribe, as much as their Christian enemies. This is a striking contrast to previous popular and official history writings in Turkey. In the early years of the secular Turkish Republic in the 1920s and 1930s, the Ottoman past is represented as the archaic other of the new Republic (Çolak, 2006, p. 591), and instead of the Ottomans, official Turkish history writing focused on the pre-Islamic, central Asian origins of the Turks (Gürpinar, 2013, p. 84). In later decades, the Ottoman past eventually emerged as a central element in the nationalist imagery to propagate the notion of Turkish greatness (Eldem, 2010, p. 29), without disowning the pre-Islamic past of the Turks.

In *Resurrection*, however, pre-Islamic Turkic groups are frequently portrayed as vile, barbaric, and self-interested. For instance, a Shamanistic Turkish commander is shown drinking wine from a skull, presumably belonging to a man he killed (fig.5.1). One of Ertuğrul's loyal men yells to a group of Mongolian soldiers in episode 199: "You conquer countries, but to what end, only to spread devastation and fear everywhere you go."[10] Mongolians and their Turkish allies are represented as fighting for bounty and personal enrichment only, whereas Ertuğrul and his loyal men fight for a just cause, "Rıza-i Ilahi," that is God's will.

Additionally, Shaman religious practices often take place in the darkness and are associated with evil intent in clear contrast to the peaceful representation of sage Muslim religious leaders (fig.5.2-5.3). The series showcases that Shamanistic Turks and Mongolians share many cultural similarities with Muslim Turks. They dress and speak analogously. Both are frequently shown using the same old Turkic idioms in their daily speeches. The cultural similarity of Shamanistic and Muslim Turks, however, does not alter the fact that followers of Shamanism are clean-cut separated from Muslim Turks as the enemy. In short, Islam is presented as the sole marker of belonging to the national polity, nullifying any other identity marker's significance. By altering the way Turkish history has come to be written in drawing a clear line between pre-Islamic and Islamic Turkish history, the series entrenches the notion that Islam is the exclusive marker of belonging to national polity.

[10] "Siz ülkeler fethedersiniz de ne olur? … Gittiğiniz yere yıkım ve korku götürürsünüz."

Fig.5.1-5.2-5.3 *On the left, a Shamanistic Turkish commander drinks wine from a skull, in the middle, a Shaman leads a religious ceremony in darkness, and in contrast to unfavorable depictions of Shamanism, a sage Muslim religious leader instructs serenely his disciples, as the low angle camera stresses his power.*

Contours of national subjectivity change considerably when we compare a critical TV show with a directly government-backed series. However, they share a crucial similarity in that they both rely on the creation and sustenance of a masculine ethos that is presented as the root cause of a nation's rise or fall. In *Magnificent Century,* the Ottomans decline and fall because Prince Mustafa was murdered. In *Resurrection: Ertuğrul,* likewise, the polity's future completely depends on Ertuğrul. Hence, we can observe a ball-sharing exercise in diverse popular historical productions in making Turkish society prone towards authoritarianism by constantly elevating male leaders, and their loyal militarist followers, to the status of being indispensable foundations and protectors of the nation.

A climactic scene in episode 123 of *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* best illustrates this ball sharing exercise in reinforcing male hegemony in political discourse between oppositional and propagandistic cultural productions. There is a direct intertextual reference to the famous scene of Prince Mustafa's execution in the *Magnificent Century. Resurrection* plays with the cultural memory of this recent popular cultural event in Turkey by connecting the destinies of Ertuğrul and Prince Mustafa.

Basically, like Mustafa, Ertuğrul enters an imperial tent to be murdered in a plot but returns back from there alive. The visual construction of this latter scene is a replica of the scene of Prince Mustafa's murder. In fact, the actors who took part in Prince Mustafa's execution play similar roles in this scene as well. For instance, an actor who plays a leading role as a devoted supporter of Mustafa in the *Magnificent Century*, likewise, is in the role of a dedicated follower of Ertuğrul, in both cases waiting in trepidation in front of the tent (fig.7.1-7.2-.7.3-7.4). After Mustafa's murder, his followers repeatedly say across several episodes: "They killed our hope," rationalizing why they are so incensed by his death. In *Resurrection*, Ertuğrul's anxiously waiting friends repeat this line twice as their leader comes out alive from the tent: "So long Ertuğrul lives, there will always be hope."

Fig. 7.1-7.2-7.3-7.4 *Above, Prince Mustafa's execution inside Sultan Suleiman's imperial tent, below, Ertuğrul's survival under analogous circumstances in the climactic scenes of Magnificent Century and Resurrection: Ertugrul.* The same actor plays a similar role in both scenes.

Resurrection strengthens the saga of Ertuğrul by relating his life to Prince Mustafa and his execution, which occupy a considerable place in the cultural memory of the people of Turkey thanks to the *Magnificent Century*. Even though Prince Mustafa's and Ertuğrul's representations in these two series differ markedly, they both are looked upon as the source of hope for the polity's rejuvenation and rise. In a sense, Ertuğrul is what Prince Mustafa would have become if he could survive the plot against his life in the narrative universe of the *Magnificent Century*, which is the redeemer of his national polity. This single intertextual reference showcases popular productions in Turkey share visual and narrative, as well as thematic correspondences in portraying masculine leaders and their dedicated followers as the redeemers of the national polity. Consequently, despite the differences in the way they conceptualize national subjectivity and contours of national belonging, they together play pivotal roles in maintaining, reproducing, and bracing hegemonic masculinity and authoritarian politics. Hence, the comparative textual analysis of *Magnificent Century* and *Resurrection* regarding the portrayal of Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul indicates that despite their diversified political content, they still converge in the way women are sidelined from political discourse, and masculinity is positioned as the central component of national subjectivity and national hope.

57

Conclusion

Magnificent Century and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* are the two most successful Ottoman-themed television dramas of Turkey in the 2010s at a time when the discursive hold of Ottomanism and the popularity of Turkish television series have both skyrocketed. *Magnificent Century* reflects the political developments of its times of production from 2011 to 2014. From celebrating the "magnificent century" of the Ottoman Empire in its earlier seasons in alignment with the relatively positive political climate in Turkey with a focus on the lives of palace women, the series thematically diverts its attention to condemn the powerholders

and their power abuses in the Ottoman past as a subtext to criticize intensifying authoritarianism in contemporaneous Turkey. Prince Mustafa's incapability of reaching his rightful place as the polity's leader becomes the single major event that prevents the redemption of the national polity from cycles of corruption, causing the decline and the eventual fall of the Ottoman Empire in the series' narrative universe. The series portrays the Ottoman monarch Sultan Suleiman as an anti-hero throughout much of its last season, while putting forward his son Prince Mustafa as the ideal phallic leader of the national polity. In this way, it re-calibrates hegemonic masculinity along the paradoxical lines of military prowess and a narrative of the victimized male body, indebted to left-wing discourses and memories about the loss of young people in Turkey's history. The series, thus, re-interprets national history as one of national victimization, while re-establishing the constitutive role of the militarist male leader and his loyal men. This narrative transformation also indicates that the growing politicization of televisual narratives in regard to contemporaneous political debates tends to sidestep women's perspectives and stories, as they reify hegemonic masculinities as central pillars of national subjectivity.

Resurrection: Ertuğrul is screened by the state-controlled TRT and is praised on multiple occasions by government officials. The series draws parallels between the early beginnings of what would later become the Ottoman Empire and the present-day self-representation of the AKP (JDP) government that, according to its own propaganda, leads the way for a rejuvenated Turkish polity. The series' central character Ertuğrul is portrayed as an authoritarian leader who brings justice and restores order through violent means. He is also depicted as a rebel leader against a cruel world order, fighting at many fronts against multitudes of foreign foes, but also against internal traitors, striking a chord with the Turkish government's self-representation. In short, *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* reflects the contemporary Turkish government's socio-political desires and projects its self-portrayal into the historical past. Surrounded by multiple enemies trying to hurt him and his polity, often betrayed by those who are close to him, and regularly suffering a

great many losses, a language of victimization and a depiction of wounded male personality is also a significant component of Ertuğrul's masculinity.

The close comparative textual analysis indicates that *Magnificent Century* and *Resurrection: Ertuğrul* converge in perpetuating the ethos of masculine leader and militarist male-bonding practices as the constitutive essences of the Turkish national polity. Despite ideological differences in the portrayal of Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul that respectively emphasize left-wing and Islamic discourses, both series coalesce in positing the male leader and his followers as foundational elements of the nation. Additionally, both Prince Mustafa and Ertuğrul are portrayed as simultaneously powerful to exert forceful change and sometimes simply powerless in the face of a deeply corrupted world. Thus, in their militaristic use of power, they are identified as harbingers of better days, and in their powerlessness, they are idolized as intrinsically different and unconnected to a corrupt world. Ultimately, the displays of might and the depiction of male victimization are equally stressed in both series, giving us the essential components of contemporary hegemonic masculinity in Turkey. Crucially, the portrayal of these two male characters strikes a chord with the self-representation of the Turkish ruling elite, which proclaims itself as the sole guardian of the nation (Yılmaz & Turner, 2019, p. 693), as well as regularly embracing a language of self-victimization.

This study postulates that the recent intensification of authoritarianism in Turkey has been on the making in the realm of popular culture through an inadvertent collaboration of governmental propaganda and criticism, as they all join forces in supporting hegemonic masculinities. The government-subsidized popular productions and TV series that attract appreciation for their critical aspects blend in building and maintaining a cultural environment suitable for the rise of authoritarianism. Hence, this article argues that, rather than exclusively focusing on governmental propaganda or government-funded popular productions, it is the general cultural climate that celebrates and finds its

hopes of salvation in unique male leaders that should be challenged to wage a struggle against political authoritarianism in Turkey.

Work Cited

Achilli, G. (2016, December 1). Turkish dramas conquer the world. *Middle East Eye,* Retrieved from https://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/turkish-tv-series- surge-popularity-worldwide-127494716

Arslan, I. & Tezcan, S. (2014). Visitor Onslaught to Prince Mustafa's Tomb [Şehzade Mustafa'nın türbesine ziyaretçi akını]. *Radikal*, Retrieved from http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/sehzade-mustafanin-turbesine-ziyaretci-akini- 1176614/

Arxer, S. L. (2011). Hybrid masculine power: Reconceptualizing the relationship between homosociality and hegemonic masculinity. *Humanity & Society*, *35*(4), 390-422

Atay, T. (2014, June 13). Magnificent Century is a reference point [Muhteşem Yüzyıl bir 'referans'tır!]. *Radikal*, Retrieved from http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/tayfun- atay/muhtesem-yuzyil-bir-referanstir-1196879/

Balaji, M., & Hughson, K. (2014). (Re) producing borders and bodies: masculinity and nationalism in Indian cultural texts. *Asian Journal of Communication*, *24*(3), 207-221.

Basaran, E. (2011, January 29). Ben vurmaya kalktıkları yerden yara almam [I won't get harmed from where they hit me]. *Radikal*, Retrieved from http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/beni-vurmaya-kalktiklari-yerden-yara-almam-1038276/

Bhutto, F. (2019, 13 September). How Turkish TV is taking over the world. *Guardian*, Retrieved From https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2019/sep/13/turkish-tv-magnificent-century-dizi-taking-over-world

Bird, S. R. (1996). Welcome to the men's club: Homosociality and the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. *Gender & Society*, *10*(2), 120-132.

Charlebois, J. (2010). *Gender and the Construction of Hegemonic and Oppositional Femininities*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

———— (1995). *Masculinities*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Çolak, Y. (2006). Ottomanism vs. Kemalism: Collective memory and cultural pluralism in 1990s Turkey. *Middle Eastern Studies*, *42*(4), 587-602.

Creeber, G. (2006). The joy of text?: Television and textual analysis. *Critical Studies in Television*, *1*(1), 81-88.

Dalle V. A. (2014). *The Body in the Mirror: Shapes of History in Italian Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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

Donovan, B. (1998). Political consequences of private authority: Promise Keepers and the transformation of hegemonic masculinity. *Theory and Society*, *27*(6), 817-843.

Duncanson, C. (2015). Hegemonic masculinity and the possibility of change in gender relations. *Men and Masculinities*, *18*(2), 231-248.

Eldem, E. (2010). Ottoman and Turkish Orientalism. *Architectural Design*, *80*(1), 26-31.

Fursich, E. (2009). In defense of textual analysis. *Journalism Studies*, *10*(2), 238-252.

Gürpinar, D. (2013). *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation, 1860-1950*. Springer.

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language* (pp. 107–116). London: Routledge in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham.

Havemann, L. (1999). Method or madness? Textual analysis in media studies. In *AANZCA Shifting disciplines: Communication, Discourses and Identities*.

Hearn, J. (2004). From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men. *Feminist theory*, *5*(1), 49-72.

Iedema, R. (2001). Analyzing film and television: A social semiotic account of Hospital: An Unhealthy Business. In T. van Leeuwen & C. Jewitt (Eds.), *Handbook of Visual Analysis* (pp. 183–206). London: Sage.

Kabesh, A. T. (2016). *Postcolonial Masculinities: Emotions, Histories and Ethics*. London and New York: Routledge.

Khan, A. J. (2020, August 12). Ertuğrul: how an epic TV series became the 'Muslim Game of Thrones,' *Guardian,* Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/aug/12/ertugrul-how-an-epic-tv-series-became-the-muslim-game-of-thrones

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

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2012). Engendering gendered knowledge: Assessing the academic appropriation of hegemonic masculinity. *Men and Masculinities*, *15*(1), 56-76.

Messerschmidt, J. W. (2018). *Hegemonic Masculinity: Formulation, Reformulation, and Amplification*. London and Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Mosse, G. L. (1985). *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Mostov, J. (2012). Sexing the nation/desexing: Politics of national identity in the former Yugoslavia. In Mayer, T. (Ed.), *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation* (pp. 89-112). Routledge

Nagel, J. (2005). Nation. In Kimmel, M. S., & Hearn, J. (Eds.), *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities* (pp. 397-413). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Phillipov, M. (2013). In defense of textual analysis: Resisting methodological hegemony in media and cultural studies. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *30*(3), 209-223.

Pribram, D. (2012). *Emotions, Genre, Justice in Film and Television: Detecting Feeling*. New York/London: Routledge.

Resurrection Ertuğrul is the Greatest Answer [En büyük cevap 'Diriliş Ertuğrul' dizisidir] (2017, March 3), *Sabah*, Retrieved from https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2017/03/09/yapilamaz-denenlere-en-buyuk- cevap-dirilis-ertugrul-dizisidir

Spackman, B. (1996). *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Spector-Mersel, G. (2006). Never-aging stories: Western hegemonic masculinity scripts. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *15*(1), 67-82.

Spicer, A. (2001). *Typical Men: The Representation of Masculinity in Popular British Culture*. London: I. B. Tauris.

Suner, A. (2011). Between magnificence and monstrosity: Turkishness in recent popular cinema. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, *45*, 123-154.

Talbot, K., & Quayle, M. (2010). The perils of being a nice guy: Contextual variation in five young women's constructions of acceptable hegemonic and alternative masculinities. *Men and Masculinities*, *13*(2), 255-278.

Toksabay, E. (2012, November 27). Turkish PM fumes over steamy Ottoman soap opera. *Reuters*, Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-show-suleiman/turkish-pm-fumes-over-steamy-ottoman-soap-opera-idUSBRE8AQ11H20121127

Traverso, E. (2016). *Left-Wing melancholia: Marxism, history, and memory*. New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.

Two thousand people in a day [Bir Gunde 2 Bin Ziyaretci]. *Aksam*, Retrieved from https://www.aksam.com.tr/yasam/sehzade-mustafanin-turbesine-bir-gunde-2-bin-ziyaretci/haber-286482

Ulus, Ö. M. (2011). *The Army and the Radical Left in Turkey: Military Coups, Socialist Revolution and Kemalism.* New York, NY: I.B. Tauris.

Yesil, B. (2016). *Media in New Turkey: The origins of an authoritarian neoliberal state*. Oxfordshire: University of Illinois Press.

Yılmaz, Z., & Turner, B. S. (2019). Turkey's deepening authoritarianism and the fall of electoral democracy. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, *46*(5), 691-698.

63

Popüler Kültürde Hegemonik Erkeklik Temsilleri ve Otoriter Yönetimin Çekiciliği: *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (2011–2014) ve *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (2014–2019) Dizilerinin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi

Öz: Bu çalışma *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (2011–2014) ve *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (2014 – 2019) adlı dizilerdeki iki ana karakter olan Şehzade Mustafa ve Ertuğrul'un temsiline odaklanarak 2010'larda yapılan tarih temeli bu iki diziyi karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemekte ve bu karşılaştırma üzerinden Türk popüler kültüründe hegemonik erkekliklerin temsili ile Türkiye'de yükselen siyasi otoriterlik akımı arasındaki bağlantıları ele almaktadır. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, Türk tarihini aşağılayıcı biçimde yanlış tanıttığı iddiasıyla üst düzey hükümet yetkilileri tarafından defalarca kınanmıştır. Dizinin 2013'teki Gezi Parkı protestolarına denk gelen dördüncü sezonunda dizi, iktidar suistimalleri ve baskılarına karşı daha eleştirel bir bakış açısı kazanmaya başlamıştır. Yine bu dördüncü sezonda, Şehzade Mustafa ölümüne kadar dizinin ana karakteri olarak yer almış ve infaz edildiği sahne, yakın Türk televizyon tarihinin en büyük medya olaylarından biri haline gelmiştir. Dizideki Şehzade Mustafa tasviri, Türkiye solunun kayıp ve baskı anılarından yoğun olarak yararlanmakta ve dizinin iktidarın kötüye kullanılmasına yönelik eleştirileri, çağdaş Türk hükümetini de kapsamaktadır. Örneğin, Şehzade Mustafa'nın öldürülmesini protesto eden Osmanlı halkı dizide defalarca Gezi Parkı eylemcilerini küçümsemek için kullanılan "çapulcu" ifadesi ile anılmaktadır. Buna karşılık *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, devlet kanalı TRT tarafından, diziyi birçok kez kamuoyu önünde öven hükümet yetkililerinin onayıyla gösterilmiştir. *Diriliş: Ertuğrul*, çağdaş Türk hükümetinin yeniden canlanma ve diriliş vurgusuna paralel olarak, daha sonra Osmanlı İmparatorluğu olacak olan yapının ilk başlangıcında kargaşa içindeki bir devletin görkemini yeniden canlandıran bir aşiret reisi olan Ertuğrul'un hikayesini anlatmaktadır. Ertuğrul ve adamlarının tasvirinde İslam, tekrarlı biçimde ulusal kimliğin nihai işareti olarak sunulur. Bununla birlikte, yakın metin analizi, tematik ve ideolojik farklılıklarına rağmen, her iki dizinin de erkek lideri ve onun sadık militarist adamlarını ulusal yönetimin yapı taşları ve koruyucuları olarak konumlandırmada

birleştiğini göstermektedir. Ek olarak, Ertuğrul ve Şehzade Mustafa'nın tasvirinde, militarist ve otoriter güç gösterilerinin paradoksal bir kucaklaşmasını ve aynı zamanda, Türkiye'deki çağdaş hegemonik erkekliğin temel bileşenlerini oluşturduğunu iddia ettiğim, kurulu otoriteye isyan ve erkek mağduriyetine yapılan vurguyu bulmaktayız. Bu nedenle, politik söylemde karşılaştığımız hegemonik erkekliğin temel bileşenlerinden bazılarının, yeniden üretildiği ve büyütüldüğü popüler kültür arenasında izlenebileceğini savunuyorum.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hegemonik erkeklikler, Türk TV dizileri, politik otoriteryenlik, militarizm, direniş, popüler tarih.

To be or Not to be Seen? Paradox of Recognition among Trans Men in Sri Lanka

Kaushalya Ariyarathne[*]

University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Abstract: This article is a part of a broader study titled 'transgender identities in contemporary Sri Lanka'. It attempts to identify a framework based on contemporary Sri Lankan trans men's lived experiences, to analyse and interpret gender, embodiment, social relationships and identities. The article discusses how socially accepted normative behaviours of gender contribute to negotiate their identities. At the same time, the masculinities demanded by capitalist forms of production in the modern world also offer possible avenues for them to explore and understand their bodies. Further, it argues that the assistance offered by the post-war Sri Lankan state for a person to move from one binary to another, is part of the long-term project of the nation state. Identifying trans men as a 'category' of gender, the State and civil society in Sri Lanka, (mis)represents and acts to homogenise and de-politicise their everyday lives. Therefore, while their identities are 'imposed' by nationalist and neoliberal discourses, they are constantly narrated, challenged and re-negotiated through paradox of recognition, visibility and non-visibility.

Keywords: Gender, Trans men, Sri Lanka, Masculinities

We were born in the wrong house. We want to be in our own house. We need to be there. To fulfil that need we want the support of medico people like you…The only where place we can regain our life is the health sector. Until we die, we need your support. We need you, we come to you and we ask you to be there to support us, to bring a smile to our lives. That is all we need. We know how to live our lives without doing any harm to any other person (Ranketh, 2019).

The first thing is to note is that the rigid division of bodies into 'male 'only' and 'female 'only' occurred at a particular moment in human history, that is, at the inception of the constellation of features that we term 'modernity' (Menon, 2012, p.53).

I begin this article by deconstructing the first excerpt shown above, from a lecture delivered at the Annual Scientific Sessions of a medical association, held in Kandy, Sri Lanka. These words were spoken by the Executive Director of an NGO based in Colombo that works for the rights of transgender persons in Sri Lanka. According to his statement, 'sexual 'body' and 'gender 'identity' are two elements that coexist in one' 'house'. A perfect life is one where the two elements live together without a conflict and only medical science can produce this 'happy' organism/form of life where the identities coexist. But citizens who call for such support from the State are bound by their pledge to live their lives subservient to the State (without being a nuisance to anyone). Thus, through this public speech, a community representative requests the State (represented by the medical authorities) to 'correct' people who are born with and suffer the consequences of a mistake of nature, who must be admitted to the State as 'good' citizens.

On the other hand, in the second excerpt, Nivedita Menon argues that the classification of the body, whether male or female, only arises with the onset of Western modernity. Similarly, Menon's analysis extends to how the principles of Western modernity are a legacy of colonial rule in Oriental and African societies, with differing degrees of

acceptance of the strict, socially normative conceptions of femininity and masculinity (2012,p. 54-60).

This article is a part of a broader study titled 'transgender identities in contemporary Sri 'Lanka'. It attempts to identify a framework based on contemporary Sri Lankan female to male transgender persons' (trans men) lived experience to analyse and interpret gender, embodiment, social relationships, and visibility. By identifying transmen as a 'category' of gender, the State and civil society in Sri Lanka (mis)represents and acts to homogenise and de-politicise their everyday lives. Instead, I argue that their identities are 'imposed' by nationalist and neoliberal discourses, yet constantly narrated, challenged, and re-negotiated through the paradox of recognition, visibility, and non-visibility.

My analysis begins with a discussion of how transmen are 'accepted' as citizens of the State based on the medical gaze on their bodies and the success of their performance of idealised male gender roles. I argue that paradoxical identities are being built and negotiated— on the one hand, being recognised by the State and fighting for their rights in civil society spaces while on the other, they continue their journey of 'abandoning' the past (i.e., womanhood), which involves home, self, country, and memory. Their lives' lingering and principal goal is to become a 'complete man'; created, built, framed, and maintained by the Sri Lankan post-war, capitalist, nationalist agenda, which necessitates able-bodied men.

Study

This article was developed using the data gathered for a doctoral research study conducted between 2016-2020 and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. A total of 15 transmen between 23 to 39 years old were selected using the snowball sampling method and interviewed. They identified themselves using terms such as 'trans man', 'F2M',

68

'transgender' or simply 'man' to introduce themselves, however, I have used the term 'transmen' throughout the article. It is noteworthy that none of them identified as 'a transsexual person' and I, therefore, avoided using the term in my analysis. The use of such terms in this article does not necessarily imply that this is an essential identity of a 'special group' of people; instead, it offers an understanding of how they experience and negotiate their everyday lives.

I approached many of them through my existing contacts, and the majority of the discussions happened at places they suggested to me. Rather than standard interview mode, the discussions were very long, unstructured conversations with them. Discussion themes were their childhood memories of friendships, family and school, current engagements (i.e., work, private life, profession, and education), medical aspects, future aspirations, and expectations of life. However, in this article, I analyse their upbringing, societal/institutional influence in their identities, and current engagements with the workplace and largely, with the State. I also interviewed two psychiatrists working in government hospitals.

Pseudonyms are used to ensure safety and confidentiality of the participants. After writing the article, I contacted them again to verify their ideas and to make sure that none of them can be recognised in the text. However, based on feminist standpoint and theory, I present the findings with the understanding of my own positionality as a queer/woman/attorney/activist, which may affect the research process, analysis and articulation.

Literature Review

Studies of the term 'transgender' have moved from the margins, and transgender studies are now established as one of the most creative sites of debate within gender and sexuality studies across the world (Hines &Sanger, 2010). The interventions of trans-scholars affected strong critiques of the organising principles and theoretical signifiers of

feminism and lesbian and gay theory/politics, articulating the productive challenges of transgender for feminist and queer theory and politics. Alongside a cultural turn to transgender (Hines, 2007) through a rising focus on transgender subjectivities within the media and popular culture, shifting attitudes towards transgender people are evident in law. These social, cultural, and legislative developments reflect how transgender communities acquire increasing visibility in contemporary society, marking transgender identities as an important area of social and cultural inquiry.

The choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live or wear 'one's body a certain way, imply a world of already established corporeal styles. To choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that reproduces and organizes them anew (Butler & Salih, 2004, p. 26). Butler & Salih (2004) further argue that the body becomes a peculiar nexus of culture and choice, and '''existing 'one's body becomes a personal way of taking up and reinterpreting received gender norms. Stryker (2006) situates transsexuality as a culturally and historically specific transgender practice/identity through which a transgendered subject enters a relationship with medical, psychotherapeutic, and juridical institutions in order to gain access to certain hormonal and surgical technologies to enact and embody itself. She further argues that 'transgender became an over determined construct, like 'cyborg' through which contemporary culture imagined a future filled with new possibilities for being human, or post-human' (2006, p. 8).

Critical readings of rights discourse show how understandings and practices of sexuality are constructed. In her analysis of the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) of the United Kingdom introduced in 2004, Hines (2010) elaborates how the GRA opens citizenship rights for transsexuals who can tick all the right boxes; preferably heterosexual within their chosen gendered role and able to blend into gendered society without much risk of being read. In considering sexual citizenship, scholars such as Stychin (1998) and Richardson (2000) argue that discourses of citizenship are constructed along a heterosexual model—so that the notion of citizenship itself is heterosexualised. Stychin points to the

problematics of a politics of recognition: "...lesbians and gays seeking rights may embrace an ideal of 'respectability', a construction that then perpetuates a division between 'good gays' and (disreputable) 'bad queers'."(1998, p. 200).

Writing on trans-masculinities, drawing on their own experience, Green (2006), describes how 'out' transsexual men experience more 'gender policing'. He argues that the more congruent transsexual identities and bodies become through the transition process, the less interesting they tend to become to the public. Cromwell (2006) argues that by framing for themselves what it means to be masculine or to be a man, FTMs often deploy socially normative concepts of manhood, which nonetheless become 'queered' by the context in which they are used. Connell (2012), highlighting the differences between trans people in the 'global metropole' and the 'global periphery', highlights the necessity of inquiring into the specifics of non-Western trans people such as, *hijras* in India and *burnesha* in Albania, who often have epistemologies and ontologies that differ from trans experiences and trans embodiments in Western contexts. Further, some scholars have emphasised the importance of decolonising the knowledge on trans-masculinities (Vidal-Ortiz, 2014), while some have argued that masculinity studies have paid little attention to trans-masculinities (Gottzén & Straube, 2016).

My analysis of the identities of transmen in Sri Lanka is placed in the context of ambivalent notions of the sex-gender categories prevalent in Sri Lanka. Social advocates recently made up the lengthy Sinhala translation of the term 'gender' 'gender' (sthree purusha samājabhāvaya) in Sri Lanka, since there was no term for it in Sinhala. While the terminologies used by specific communities to identify themselves are more complex and nuanced in Sri Lanka, the literature is mainly framed around Western-oriented sex-gender categories. However, a few scholars have explored transgender subjectivities in Sri Lanka beyond NGO/rights perspective (Ariyarathne, 2020; Chandimal, 2014; Miller & Nichols, 2012; Nichols, 2010; Wijewardene, 2007, 2008). LGBTIQ study has been alienated in mainstream literature on sex and gender in Sri Lanka (Wijewardene, 2008), while research on sexuality

has either been overlooked or enclosed in a rights-based framework (Kuru-Uthumpala, 2014). As Samaraweera (2015) argues, research on transgender visibility in Sri Lanka has been limited to the study of urban transgender communities, and it is based on the hypothesis that transgender people are a 'tortured sexual minority'. This article attempts to address the gap of such literature in trans-masculinities, interrogating the dilemma of visibility among transmen in Sri Lanka.

Citizenship, Medical Gaze, and Docile Bodies

The procedural laws and regulations on gender change in Sri Lanka in the recent past have evolved interestingly. While there is no law passed by an Act that accepts the change of gender as a fundamental human right, transgender communities are being recognised by the State by introducing practical procedural methods in various contexts.

For instance, when three transgender women in Sri Lanka complained to the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka in 2015 after the Department of the Registrar General refused permission to change their legal gender, a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) that all authorities would accept was proposed, whereby gender would be indicated on official documents, including the Birth Certificate, National Identity Card and Passport. The Ministry of Health released a circular in June 2016 detailing the criteria for awarding the GRC. The draft certificate allows a doctor to certify that a transgender person has been referred for hormone therapy and the required surgical procedures and that the individual has undergone such procedures.

Concurrently, the Department of the Registrar General of Sri Lanka also issued a circular in 2016 titled "Procedure to change the name and gender of transgender persons' birth certificates." According to this Circular, to qualify to change the name and gender in the Birth Certificate, a person has first to approach a psychiatrist who works for a government hospital who can issue a GRC. Thus, the medical health sector in Sri Lanka still possesses a robust discretionary power over

transgender communities in deciding the need for gender change. For instance, even though the World Health Organisation has declassified Gender Dysphoria as a mental health issue, medical scholars have argued that this declassification is 'controversial' as it is always a psychiatrist who deals with such persons (Malalgama, 2017, p. 27).

In Sri Lanka when a person consults a psychiatrist to obtain the GRC, it is the psychiatrist who 'takes the crucial decision' about whether the person is allowed to obtain it or not. In this identification process, the most critical decisions in the life of the individual wishing to obtain the GRC to modify their documents depend on the psychiatrist's acceptance, and the psychiatrist's discretionary power is unrestricted. For example, the Real Life Test (RLT) conducted by the doctors is designed to assess how one would cope with his/her gender transition in 'real' life. The purpose of the RLT is to confirm that a transgender person can function successfully as a member of that gender in society and to confirm that he/she is sure that he/she wants to live as the same gender for the rest of his/her life. A doctor who is eligible to issue a GRC describes the RLT as follows:

73

> RLT is an assessment of how a *patient* lives in real life with his/her new identity. The full assessment takes at least two years. For example, if a woman comes to me wanting to change identity into a man, my first advice is to choose your clothes and start dressing as a man. Over the time, she needs to change the way she dresses. After some time, I observe how he cuts his hair, what kind of denim or pants he wears, whether tattoos are male tattoos or feminine tattoos, whether he wears male deck shoes,[1] and whether he wears men's jewellery. Not only that, but when he comes to see me, I silently observe how he sits and how he holds his hands. For example, I can quickly recognise his sitting pattern - whether he sits with *his legs wide open like a boy*

---

[1]Deck shoes (also known as boat shoes) are typically canvas or leather with non-marking rubber soles. In Sri Lanka deck shoes are mostly popular among men.

> or if he is still *sitting with his legs closed like a girl*."(Interview with Psychiatrist X on January 30, 2020, Colombo, emphasis mine)

This normative, rigid, conventional recognition of gender identity (performed by a 'patient' in the hospital context) does not end there. This is the statement of another psychiatrist:

> I ask them what they wear, not only when they come for consultations but also at home, at work too. I also inquire *what they like to do* at home and whether they have the *strength* to cope with external pressure (Interview with Psychiatrist Y on February 08 2020, Colombo, emphasis mine).

During my further questions of 'work they like to do', he further elaborated:

> I usually find out if he works in the kitchen to help his mother at home, or he does male work at home—such as doing heavy work, going to the shop to buy groceries. If he was a boy, in his real life, he should be interested in doing the boys' work in his real life (Interview with Psychiatrist Y on February 08, 2020, Colombo).

He further added that it would be helpful if, in Sri Lanka, a social activist could be deployed in the home and workplace of the person to enlighten the residents or colleagues about their transition, like the process in the West (Interview with Psychiatrist Y on February 08, 2020, Colombo).

In fact, the statements by two leading psychiatrists in Sri Lanka offer strong evidence that this hypothetical 'real life', as defined and interpreted by doctors, is a locale full of conventional prejudices about gender and sexuality. All those who consulted them to change their bodily organs, had to perform before the doctor, using different ways of reinforcing the norms; i.e,. established conceptions of female hairstyles, feminine clothes, and feminine behaviour. It was easy to obtain the doctor's approval if the performance was successful, which was the key

to enrolling as a citizen. Thus, the process ensures that everything from the birth certificate and identity card to passport, driver's license and education and work-related documents can be revised—but it would depend on the success of the man/woman role performed by the person, in the presence of the medical gaze. The medical health sector (and their knowledge) are gatekeepers for transgender persons, holding the authority to include them (or not) as citizens of the Sri Lankan State. The transgender body comes under the scrutiny of the State, and the modern form of power held by the medical profession over transgender subjectivities is apparent.

Foucault (1979) sought to understand how the modern individual and modern forms of power came to be. Foucault's focus was on the changing relationship between the human body and power. This changing relationship, he argued, influenced the operation of power in general. He elaborated that there is a relationship between power and knowledge. Institutional power, for example, the power of schools and the justice system, and the construction of knowledge, are deeply interlinked. According to him, together, they shape the individual's desires and the way they understand their place in the world. Foucault sought to show how every social norm, every impulse that society takes for granted, is historically produced and dependent on the systems of knowledge that created it. Power rests in the production of what is 'normal'.

> The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political economy', which was also a 'mechanics of power', was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed, and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practical bodies, 'docile' bodies (Foucault, 1979, p. 35).

In the case of transgender bodies, persons who need to be identified as citizens with their desired gender must behave in a way recognised as a disciplined proof that they are obedient to the norms of gender in front of the medical eye. The disturbing fact in this phenomenon is that the power produced by the medical gaze is internalised by their 'patients' who consider such normative behaviour an essential part of their identity.

> If I want to be a man, first I have to *behave like a man* in the society, without behaving like a man, no use of changing your private parts from female to male (laughing) (Interview with Sameera on January 20, 2020, Kandy, my emphasis).

My immediate question to Sameera was how he perceived a man's behaviour, which he responded as follows:

> Born and raised as a girl, becoming a man is different and difficult. It needs a lot of courage. People will initially tell you that you are a masculine woman. But once you start taking hormones, your voice become rougher. Hair and beard start growing. My office colleagues initially talked behind me about my body changes. I initially felt shy and awkward. But my doctor was very supportive in facing this; he always said *becoming a man means having much courage to face the world* as who you are. These words guide my journey of becoming a man (Interview with Sameera on January 20, 2020, Kandy, my emphasis).

The problematics of claiming sexual/gendered citizenship map on to the paradoxes of claiming gender recognition. While the Health Ministry Circular (2016) has developed to broaden the rights of citizenship for trans men, the influence of medical discourse and practice and the binary conceptualisations of genders and sexualities effect a division between the trans citizen who is able and/or willing to fulfil the requirements of the law, and the trans person who is unable or unwilling to meet the demands of recognition.

However, these prejudiced beliefs about gender norms construct the masculinities that they have embodied in their lives since childhood.

> Sameera: I was treated as a girl who behaved like a boy during my school time. I never did *girls work* at the school.

> Me: What do you mean by girls' work?

> Sameera: Like sweeping the classroom, decorating the teacher's table with flowers. My friends did them for me. But I was asked to carry the dustbin and throw the garbage after they swept the classroom (Interview with Sameera on January 20, 2020, Kandy, emphasis mine).

In the context of school, duties within the classroom (the private sphere) such as sweeping the classroom and decorating the teacher's desk with flowers were considered by kids as women's work while activities outside the classroom (the public sphere) such as throwing garbage away were considered men's work. This confirms their adherence to the social norms of performing gendered social roles from childhood. In school, many of them preferred boxing, cricket, volleyball or hockey which are considered 'men's sports', requiring physical strength and energy. While many of them did not like discussing the female bodies they had in the past, it became very apparent during the discussion on sports that the physical attributes associated with athleticism (i.e., playing men's sports) and physical superiority (i.e., winning medals and awards) were among the main elements of embodying masculine identities.

After being labelled and marginalised as a 'girl who acts like a boy' by their families, schools, religious institutions, and neighbourhood/community, their identity crisis was somewhat resolved through Western medical science and the knowledge produced by civil society/non- governmental organisations. This framing of gender is produced and maintained by the liberal knowledge systems of the global North, who fund non-governmental initiatives in the global South. The modern LGBTIQ classification produces strict categories of gender

identities and sexual orientations, which are very closely aligned with the white-male identities of the global North. Thus, neo-colonial knowledge production and domination continue to play an increasingly important role in the creation of identities among transmen in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the pursuit of an 'ideal life' within the framed, systematic gender identities and rights that are presumed to exist in the global North, becomes the goal of many transgender lives. Many expect that they will be invisible among a larger migrant community in the West and they can continue to live as a male, easily abandoning their transition process and history. These paradoxical goals i.e., recognition vs. invisibility, is elaborated more in the next section.

Forgetting the Past - Moving Through Spaces

The first and most common question asked by nearly everyone involved in discussions with me was, "Will I be identifiable through what you write?".I had to make a particular explanation of the anonymity and confidentiality of their identity as it was manifested by them. It is noteworthy that even though they all accepted themselves as transmen according to medical terminology, they prefer to be called men in their everyday lives.

It is also noteworthy that many were keen to erase the memories of their past, about their female self, not just from their own memories but from the memories of the outside world. For example, Thisal, who attended a training programme with an NGO at the time he started hormone treatment, requested my assistance to delete all the photos and videos released by the NGO on the internet, where he was attributed as having 'feminine' characteristics of the body during that period. Thisal said that it was embarrassing for him to see the images taken two years ago of his previous, feminine body (telephone conversation with Thisal, January 20 2020). Meanwhile, Sameera had achieved success at national level in Netball and Cricket tournaments while he was a woman and later had to stop playing due to the change of gender. Many of his (previously,

her) achievements were reported in the national newspapers. When asked whether he had compiled those newspaper articles, Sameera said:

> No, no....even if I had, I would have hidden them. I played as
> a girl at the time, and those reports carried my girl name.
> (Interview with Sameera, January 20, 2020, Kandy)

I noticed that everyone who spoke to me wanted to erase not only the evidence—the photographs, files, and certificates, but also the memories associated with their past womanhood.

Evidence of this desire to establish their present identity as a man and their abhorrence and embarrassment about their previous identity as a woman can be seen in the following statements; the past life as a woman was "...not a part of my life" (Interview with Lahiru, November 15 2019, Colombo) and,it felt as if it was "...a life in another world" (Interview with Sameera, January 20, 2020, Colombo, emphasis mine). I believe that the reason for this discontent or embarrassment was often because of the idea that their women's identity was somehow incomplete, distorted or flawed in ways that could be corrected by embracing the identity of a man, thereby entering a 'complete' life.

The term 'correction' is very complex, problematic and stereotypical. When discussing it with transmen who use the term, I found out its source. For example, Sameera found information about his transgender process from newspaper articles and a psychiatrist who was introduced to him by his friends. It was while studying in a European country that Thisal realised that he 'needed to correct' his gender identity and that it was possible. Maalinga's statement is also significant:

> I went to a famous girls' school. My behaviour as a boy did
> not matter to anyone in the school. I was famously known
> in the school as a 'girl like a boy'. In the university, I was
> considered as lesbian who is sexually attracted to girls. I
> first heard the term 'transgender/transsexual' when I
> attended a workshop conducted by a group of NGOs in my
> final year of the university. It was only then that I started

> looking into it. I was curious about it and consulted two psychiatrists for more information. They talked to me and '*assessed*' me as a transman. I knew I could change my identity. It's been five years since this process started. Somehow, we have to complete *the rest* (Interview with Maalinga, February 10, 2020, Colombo, emphasis mine).

What he meant by the term 'the rest' was the surgical procedure to change genitalia, which is currently quite challenging to do in Sri Lanka (Interview with Maalinga, above). Although breast removal surgery and hormonal treatments are relatively easy to access, the process of male genital replacement surgery in Sri Lanka is difficult, almost impossible. While it is possible to have internal surgeries such as the removal of a uterus done free of charge at a government hospital, it is still difficult to change the external form of the genitalia. Therefore, many people who find it difficult to go abroad still see themselves as 'incomplete' men.

> I am still in my journey of becoming a proper man (Interview with Sameera, January 2020, 2020, Kandy).

> The goal of my life is to be a complete person (Telephone conversation with Shevon, August 28, 2019).

Nevertheless, where does this complete life/person exist? When can they be complete? The past is a chapter they need to forget or wipe out, and the present is a moment of imperfect journey. The following points were highlighted in every discussion I had with transmen:

a.) Their home, family, village, and neighbourhood were reminiscent of past lives; every one of them was living away from home, either in Colombo or other urban areas.

b.) Everyone was planning to migrate to another country (often in the West) in the near future. One person has already moved.

This fascinating similarity is indeed made visible by their dream of a future with a complete male identity, which is far away and free from the 'imperfect' female identities of the past (and the present).

Sameera explains his experience of being invisible, away from his home:

> I have been working as a factory worker in a cable company in Malaysia for two years. During my stay in Malaysia no one cared about my gender or sexual orientation. There were many lesbians, gays, and transgender persons in the factory. I could wear what I like and had relationship with another girl. I was *not noticed* by anyone particularly as a transgender man (Interview with Sameera, on January 20, 2020, Kandy, emphasis mine).

However, this has an interesting dimension in terms of people working in organisations for trans-rights. For instance, Mano, who has founded a leading trans-organisation in Colombo, wanted me to identify him as a man. But in different spaces, such as meetings of civil society organisations, activities with Ministry of Health officials, and committees of the National Human Rights Commission, he identifies himself as a transman.

> My transgender-ness has brought me a long way. It made me to who I am today. I have founded my organisation. I have been working for the benefit of hundreds of transgender persons is Sri Lanka. I work with important government officials, in order to recognise transgender communities in the system of governance. But in the society (i.e., my higher education institute, my neighbours, etc.), I simply want to be a man like any other. I do not want a different treatment from the society. I want to blend in with the society as any other man (Interview with Mano on May 12, 2020, Colombo).

During the presidential election of 2019, when a group of left-leaning LGBTIQ activists supported the candidate of the main leftist coalition

(JVP/NPP)[2] in Sri Lanka, some other trans-activists demanded that the Sinhala terms used by the group should indicate the presence of transgender communities. While activists use the Sinhala term *Samarisi*[3], some transgender members argued that *Samarisi* does not imply transgender persons; rather, it has been used as a common Sinhala term for same-sex relationships. Therefore, the demand was to use the term *Sankrānthi* (transgender) along with the term *Samarisi*, wherever political campaigns were taking place. It is quite important to mark the paradoxes of the two needs; wanting to be recognised and wanting to be invisible, at the same moment. While claiming different identities in different moments and contexts, they were always careful to use the word 'transgender' in our election campaigning and requested everyone to use the term when referring to queer communities.

> While inclusivity and visibility are being highlighted in these contexts, invisibility is what they expect from the society they live in and going to live in the global North creates a paradoxical relationship that they are unable to explain or understand. Their ultimate purpose of emancipation from the old self/body becomes a journey of physical movement across spaces. However, in the new space, the expectation of being invisible or to blend in with the normative gender binaries of the outside world has also been challenging. Shevon, who has migrated to a country in the global North as student, shares his experience:

> When I came here, I thought it is easy to live here, because nobody knows me as a trans-man. Even though ticking the box as trans-man has been benefitting me in several contexts (e.g., college entrance, membership of different societies), I have never disclosed my identity with any of

---

[2]*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (People's Liberation Front) became a coalition called National People's Power (NPP) with several other leftist civil society movements in 2019. The author is a member of this coalition.
[3]Term *Samarisi* is originated by two terms *sama* (same) *risi* (like).

> my friends or colleagues. But when they are very close to
> me and we share personal experiences, I always feel like I
> cheat about my *true* identity. Even though I will become a
> *complete man* one day, I do not think I can forget my past
> completely (*Long silence*) (Telephone conversation with
> Shevon, August 28, 2019, emphasis mine).

In fact, while living in a predominantly white area in the country, Shevon
had to be more concerned about his race and class identities than his
transgender identity. He had shared an experience of an incident he
faced while commuting in public transport, where a young white man
complained that 'immigrants take all our jobs'.

> I thought grass is always greener on the other side. My
> history or the present as a trans-man is less important here.
> There are more important things; being a brown man or a
> poor man matters more (Telephone conversation with
> Shevon, August 28, 2019).

As a person who had lived away from his family since he was 18, 'home'
for Shevon, could be either the family he left behind at a younger age, the
city (Colombo) he lived in before leaving; or his nation and home country
(Sri Lanka) in the context of his present life in the diaspora; a place filled
with nostalgia which he cannot go back to.

> "Home...", as Gopinath writes "...in the queer fantasy of the past is
> the space of violent (familial and national) disowning."(2005, p. 173).
> According to Gopinath, home for a queer diasporic subject becomes not
> only that which they cannot want but also that which they could never
> have. Nostalgia as deployed by queer diasporic subjects, is a means to
> imagine oneself within those spaces from which one is perpetually
> excluded or denied existence. Quoting Popoola and Sezen, Tudor (2017)
> describes the failure to belong that is imposed by racism and migration
> as the feeling of 'never be[ing] whole', eternally searching, homeless and
> dispossessed. Thus, moving away from violent or unwanted 'home'
> spaces to (presumed) better spaces has in fact opened more complexities
> of identities for young trans men who were in the process of finding their

so-called 'true' inner selves. Instead of a complete rupture from the past and a sense of a new/complete identity, they meet with different life realities to deal with, that require them to imagine themselves in the frames of various other identities, i.e., Asian/brown, poor, etc.

'Able and Productive' Bodies

I recall my visit in late 2019, to a leading NGO working for transgender communities in Colombo. They had set up their new office in a suburban area and invited me to pay a visit. The neighbourhood was very quiet and residential with middle-class houses surrounded by high walls and remotely controlled iron gates. I could not resist comparing this environment with that of one of the other NGO's (working mainly with the *nachchi*[4] community and HIV positive persons) offices that I often used to visit, situated in the middle of a messy, lower middle-class neighbourhood.

When I entered the office, I could see a room converted into a small gym. There were a few heavy-duty exercise-machines, along with dumbbells, weights, and some other weight-lifting equipment. Later, I learnt that many of the clients/beneficiaries of the organisation were transmen and the gym was one of their major requirements/needs. Therefore, the organisation had decided to provide this service for a nominal fee, and the gym instructor himself was a trans man. Apparently, among this particular group, a muscular body with 'six packs' and a sense of strength/capability have become an essential part of trans men performativity.

In her analysis of how violence and valour shape Sri Lankan Tamil masculinities, De Silva (2014) argues that masculinity is tied to the body: attributes such as courage, violence, aggression, confidence, composure, and deference are inscribed upon the body and its demeanours. De Silva

---

[4]A local term used by a transgender community in Sri Lanka, born with male anatomy but perceived as women. They do not necessarily undergo hormone/surgical treatments.

(2014) further explores how taking up arms has become one of the highly performative practices of masculinity and how the associated aggression privileges it over others. Further, Randall and colleagues (1992) argue that bodybuilding offers men clear-cut mechanisms for asserting values traditionally associated with masculinity. Achieving an ideal male body requires "...a lifestyle centred on control and conducive to individualism, independence, domination and competition." (Randall et al., 1992 p. 63).

In the context of trans men, being qualified to be a man becomes a matter of how successful they are in terms of normative masculine performance, not only as a subject of the medical gaze, but also in their day to day lives, in society. Many have childhood memories of rejecting female clothing and demanding shorts and t-shirts from their parents, cutting their hair short and using hair gel and tightly binding their breasts with a piece of cloth, etc. Their childhood heroes included famous male figures of the cinema or television such as Vijaya Kumaratunge[5], Tarzan[6], or Knight Rider.[7] Therefore, the figure of an ideal (Western) male body plays an important role in the imagination of the bodies of contemporary Sri Lankan trans men.

---

[5] Vijaya Kumarathunga (1945-1988) was a popular Sinhala film actor and a singer who later became a politician. Kumaratunga (called Vijay by fans) was famous for his romantic male-hero characters in Sinhala cinema, but he had a wide fan base across the country. He was shot and killed in 1988.However, his songs are still sung by many other singers in popular media.

[6] Tarzan is an American television series that aired during the 90's in Sri Lanka. The series portrayed Tarzan as a well-educated character who had grown tired of civilisation and returned to the jungle where he had been raised. In the series, Tarzan wears a small under-garment made with leopard skin and the upper body remains naked.

[7] Knight Rider is an American action crime drama television series airedin Sri Lankain the 90's. The show stars David Hasselhoff as Michael Knight, a modern crime fighter assisted by an advanced, artificially intelligent, self-aware, indestructible car. The main character of Michael was popular among Sri Lankan viewers as the 'Knight Rider'.

Similarly, when talking about work, many have mentioned 'physical capability' as a qualification in getting work. During my discussions with them, their ability/inability to work became an observable reiteration. It was interesting to notice that every single person I had discussions with linked their work into the gender identity/performance in an inextricable manner.

> My first overseas job was in Malaysia. I worked as a labourer in a cable company. All of my co-workers were men. I had not changed my gender at that time; I was still a girl. But I *dressed like a boy* and therefore, they were not hesitant to recruit me, I think. Later when I applied for a hotel job in Sri Lanka as a room boy, they checked all my sports certificates. I have *played boxing* and the Manager was very fond of it(Interview with Sameera on January 20 2020, Kandy, emphasis mine).

> I was selected to the Sri Lanka Administrative Service. But I did not enrol. The reason was that I had to wear *Saree*[8] for work, which I hate doing. But the current job I do, does not require *Saree*; I can wear a shirt, a pair of trousers and male shoes (Interview with Maalinda, February 10, 2020, Colombo).

Both these examples illustrate the demand of the capitalist mode of production for the able, (preferably) masculine (often associated with strength and ability) body. Therefore, in a system where transgender bodies are stigmatised and continuously forced to become 'normal', whoever embraces a transgender identity must perform certain skills or have particular capacities in order to qualify as a 'worker' who is able to serve the economy of the country. On the one hand, the capitalist division of labour requires women to be kept out of waged labour (labelled as domestic labour) that produces surplus value facilitated by the corollary relation (Holstrom, 1981) between patriarchal family

---

[8]Atraditional dress worn by women in India and Sri Lanka.

structure the capitalist system. On the other hand, in neo-liberal economic policies, the individual citizen is granted a set of liberties and responsibilities and is assumed to be a self-regulating, enterprising, good citizen subject (DasGupta, 2014; Foucault, 2003; Richardson, 2005). Whenever the State can regulate the body (in this case, the ability to work hard and the regulation of women's attire in the government sector), it is done purposely to sustain the notion of a good citizen in the nationalist agenda. Therefore, to be a skilled labourer who works for the capitalist mode of production and the nation state, a person should not challenge the accepted gender norms; rather, they should 'perform well' in assigned gender roles. Therefore, I argue that the more transmen want to enter the labour force, the less they want to be visible as transgender individuals. Rather, they attempt to become 'capable' or 'productive' men by performing strength and ability.

Fixing Categories by the State

However, it is important to recognise the post-war, progressive attempts by the Sri Lankan state to recognise the category of transgender within either the international human rights obligatory framework and/or medical health systems.

The first example is the new Constitutional reform process which took place in 2016-2019 where gender identity was recognised as a basis of discrimination. In the aftermath of the change of government in 2015, a Public Representative Committee (PRC) was appointed by the Cabinet of Ministers to receive public representations on constitutional reform to support the constitutional reform process.[9] Several LGBTIQ rights activists made representations in different locations of the

---

[9] The new coalition government came to power in January 2015 with a mandate to abolish the executive presidency, reform the electoral system and make several other structural and political changes in Sri Lanka by introducing a new Constitution.

country.[10] The report of the PRC came out in May 2016, with a very progressive and a broad chapter of Fundamental Rights. It identified that citizens are discriminated against based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, and it made recommendations for equality and even the decriminalisation of same-sex acts. The equality clause included grounds such as "...race, religion, caste, marital status, maternity, age, language, mental or physical disability, pregnancy, civil status, widowhood, social origin, sexual orientation, or sexual and gender identities" (PRC, p. 95). Further, the right to marriage and privacy are guaranteed without any discrimination based on the same grounds (PRC, pp. 96-98). Most importantly, it has introduced a separate rights clause (Sec. 28) on LGBTIQ rights. The wording of the PRC places gender identity within the framework of the development/advocacy agendas of the global North that are derived from the language of the United Nations' human rights discourse.

It can be assumed that the PRC identifies this as a 'fairly new issue' due to the intense scrutiny brought by civil society organisations in post-war Sri Lanka. The Interim Report released by the government in 2017[11] is interestingly silent about the Fundamental Rights Chapter, leaving it for a later assessment. However, the National Human Rights Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Sri Lanka (2017-2021)[12] has fascinatingly included 'gender identity' as grounds for discrimination and included it in the equality action (Section 6.1). However, by placing it with other categories such as disability, race and place of birth, the Action Plan has presented the term gender identity as an abstract, essential category, while it was very careful to avoid the term sexual orientation.

---

[10]The author has been involved in making submissions to the PRC on behalf of LGBTIQ communities.

[11]http://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/Interim%20Report%20of%20the%20Steering%20Commmittee%20of%20the%20Constitutional%20Assembly%20of%20Sri%20Lanka_21%20September%202017.pdf

[12]https://www.stopchildcruelty.com/media/doc/1554788053.pdf

The second example is the other steps taken by the post-war Sri Lankan State, to facilitate the process of changing gender by issuing the relevant Circulars in 2016 (as discussed above) for the Ministry of Health and the Department of Registration of Persons. These circulars in fact facilitated citizens to place themselves in one of the normative gender binaries (i.e., male or female) by acquiring body conformity and gender-conforming names. Thus, a transgender person's political relationship to the nation is submerged in his/her recognition in the State bureaucracy, and citizenship in the nation is mediated by the authorities.

On the one hand, framing gender identity as a binary classification and purposefully 'ignoring' same-sex relationships are not random or unconscious acts of the State. They are persistently done in order to facilitate the notions of heteronormative, monogamous, gendered family structures that support the post-war, right-wing, nation-building project. On the other hand, offering a place to stand within a 'safer category' of gender (i.e., transgender as opposed to same-sex) has encouraged many transgender persons to step forward and be registered in the system. Therefore, placing gender identity in the safer terrain of the State makes transgender persons visible and observable, thereby making them easier to deal with. However, it is always emphasised that a 'good' transgender person can only claim his/her rights and 'proper' identity through a constant medical gaze. The childhood urges to wear male clothes and the desire to play cricket or boxing, hang out with male friends in the village, work in factories in jobs that require more physical strength and go to the gym have now become essential activities for transmen to qualify as 'real' men of the nation.

Nationalisms are contested systems of representation enacted through social institutions and legitimizing, or limiting, people's access to the rights and resources of the nation-state (McClintock, 1991). In order to facilitate this ideology, nationalisms are "...formed through a combination of marital and blood ties, ideal families consist of heterosexual couples that produce their own biological children." (Collins, 1998, p. 63). The State is organised not around a biological core, but a state-sanctioned, heterosexual marriage that confers legitimacy not

only on the family structure itself but on children born into it (Andersen, 1991). Therefore, assuming a fairly fixed sexual division of labour, in which the role of women is defined predominantly in the home and of men in the public sphere of work, the conventional model of the family often presupposes a separation of work and family. Described as a natural or biological relationship based on heterosexual attraction, this monolithic family type is articulated with governmental structures that are ideologically framed by heteronormativity/normative gender roles.

In order to get a citizen's benefits from the State, it becomes necessary to comply with its institutions, making them essential/fixed category, which in turn contributes to how they place themselves, understand their stances and navigate/negotiate their identities. Thus, the framing of gender identities and making contemporary Sri Lankan trans men' invisible' are steered by the post-war nationalist project of the Sri Lankan state.

Conclusion

This article strives to provide an insight into the everyday lives, realities, and expectations of several young transmen in Sri Lanka, who were on their journey of pursuing an 'ideal - complete life of a man', by changing their bodily organs and undergoing hormonal therapy. I discussed how the socially accepted, normative behaviours of gender contribute to negotiating their identities. At the same time, the masculinities demanded by capitalist forms of production in the new era also provide possible avenues for them to explore and understand their bodies while making them more 'invisible' among the labour force. Further, I have argued that the support provided by the post-war Sri Lankan state to move from one binary to another, is part of a 'long term project' of the nation state.

It is important to recognise how young transmen negotiate with the outside world by performing the desired male gender roles in situations with extreme prejudices. Further, the transmen who have

taken the lead to establish organisations to support and lobby for trans-rights are writing history by making themselves visible in the big picture. Therefore, it is important to highlight that while their lived realities are influenced by gendered notions, capitalism, and nationalism, it does not imply that they do not have any authority or agency in taking decisions about their lives. Rather, shaped by several overarching factors and juggling between visibility and invisibility, contemporary transmen in Sri Lanka portray their life stories in the complex canvas of post-war, neo-colonial Sri Lankan history.

Work Cited

Andersen, M. L. (1991). Feminism and the American Family Ideal. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 22(2) (Summer). 235-46

Ariyarathne, K. (2020). *Kājal Thevaru Dēsin Helana Belum: Nirprabhu Dēshapaalana Prakaashanayak Lesa Sri Lankāve Jōgi Netum* (Gaze of the Kajal Painted Eyes: Sri Lankan *Jōgi* Dance as a Subaltern Political Expression. *Patitha* Vol. 11. Vidarshana Publishers. Colombo. 13-37

Collins, P. H. (1998). It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race and Nation, *Hypatia,* Vol 13, No. 3. Border Crossings: Multicultural and Postcolonial Feminist Challenges to Philosophy (Pat 2) (Summer 1998). 62-82

Connell, R. (2012). Transsexual women and feminist thought: Toward new understanding and new politics. *Signs.* 37, 857–881

Cromwell, J. (2006). Queering the Binaries: TranssituatedIdentitites, Bodies and Sexualities in Stryker, Susan& Whittle, Stephen (eds). *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Routledge. New York

Butler, J. and Salih, S. (eds.). (2004). *The Judith Butler Reader,* Blackwell Publishing, USA, UK & Australia

DasGupta, D. (2014). Cartographies of Friendship, Desire and Home: Notes on Surviving Neo Liberal Security Regimes. *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 34, No:4

de Silva, J. (2014). Valour, Violence and Ethics of Struggle: Constructing Militant Masculinities in Sri Lanka, *South Asian History and Culture.* Vol. 05, Issue 4, 438-456

Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Sheridan. Vintage Books. New York

Foucault, M. (2003). *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at The College de France, 1975-1976.* Picador Publishing. New York

Gopintah, G. (2005). *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Culture.* Duke University Press. Durham and London

Gottzén, L. and Straube, W. (2016). Trans masculinities. *NORMA*. 11:4. 217-224

Green, J. (2006). Look! No Don't! The Visibility Dilemma for Transsexual Men in in Stryker, Susan & Whittle, Stephen (eds). *The Transgender Studies Reader*. Routledge. New York

Hines, S. (2007). '(Trans)forming gender: social change and transgender citizenship'. *Sociological Research Online* 12(1), 12(1). http://www.socresonline.org.uk/12/1/

Hines/ html. (Accessed on 10 October 2017)

Hines, S. and Sanger, T. (eds). (2010). *Transgender Identities*. Taylor & Francis. New York

Kuru-Uthumpala, J. (2014). Butching it up: an analysis of same sex female masculinity in Sri Lanka. *Culture, Health and Sexuality, An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care,* 15(2). 153-165

Malalgama, A. S. (2017). The Shifting Landscape of Gender Identity and Situation in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Sexual Health and HIV Medicine*. 3, 45–50

McClintock, A. (1991). No Longer in a Future Heaven: Women and Nationalism in South Africa, *Transition*. No. 51, 104-123

Menon, N. (2012). *Seeing Like a Feminist*, Penguin Books, UK

Miller, J. & Nicols, A. (2012). Identity, Sexuality and Commercial Sex among Sri Lankan Nachchi*, Sexualities.* 15(5/6) 554-569

Nichols A. (2010). Dance Ponnaya Dance. *Feminist Criminology*. SAGE, 5(2). 195-222

Randall, A., Hall, S. & Rogers, M. (1992). Masculinity on Stage: Competitive Male Bodybuilders. *Studies in Popular Culture*. Vol. 14, No. 2, 57-69

Ranketh, T. (2019). Speech delivered at the KSM Annual Academic Sessions 2019 IN Kandy Sri Lanka https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ijbb1CazkgQ

Richardson, D. (2000). Constructing sexual citizenship: theorizing sexual rights, *Critical Social Policy*. 20(1): 105–135

Richardson, D. (2005). Desiring Sameness? The Rise of Neoliberal Politics of Normalization. *Antipode: A Journal of Radical Geography.* Vol 37, issue 3: 515-535

Samaraweera, U. (2015). *Unseen Lives – Making Transgender Lives Visible: Dominant Social Perspectives of the Transgender Community in Urban Sri Lanka*. [paper presentation]. Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, International Research Conference, http://archive.cmb.ac.lk:8080/research/bitstream/70130/4307/1/23%20Page.pdf

Stychin, C. (1998). *A Nation By Rights: National Cultures, Sexual Identity Politics and the Discourse of Rights.* Temple University Press. Philadelphia

Tudor, A. (2017). Dimensions of Transnationalism. *Feminist Review*. 117 (1), 20-40

Vidal-Ortiz, S. (2002). Queering sexuality and doing gender: Transgender men's identification with gender and sexuality. In P. Gagné& R. Tewksbury (Eds.), *Gendered sexualities*. Bingley: Emerald. 181–233

Wijewardene, S. (2007). But no one has explained to me who I am now ...": "Trans" Self-Perceptions in Sri Lanka, Wieringa et al (eds). *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a Globalizing Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan. New York. 101-116

_____ (2008). Missing Niche Audiences and Underground Views on Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sri Lanka in Coomaraswamy, R. & Perera-Rajasingham, N. (eds). *Constellations of Violence: Feminist Interventions in South Asia*. Women Unlimited. New Delhi

Other documents cited

Circular Number 01-34-2016 issued by the Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka

Circular Number 06-2016 issued by the Department of Registration of Persons, Sri Lanka

Draft Bill of Constitution prepared by the Panel of Experts, 2019

National Human Rights Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Sri Lanka (2017-2012)

Görünmek ya da Görünmemek? Sri Lanka'da Trans Erkekler Arasında Tanınma Paradoksu

Öz: Bu makale "Günümüz Sri Lanka'sında Transgender Kimlikler" başlıklı daha kapsamlı bir çalışmanın bir parçasını oluşturmaktadır. Bu makale, toplumsal cinsiyet, bedensellik, toplumsal ilişkiler ve kimlikleri analiz etmek ve anlamlandırmak amacıyla, günümüz Sri Lanka'sında trans erkeklerin gündelik yaşam deneyimleri temelinde bir çerçeve tanımlama denemesinde bulunmaktadır. Makale toplumsal kabul gören normatif cinsiyet davranışlarının trans

erkeklerin kimliklerini müzakere etmelerinde hangi şekilde pay sahibi olduğunu tartışmaktadır. Aynı zamanda modern dünyada kapitalist üretim biçimlerinin gerektirdiği erkeklikler de trans erkeklere bedenlerini keşfetmek ve anlamak için olası mecralar sunmaktadır. Makale ayrıca savaş sonrası Sri Lanka devleti tarafından kişiye bir ikili cinsiyetten diğerine geçmesi için sağlanan desteğin uzun erimli ulus-devlet projesinin bir parçası olduğunu savunmaktadır. Sri Lanka'da devlet ve sivil toplum trans erkekleri bir toplumsal cinsiyet "kategorisi" olarak tanımlayarak onların gündelik hayatını (yanlış) temsil etmekte, homojen hale getirmekte ve depolitize etmektedir. Bu nedenle, her ne kadar kimlikleri ulusal ve neoliberal söylemler tarafından empoze edilse de, bunlar devamlı olarak, tanınma, görünürlük ve görünmezlik paradoksu üzerinden, hikayelendirilmekte, meydan okumaya tabi tutulmakta ve yeniden müzakere edilmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplumsal cinsiyet, Trans erkekler, Sri Lanka, Erkeklikler

RESEARCH-in-PROGRESS

A Comparative Criticism of Hegemonic Masculinities in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* and *Ağır Roman*

Süleyman Bölükbaş*
Sabanci University, Turkey

Zeynep Özgül **
Beykoz University, Turkey

Abstract: This paper examines two existing examples of hegemonic masculinity in texts that are productions of different contexts: Colombian and Turkish. Although the two countries seem to be separate and contrasting, the *machismo* culture in Márquez and Kaçan's portrayal of *kabadayı* images have a practice of hegemonic masculinity in common. In both texts, the notion of hegemonic masculinity strictly demands male characters to present their masculinities to dominate both women and other men. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by Márquez, the reader comes across a culture that attains men a certain role, requiring them to have control over women and men around them to uphold their honorable status. The obsession with the notion of "honor" only strengthens the hypocrisy between the sexual freedom of men and women. In *Ağır Roman* by Metin Kaçan, men embrace this role in the *varoş* culture. *Kabadayı* figures shows this masculinity performance. This masculinity emerges as strictly heterosexual and it is fragile construction, requiring constant demonstrations. When a man displays weakness, others challenge his masculinity. Characters gain their status with dominance over others to create their reputation and honor, and their hegemonic masculinity. Since the masculinity is heavily significant for those men's lives, it damages both men and women. Through this analysis, this paper criticizes the struggle hegemonic masculinity forces on men and women.

Keywords: Hegemonic masculinity, machismo, kabadayı, honor, comparative literature

* Sabanci University, The Foundations Development Program
e-mail: suleymanb@alumni.sabanciuniv.edu ORCID ID: 0000-0001-6721-9048
** Beykoz University, School of Foreign Languages, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4415-8523

Masculinities are possible to observe and analyze in different ways in accordance with the cultural context in which they are constructed. As parts of the very fabric of society, such gender performances shape people's behaviors as they create the patterns by which people lead their lives. In that sense, Metin Kaçan in *Ağır Roman* and Gabriel Garcia Márquez in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* present the performance of hegemonic masculinity along with plain descriptions of Turkish and Columbian cultures respectively. It is possible to observe the performance of *kabadayı*, which is roughneck in Kaçan's novel, and that of *machismo* in Márquez's novella. Both of the authors present this hegemonic masculinity through acts of honor. These masculinities have similarities with the concept of hegemonic masculinity. This paper, then, analyzes the concept of hegemonic masculinity and how it oppresses men and women both as its victims and participants in the works of the two authors. While the concept of masculinities and its studies have recently been extended to non-Western identities and cultures, as it can be seen in the studies by scholars such as R. Connell, Harry Broad, and Michael Kaufman, it would not be unfair to state that hegemonic masculinity has mainly been studied through the Western perspective. Therefore, drawing on feminist methodology and critical masculinity studies, this study aims to examine how the hegemonic masculinity presents itself in different cultural and social atmospheres, yet how it similarly oppresses people's lives. In *Ağır Roman*, the hegemonic masculinity practice forces Gıli Gıli Salih, the protagonist, into a constant struggle to prove his masculinity and honor through dominance, which leads to his death in the end. Similarly, in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, the characters of Bayardo San Roman and the Vicario brothers are built through the understanding of a similar hegemonic masculinity that constantly forces men to prove their "manhood" and therefore worthiness. In both texts, demonstration of hegemonic masculinity and its performance, despite operating through different cultural contexts, are through the creation of terms such as reputation and "honor."

> ...Gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency
> from which various acts proceed; rather it is an identity

> tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted
> through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is
> instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence,
> must be understood as the mundane way, in which bodily
> gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds
> constitute an illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler,
> 1988, p. 519)

This is how Judith Butler defines gender; not as a rigid, permanently
constructed identity, but more of a fluid one that is shaped through the
performance or practice of the individual. In other words, gender is
learned through practice and imitation. Consequently, gender and
gender performances are defined as social constructions that require
people to behave in certain mannerisms and ways. Moreover, those
behaviors and mannerisms are not ahistorical and stable. Instead, they
are structured within the dynamics of social norms, and people do learn
to acquire and perform these requirements of gender as a social
construction. Masculinity, as a set of gender behaviors and mannerisms,
is consequently no different in terms of imitation and performativity. In
fact, considering the effect of social dynamics on gender performances,
masculinity is multiplied as masculinities, since social dynamics are
affected by such issues as class, race, and ethnicity and so on. Therefore,
each social and cultural context creates its own masculinity type, which
means there is not singular and universal masculinity but masculinities.
In their introduction to *Theorizing Masculinities,* Harry Brod and Michael
Kaufman also underlines the varied number of masculinities: "…We wish
to emphasize the plurality and diversity of men's experiences, attitudes,
beliefs, situations, practices, and institutions, along lines of race, class,
sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, age, region, physical appearance,
able-bodiedness, mental ability, and various other categories with which
we describe our lives and experiences" (Brod and Kaufman, 1994, pp. 4-
5). Accordingly, men and masculinities could be observed in different
forms as a man's experiences within his social atmosphere forge and
shape his construction of his own masculinity. From a man's age to his
educational background, his social and economic class to religious and

cultural values, a variety of outsider social factors have a great deal of influence on a man's experience and the way he performs his masculinity. Consequently, there is not a singular type of masculinity to cover all men, but there are various masculinities, which could be used to address men's differing experiences. This is also acknowledged by Uğur Uçkıran in his thesis on masculinities in Turkish Literature: "...It can be said that masculinity is a phenomenon that takes shape with the influence of many changes and manifests itself in various ways in various conditions that cannot be fit into a universal pattern. It changes with the effect of time, place, social status and many similar factors in manhood, and it is understood and lived differently under all these different conditions" (Uçkıran, 2019, p. 21).[1] Similar to the statement by Brod and Kaufman, Uçkukıran acknowledges the plurality of masculinities. Becoming an umbrella term, masculinity refers to different types of experiences and behaviors that might demonstrate differences under various conditions. However, differences between masculinities and the patterns of their demonstration does not necessarily indicate that they cannot be studied and analyzed through a collective perspective. The differences in patterns might cause similar results for men due to their (or possibly lack of) masculinities. In that sense, as suggested by Atilla Barutçu, an intersectional feminist approach to analysis of masculinities is a functional method to critically examine masculinities in different cultures and contexts. Indicating that men are positioned in a hierarchy not only as opposed to women, but also within themselves, he says that "the critical masculinity studies... points out the intersectionality with the analysis it conducts on different masculinity positions" (Barutçu, 2020, p.157).[2] Such an intersectional function becomes valuable and

---

[1] Translated by the authors. The original text is as follows: "Özetle denilebilir ki erkeklik birçok değişkenin tesiriyle şekil alan, evrensel bir kalıba sığdırılamayacak türlü koşullarda kendisini türlü şekillerde dışavuran bir olgudur. Erkeklik içerisinde bulunan zamanın, mekanın, sosyal statünün ve benzeri bir çok unsurun etkisiyle değişmekte, tüm bu değişik koşullar altında farklı şekilde anlaşılmakta ve yaşanmaktadır".

[2] Translated by the authors. Original text as it follows: "...Erkeklik çalışmaları... farklı erkeklik konumları üzerinden yaptığı analizlerle kesişimselliği vurgular".

useful to study masculinities from different contexts together. It is because with this approach, each type of masculinity could be critically examined on its own, while it could also be compared to other types of masculinities to challenge and criticize dominant patriarchal norms and how they operate oppression on women, men and all participants of such systems. Therefore, it allows to examine how the concept of hegemonic masculinity is at work in Turkish and Latin American cultures and how it puts oppression on men and women, especially through the problematic idea of "honor." For the characters of both texts, honor is closely related to the demonstration of their masculinities, as well as its validation. After all, honor is an inseparable part of the residents of Sucre, the Colombian village where *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* takes place, and those of suburban Istanbul, the setting of *Ağır Roman.* Yet, it is not only specific to these places, or even to Colombia or Turkey. The idea of honor was and is considered to be integrated into the Latin American and Middle Eastern cultures: "Honour is at the apex of the pyramid of temporal social values and it conditions their hierarchical order. Cutting across all other social classifications it divides social beings into two fundamental categories, those endowed with honour and those deprived of it" (Peristiany, 1966, p. 10). The one deprived of their honor, although they might be so physically, can no longer be a part of the society in a mental sense. Thus, the integration of terms such as honor becomes the moving force for the men in the society. This can be clearly observed in Marquez's novella, where two brothers, Pedro and Pablo Vicario, decide to murder a man called Santiago Nasar to "uphold" their reputation and to prove their worth, because they believe him to be the taker of their sister's virginity and therefore "purity." For them, the only way to clear their family's name and avenge their sister is through murder, which only proves further the strong hold of the idea of honor within the society. Similarly, in *Ağır Roman*, Salih's journey, as the protagonist of the novel, from a young and innocent guy to a tough roughneck, narrates his attempts to gain and protect his honor by engaging in different power relations to prove his toughness and maleness, such as Salih's attempt to regain his honor by punishing Tina

and his acts of bravery against other roughneck images in his area to maintain his honor.

Marquez's 1981 novella *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* could be said to offer an imperfectly perfect portrayal of this society of male hegemony. The plot revolves around the turmoil that arises after a young woman called Angela Vicario who, newly married, is brought back to her parents' house after her husband discovers that she is not a virgin. Her brothers, guided by the pressure of the male hegemony in the Columbian society to "save" their family's honor, go after Santiago Nasar, whom they believe to be the taker of their sister's virginity, in order to kill him and "clean" their names.

The implication of gender roles and the discrimination it creates in the society, therefore, becomes apparent: while women are seen to defame one's family, men are seen the only ones capable of cleaning it. Moreover, the fact that the roles of men and women are predestined does not help: "The brothers were brought up to be men. The girls had been reared to get married." (Marquez, 200, p. 30). Thus, in a society that degrades women to be seen solely as marriage material—to be a good wife and a good mother—it comes as no surprise that male hegemony is revered and performed to a great extent, even so that women in the society believe it is in their best interest to follow this system that disparages women. It is perhaps best seen in the words of Angela Vicario's own mother when she is talking about her daughters: "[S]he thought there were no better-reared daughters. 'They're perfect,' she was frequently heard to say. 'Any man will be happy with them because they've been raised to suffer.'" (Marquez, 2007, p. 31). As it is observed, male hegemony not only creates a society that makes the women suffer, but it also makes women regard this as "normal" and acceptable as if it bears a positive connotation. Here, hegemony becomes not a tangible force, as in domestic violence, but more of an abstract notion that elevates men above women, conclusively rendering them superior. As Connell states, "Hegemony did not mean violence, although it could be supported by force; it meant ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion." (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 837).

Instances of hegemonic masculinity in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* are more abstract than concrete. This is demonstrated through a murder committed at the end of the novella, a murder that is fostered by this hegemony and ultimately leads to the demise of Santiago Nasar. In the end, this superiority over women is won through the accustomed, intangible rules of Colombian culture and the society these women live in, which shaped most women in the sense that they are content in the situation they were in. While women like Angela, her sisters, and her mother are seen as the carriers of "purity" and "honor," her brothers Pablo and Pedro, like other men, were raised in this culture of *machismo* to act like a man, that the moment they learn their sister was not a virgin, they do not hesitate even for a moment to go after Santiago to kill him.: "'We killed him openly,' Pedro Vicario said, 'but we're innocent.' 'Perhaps before God,' said Father Amador. 'Before God and before men,' Pablo Vicario said. 'It was a matter of honor.'" (Marquez, 2007, p. 49). This pressure to prove one's manliness is not only pushed by men, but also women. Pablo's fiancée, Prudencia, herself openly mentions that she would not have married him if he did not kill Santiago to gain their family's honor back: "While they were drinking their coffee, Prudencia Cotes came into the kitchen in all her adolescent bloom, carrying a roll of old newspapers to revive the fire in the stove. 'I knew what they were up to,' she told me, "and I didn't only agree, I never would have married him if he hadn't done what a man should do.'" (Marquez, 2007, p. 63). Just like that "what a man should do'' becomes almost a concrete rule, accepted by all members of the society, and while the burden falls on the shoulders of men, it affects all in the long run. It might also be helpful to look further into the idea of *machismo* to be able to comprehend the oppression behind masculinity within the novella:

> Two principal characteristics appear in the study of machismo. The first is aggressiveness. Each macho must show that he is masculine, strong, and physically powerful. Differences, verbal or physical abuse, or challenges must be met with fists or other weapons. The true macho shouldn't be afraid of anything, and he should be capable of drinking

great quantities of liquor without necessarily getting drunk.
(Ingoldsby, 1991, p. 57)

Analyzing the definition of a *macho* above, it is can be inferred that the majority of Marquez's male characters in the novella do, in fact, suffer from machismo. Most clearly there are Pedro and Pablo Vicario, the brothers who constantly try to justify their masculinity and male power by "avenging" their sister. Their biggest challenge in the book, the "dishonoring" of their sister is met by more than fists. The "other weapons" brought into the challenge are knives with which they eventually murder Santiago Nasar. The constant need to prove that they are fearless, not even afraid of going to jail as a result of what they plan to do, certainly drives their intention of murder so as to follow what they believe to be a must. There is a constant mention of how often they drink and how well they can hold their liquor, another characteristic of a macho: "Although they [the Vicario brothers] hadn't stopped drinking since the eve of the wedding, they weren't drunk at the end of three days [...]" (Marquez, 2007, p. 14). Although there are other characters in the novel carrying the characteristics of machismo, the Vicario brothers can be said to be the epitomes of the term.

Another indication of such male hegemony and seemingly commonly accepted masculinity can be observed in the case of Bayardo San Roman, Angela's fiancé, and later husband. He is described as a wealthy man who does not abstain from demonstrating his physical and material power, and is admired by almost all the women except Angela. Upon his arrival to the town to marry a woman, he sees Angela and decides to marry her, without questioning once whether she would want to marry him or not. Of course, as a result of male hegemony, Angela is more or less "given" to him, even though she makes it apparent that she is unwilling to marry him. This burden of honor that remains hanging on men's shoulder does not miss him, at their wedding night, he takes Angela back to her parents' house, and intentionally refrains from coming with a car so that his tarnished "honor" is witnessed by fewer people: "Bayardo San Roman had taken her to her parents' house on foot so that the noise of the motor wouldn't betray his misfortune in advance,

and he was back there alone and with the lights out in the widower Xius's happy farmhouse." (Marquez, 2007, pp. 67-68). Bayardo San Roman actually fits impeccably into the typical Latin American male character: "Looking, [...], at the caudillo, or dictator, novels produced in Latin America since the nineteenth century, we see a preponderance of textual constructions of gender that stress the role of male virility, stylized corporal aesthetics, and an epistemological focus on logic and science as parts that construct a masculine whole." (Venkatesh, 2015, p. 6). Roman, considered to be extremely good-looking and masculine by especially the women in the book, is the embodiment of male virility. Apart from his physical strength, he also gives the impression of possessing a strong sex drive. Ironically, the story itself, as well as Roman's life, seem to revolve around sex. He returns Angela to her parents' house as she is no longer "pure" for having sex before him, rendering their marriage "unfortunate" (Marquez, 2007, p. 27) and becoming caught in the illusion that his life is ruined. In fact, Bayardo San Roman is considered to be such an epitome of masculinity and virility that Angela does not really want to marry him at the beginning, stating her reason as Roman's being "too much of a man.": "It was Angela Vicario who didn't want to marry him. 'He seemed too much of a man for me,' she told me." (Marquez, 2007, p. 33-34). Like other men of his culture, what happens to Bayardo is probably seen as the worst thing that could happen to a man of his society. Brought up with the notion of his dominance over women, it can be seen that he is disillusioned with the fact that her choice of a bride is the cause of his greatest misery that breaks down the life he had been building so far: "Bayardo San Roman, for his part, must have got married with the illusion of buying happiness with the huge weight of his power and fortune, for the more the plans for the festival grew, the more delirious ideas occurred to him to make it even larger." (Marquez, 2007, p. 38). While the duty to kill Santiago falls on Angela's brothers, Bayardo, as well, takes his own share of the destructive consequences of male hegemony as he is unable to free himself from the consequences of his disrupted marriage, and his illusion of an honorable family and a "pure" wife is destroyed for good. Perhaps

it could be even said that while the Vicario brothers had an objective, a duty to save their names, the fact that this culture offered none for Bayardo—no matter how disruptive it is—makes him the most damaged as a result of this hegemonic culture. "He was aware of the prudish disposition of his world, and he must have understood that the twins' simple nature was incapable of resisting an insult. No one knew Bayardo San Roman very well, but Santiago Nasar knew him well enough to know that underneath his worldly airs he was as subject as anyone else to his native prejudices." (Marquez, 2007, p. 102). So, while society and culture revere male hegemony, the pressure of masculinity it forces onto the individuals affects and disrupts the lives of men the most. In the end, none of the characters can be set aside or stay outside of these "native prejudices" that remain whether one fulfills their duty or not. Moreover, it is not only a question of society itself, but of a more specific one with its own culture and set of rules. Márquez's depiction of the realities of the Colombian society is almost impeccable, yet it can also be said that this hegemony of maleness and masculinity spans borders and is more or less the case in most countries in Latin America. Being a writer of the Latin American Boom, a literary period in which Latin American authors began to gain acclamation around Europe and other parts of the world, one could perhaps say *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* was only one of the many realist works of Márquez through which the rest of the world become acquainted with the specific patriarchy widespread in Latin America at the same, which continue to be prevalent today:

> The period in which Gabriel Garcia Marquez began to write was an important one for Hispanic American literature. Up to 1950, literature of the continent was characterized by three specific features: the realist-modernist duality, super-regionalism and the striving towards universalization. The realist-modernist trend continued up to 1910-the year of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Mexico. This event reverberated in the consciousness of Latin American writers. Their ability to perceive and depict the reality, which the modernists tried to black out, made the need for

> realist writing imperative. However, literary realism in the
> Latin American context meant portrayal of peculiar
> problems and conflicts of the region, which accounts for the
> incorporation of the qualifying term "regionalism". The
> writers groped for an understanding of the American
> situation, searching for the causes of economic
> backwardness and the misery of their people. This led to
> over-emphasizing the antagonism between civilization and
> barbarism in their works. Nature versus civilization
> became the focal point in fiction writing. Social problems
> continued to find an echo but nature was depicted as an all-
> powerful (Doria Barbara) force in their writings. (Maurya,
> 1983, p. 53)

This "antagonism between civilization and barbarism" could be
exemplified with the established idea of "honor" within the society. Not
much says "barbarism" as two brothers killing a man because they
believe him to be the taker of their sister's virginity, as well as seeing this
as their duty beyond doubt. Clashing with the idea of "civilization,"
Márquez's novella follows the path of his contemporaries, setting "the
American situation" forth. If one is talking about a clash between
"nature" and "civilization," then nature and barbarism has to be
synonyms here, implying that it is within the human beings' nature to be
violent and barbaric. This leads to another question, as until now we
have been discussing the idea of honor as a product of culture, rather
than natural. Perhaps it can be said that even though human nature
might possess a tendency to violence and barbarism, cultural
constructions as honor and "cleaning" one's name only add up to this
barbarism, and justifying it at the same time.

As for *Ağır Roman* by Metin Kaçan, the setting is predominantly a
varoş culture. Noting the illegality and poverty in it, Cenk Özbay states
that "varoş was constructed as space where fundamental Islamism,
Kurdish separatism, illegality, criminality, and violence met...
Accordingly, the 'dangerous' varoş quarters of the city housed beggars,
terrorists, gangsters, smugglers, and other components of the informal

economy..." (Özbay, 2010, p. 649). And the Cholera Street in the novel perfectly fits in this definition as it bears characters like Gaftici Fethi, whose nickname "gaftici" means burglar and pickpocket. And we also observe "*bitirims*" who are murderers, hashish addicts, men who kidnap children and cut their fingers to make them beggars and "psychos" (Kaçan, 2017, p. 65). Therefore the Cholera Street could be defined as varoş. For, it is a neighborhood that is in low conditions and poverty and is full of criminality and illegality at the same time. This is also suggested by the writing style of the author, who uses lots of slang throughout the narration, which could be interpreted as the sign of varoş. The significance of the setting for the narration is acknowledged by Leyla Burcu Dündar, as well. She states about Kaçan that "He brought the experience of a life lived fully in the streets of Istanbul, with all its insolence, bitterness, and sensuality, into his first novel, *Agir Roman*" (Dündar, 2014, p. 130). In his novel, therefore, Kaçan portrays a lifestyle which is experienced in extreme ways, and this type of setting allows for the presence of hegemonic masculinity. For hegemonic masculinity is supported through acts of bitterness and insolence among men towards both women and themselves. We get to observe men who are willing to push the limits of mercy and violence to prove their manhood. Additionally, "*bitirim*" is a type of masculinity that exists in varoş culture, which means cunning or clever in Turkish slang. Furthermore, *bitirim* is the hegemonic masculinity of the varoş culture in the novel. R. W. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as "a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organization of private life and cultural processes" (qtd. in Hinrichsen, 2012, p. 57). Making use of Connell's concept, Hinrichsen further states that "thus, hegemonic masculinity is a relative theory that defines manhood by the male's relationship with women and other subordinate males. According to Connell's theory, the most masculine men exert unyielding dominance over females and other weaker males" (Hinrichsen, 2012, p. 57). Consequently, the problem with masculinity is that the ideal masculinity's requirement includes more than just acquiring the demanded aspects of the masculinity codes. The moment a

man manages to acquire masculine image, the second part unfolds, which requires him to compete with other fellow masculine men. Thus, men have rivalry among themselves in order to achieve the most masculine statues, which will provide them with the utmost supremacy over both males and females. Therefore, the hegemonic masculinity is exclusively heterosexual, which makes it a competition between heterosexual men who try to dominate each other as well as women.

Similar to Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, Atilla Baruçtu provides a parallel pattern for hegemonic masculinity performance in Turkey. Underlying that hegemonic masculinity does possess a superiority and dominance over people in Turkey, Barutçu explains that men that "are from middle or upper-middle class, generally accepted sect and Muslim, heterosexual, have a full-time job, as well as, physical strength, are able to protect the honor of women around them and their homeland along with marriage and fatherhood, gain superiority over those who do not possess these characteristics, by which they construct themselves" (Barutçu, 2013, 14).[3] Even though the requirements of marriage and fatherhood are highlighted by Barutçu to achieve the status of hegemony in Turkish masculinities, they are not always observable in every case of masculinity performance. Instead, they are instrumental to underline another significant characteristic of this hegemonic masculinity: the compulsory heterosexuality. Marriage and becoming a father are legal proofs that a man is eligible to sexually dominate a woman and could sustain his masculinity. Thus, such aspects of masculinity performance are functions for a man to demonstrate his heterosexuality along with dominance and power. Accordingly, then, hegemonic masculinity could present itself with different tools to demonstrate the dominant male figure in different contexts, where equivalences of marriage and fatherhood for heterosexuality enable men

109

---

[3] Translated by the authors. Original text is as follows: "Orta veya üst orta sinif, Müslüman, genel kabule uygun mezhepten, heteroseksüel, tam zamanli bir ise sahip, fiziksel, ruhsal ve cinsel gücü yerinde, vataninin ve çevresindeki kadinlarin namusunu koruyabilen, evli ve baba olmus her erkek, bu özellikleri tasimayan grup üzerinden üstünlüklerini saglamakta ve kendilerini bu sekilde var etmektedirler".

to perform their manhood. In his another study on masculinities, Atilla Barutçu again explains that "[w]hile masculinity refers to an endless construction that is shaped by cultural, social, historical political effects, it is undeniably mistake to assume that men will develop almost identical masculinities in this process of construction" (Barutçu, 2020, 171).[4] To clarify, masculinities do present themselves in different ways in accordance with the social and cultural atmosphere in which they are created. Barutçu's method of understanding masculinities helps understanding the emergence of hegemonic masculinity, as well. If masculinities differ from one culture to another, so does the hegemonic masculinity. While the hegemonic masculinity definitely requires power, dominance and heterosexuality, the way men gain these treats might differ. However, these different patterns of acquiring masculinity could still suggest that men have to compete among one another in addition to their constant obligation to prove their dominance over women. Barutçu's definition of hegemonic masculinity and his explanation on how masculinities are varied are functional to analyze the hegemonic masculinity process and its effects on Salih in *Ağır Roman.* It is because this is what Salih experiences in the narration even after he has entered the spectrum of hegemonic masculinity. Salih, who is outside of this hegemonic masculinity at the beginning of the narration, goes through an enormous change both in his appearance and behavior. While he used to be oppressed by his father constantly, he starts hanging out with murderers and kidnappers. In other words, he aims to become the oppressor as the narrator declares that "he was aiming for the biggest cruelty" (2017, p. 64). However, to have a place among them and to demonstrate his hegemony, he has to prove it regularly: "Gıli Gıli Salih was posing doggishly for the "*bitirim*" in Orso's coffeehouse to prove that he has been forged in this world for years…Gıli Gıli Salih, with his kind kidnapper friends, began to go to work to prove himself and to commit

---

[4]Translated by the authors. Original text is as follows: "Erkeklik; kültürel, toplumsal, tarihsel, politik vs. etkilerle şekillenen ve sonu gelmeyen bir inşaaya işaret ederken, erkeklerin bu inşa sürecinde birbirinin aynısı erkekliklere sahip olabileceğini düşünmek şüphesiz ki bir yanılgıdır".

every kind of crime with them" (Kaçan, 2017, p. 64). His criminal behavior, a result of his need to demonstrate a satisfactory level of machismo in front of others, is functional to create an image of hegemonic masculinity that would not submit to the hegemony of his peers. It is when he gains himself a status as a *bitirim* as he becomes the roughneck, he gains honor and every interaction with others sustains his image and honor. The other way for him to prove and protect his hegemony is bravery. Now that he has this honor as the hegemonic man, he is constantly challenged by other figures that challenge Salih's status as roughneck. And this honor is predominantly provided by an act of bravery. Two incidents suggest how bravery helps the construction of the honorable image of a *bitirim*. One is the scene where Salih is attacked by drunk men in the street. Salih's reaction is most significant here through taking of switchblade handed down by Arap Sado, who a former hegemonic masculine figure, proclaiming "I will write down my name on the heart of the one who makes any tiny movement" (Kaçan, 2017, p. 65). The word "heart" is important here because it symbolizes bravery. Thus, when those men threaten his hegemony as they dare attacking him, he threatens their bravery, which sustains both his honor and hegemony. The second incident, meanwhile, reinforces this hegemonic status he has recently gained. When there is an explosion at Fil Hamit's workplace, Tilki Orhan and Gaftici Fethi are trapped inside as fire engulfs the building. With no one able to enter the building, Salih valiantly ran through the flames to rescue the men trapped inside. And this act of bravery is favored by the other hegemonic men in Cholera Street, who announce in Turkish slang that "well done, he is a real man" (Kaçan, 2017, p. 68). Thus, with these heroic actions, Gıli Gıli Salih manages to protect his status as the *bitirim*.

The final way for him to sustain his hegemonic and honorable image is the dominance over a female figure, a prostitute named Tina. While his acts of both crime and bravery show his dominance over other men, his dominance over Tina also contributes to this image. After the incident at Fil Hamit's workplace, he develops a romantic and erotic attachment to Tina. After that, Tina becomes the female figure for him to

protect and also dominate, which will verify his hegemony. When he rejoins the fellow *bitirim*s after leaving Tina's house, where she took care of him after he had saved the two men from burning, Salih demonstrates his dominance over her right away: "when one of the *bitirims* said 'I am sure you ate the whore out', Salih brought the rascal, speaking nonsense, down on the ground with a single blow". Here he clearly states that whoever talks about Tina like this, he will make him pay for it (Kaçan, 2017, p. 69). First of all, the *bitirim* that is talking about Tina is called "rascal" here, which suggests he does something wrong to Salih. In other words, Tina is now under Salih's dominance, and such talk challenges this dominance. Salih's punch and response afterwards are meant to sustain his honor as he simply punished the guy talking badly about "his woman" as well as demonstrating his dominance. When he forbids Tina from working, it strengthens his dominance over her as now it is only Salih that can have sex with Tina.

Even though Salih successfully manage to dominate both men and women around him, the problem with hegemonic masculinity is that it requires constant reinforcement and gets challenged occasionally due to the fragile grounds on which it is built. The challenge he faces could be observed in two ways: his killing of the Cholera Monster and Tina's betrayal. After a series of murders on Cholera Street, Salih loses much of the trust he has gained from others and therefore he designs a plan to kill this monster in order to regain his honor as the narrator says "Just like all smart *bitirims*, he lived only for his name" (Kaçan, 2017, p. 101). When he manages to capture and kill the monster, he also overcomes this challenge. But, a second challenge emerges when Tina cheats on him with someone else, which is revealed to him by a fellow *bitirim*. Salih takes his revenge by catching them during sex and making them run into the street naked. I argue that he does this to protect his honor or his "name". Tina's affair with another man had destroyed the dominance Salih had over her. Thus, he took his revenge on them to preserve his honor before other people, which appears to work as the narrator states after the incident that "Gıli walks through the gazes full of the love of street people and neighbors to the *bitirim* place" (Kaçan, 2017, p. 120).

The way other people react to his act of revenge indicates he still maintains his respectable image among them after this challenge to his masculinity. However, the seemingly never-ending challenges to his manhood and acts of bravery and honor obviously exhaust Salih towards the end of the novel as he also loses the respect and honor he has gained from others. While he is walking on the streets after taking so many drugs, those who see him say "I would not live for another minute, if I were him" (Kaçan, 2017, p. 124), which shows he has lost his honorable image. Consequently, he commits suicide after facing the fact that his days of glory have long faded away. In other words, the strict codes of hegemonic masculinity have torn him apart until his death as he tries so hard to satisfy them until he is worn out and becomes a failure. Consequently, Salih contributes to this masculinity system on purpose. And when all is said and done, this masculinity, which he created, becomes the cause of his death. Recognizing Salih's own participation in this situation, Dündar again explains that "[i]n the course of time, Salih's manly demeanor impresses everyone, including Tina...Salih accepts his role as the guardian of law and order of Kolera, but his sovereignty is temporary. In truth, his end has already been prepared from the beginning as his world, starting with his family, crumbles around him" (Dündar, 2014, p. 130). Dündar briefly traces down how Salih rises to the power and underlines that this is the beginning of the end for him. When he attempts to claim the status of roughneck, he also gives way to his own doom. The moment he accepts this role, this world begins to shatter, and continues to break down until there is nothing left of him. Consequently, he becomes a failure of the hegemonic masculinity, who has exhausted himself to satisfy its requirements up until a point where he is unable to do so, which invalidates him and his life and he commits suicide to save himself from its unbearable burden.

Upon the analysis of both novels, it becomes rather apparent that the notion of hegemonic masculinity works similarly in these two different contexts. In both contexts, women are placed in the subordinate position as opposed to men, and they are the tools whereby men can achieve the status of masculinity. In the portrayals by both Marquez and

Kaçan, they are presented as such. Just as how Angela merely functions for her brothers and her husband to save their honor and re-gain their masculinity, Tina is instrumental for Salih in the same way. In Marquez's novel, how women, especially the Vicario daughters, are depicted in the narration illustrates this subordinate position for women in Latin American Columbian culture, whereas depictions of women in *Ağır Roman* and how men are narrated by Kaçan to dominate women, such as the dominance of Salih's father over his mother and that of Salih on Tina, indicate such dynamics of gender within the varoş Turkish culture. When Angela's brothers find out that Angela is not a virgin, it is not her dignity but their honor at stake. So much so that, this almost-unbearable-burden for Bayardo becomes a matter of death for them, which requires the blood of a man to compensate for such a loss of honour. Correspondingly, when Tina is having an affair with another man, Salih "punishes" them so that he can save his challenged honor, he does not necessarily attempt to do this for his "unstoppable" love for Tina.

Along with Tina's function in Kaçan's narration, Salih's mother as well as a few other female figures, along with the Vicario women of Marquez's novel simultaneously exemplify how women are the ultimate subordinate in the notion of hegemonic masculinity. Yet, men, alike, have their own shares in the burden of this masculinity concept. Not only does this concept force them to dominate women, but it also requires them to face constant challenges to maintain this status, which is built such fragile foundations that it could easily fall. As mentioned previously, although his financial power and physical appearances secure him a hegemonic masculine status to a point he cannot be refused while choosing his bride. The burden of marrying a non-virgin rips Bayardo out of this status despite all his qualifications that meet the criteria. On other hand, Angela's brothers are apparently forced to become murderers. Although they seem to enjoy this process of so-called saving their honor, they perform this action in the name of duty. Meanwhile, Kaçan's Salih finds himself in a similar position to defend his masculinity on a constant level. As aforementioned, the only thing that matters to him becomes his fame. From his catching the Cholera Monster to his

revenge on Tina, all his actions are to prove his violence, so that he could hold on to being the hegemonic man. This constant war for his name and honor gradually becomes such a burden for him that it leads him to his doom. In other words, for the sake of his hegemony, Salih ends up taking his life.

The comparative analysis between Salih of Kaçan and Vicario Brothers of Marquez indicates what a fragile and self-destructive system hegemonic masculinity is. Noting that only a small number of men are eligible to reach the status of hegemonic masculinity, Connell states that "[t]he public face of hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily what powerful men are, but what sustains their power and what large numbers of men are motivated to support. The notion of 'hegemony' generally implies a large measure of consent. Few men are Bogarts or Stallones, many collaborate in sustaining those images" (Connell, 1987, p. 185). The analogy of Bogart and Stallone by Connell here shows us what kind a figure is promoted by hegemonic masculinity: a powerful and dominant male over everyone around him. Although Connell's examples are the Western examples, the way she conceptualizes hegemonic masculinity could be applied to masculinities from other cultures. While a few men could become this idealized masculine image, what is also underlined by her is that many other men willingly take part in it. This is what is problematic about this type of masculinity. A lot of men are in a race for it, however; a very few of them survive out of this race. The others are mere participants that contribute to this masculinity system. Moreover, while it is beneficial for the sustainability of this image, it is not sustainable for the participants. It is because, apparently, the men constantly fight for this status, yet most of them cannot win this endless war, for which they willingly fight. Thus, this fight, so to say, destroys men. Atilla Barutçu explains in his thesis that "[a] man, proves his masculinity by demonstrating the attitude and behaviors expected of him in a society. A man that cannot enact the performance demanded from him has to be punished for not conforming to the social norms of

gender" (Barutçu, 2013, p. 6).[5] Barutçu's claim on masculinity performance clarifies the constant struggle of hegemonic masculinity. Men do fight for proving their masculinity with their full consent, and those who fail to do so receive no mercy from people around them. That is exactly what happens to men we analyze in the two novels. Salih has fought for a very long time to show that he is the tough guy that deserves respect and recognition. After going through this endless and fruitless battle, he has reached a point where he can no longer satisfy the requirements, lost the respect and ended his life. Similarly, the same self-destructive mechanism of hegemonic masculinity works against the men of Marquez. Pablo and Pedro try so hard to save their honor at the expense of becoming murderers, while Santiago has to die and Bayardo loses all he has 'achieved'. They all are parts of this hegemonic masculinity, and in one way or another, this image destroys them. Their masculinities are built upon such a fragile surface – just like that of Salih – the moment their dominance over Angela (inevitably their honor and masculinity) is lost, their masculinity is threatened, which alters their lives indefinitely.

In conclusion, it can be said that while the context, culture, and language of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* and *Ağır Roman* differ widely, the results of the prevailing male hegemony and the accustomed manners of masculinity bear similarities. These are that hegemonic masculinity forces men to follow certain rules to prove their "manhood". While *machismo* is a term that arose and is more widely used within Latin American culture, the word itself being Spanish, one can see that being a *macho* (or *maço* in Turkish) draws no borders. Male characters in both novels whose worth are defined by their physical power, virility, and reputation, and who would do anything to uphold this reputation can easily be defined as macho, rendering machismo as just another part

---

[5] Translated by the authors. Original text is as follows: Bir erkek, toplumda kendisinden beklenen tutum ve davranışları gerçekleştirerek erkekliğini kanıtlamaktadır. Ondan beklenen performansı gerçekleştiremeyen erkek, toplumsal cinsiyet normlarına uyamamaktan dolayı cezalandırılmaya muhtaçtır".

of this toxic hegemonic masculinity as it can be observed within the Vicario brothers, Bayardo San Roman, or Salih. This hegemonic masculinity also draws a line of superiority between men and women and men and men alike: while women are positioned as inferior, men have to prove their superiority to one another, as well. At some point, the women in these books not only accept but also support this hierarchy within the society, serving as pawns and the protectors of male "honor" and name. All things considered, this constant need and competition to prove one's masculinity and superiority is seen to leave lasting damages on both men and women alike, in the end, consequently rendering this hegemonic masculinity as destructive. The Vicario brothers are sent to jail, Bayardo San Roman leads an unhappy life for years considering himself a ruined man through societal standards, and Salih suffers from the most tragic consequence: death.

Work Cited

Primary Sources

García Márquez, G. (2007). *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. (Gregory Rabassa, Trans.). Penguin Publishing.

Kaçan, M. (2017). *Ağır Roman.* Everest Yayınları.

Secondary Sources

Barutçu, A. (2013). *Türkiye'de Erkeklik İnşasının Bedensel ve Toplumsal Aşamaları,* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Ankara University.

Barutçu, A. (2020). "(Pro)Feminist Araştırmalarda Erkekler Arası Güç İlişkileri, Yöntemsel Soru(n)lar ve Defansta Duran Ben", in Emine Erdoğan & Nehir Gündoğdu (Eds.), *Türkiye'de Feminist Yöntem,* Metis Yayınları, 147-178.

Brod, H., & Kaufman, M. (Eds.). (1994). *Theorizing Masculinities* (Vol. 5). Sage Publications.

Butler, J. (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory". *Theatre Journal*, 40 (4), 519–531.

Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics,* Stanford University Press.

Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J. (2005). "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept". *Gender and Society*, 19 (6), 829-859.

Dündar, L. B. (2014). "Metin Kaçan". In Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkol (Eds.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Turkish Novelists Since 1960*. Michigan: Gale, 129-133.

Hinrichsen, E. (2012). "Emasculating American Bourgeoisie Culture: The Graduate and the Critique of Material Prosperity as Happiness". *Film Matters*, 3 (2), 57-59.

Ingoldsby, B. B. (1991). "The Latin American Family: Familism vs. Machismo". *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 22 (1), 57–62.

Maurya, V. (1983). "Gabriel Garcia Marquez". *Social Scientist*, 11 (1), 53–58.

Özbay, C. (2010). "Nocturnal Queers: Rent Boys' Masculinity in Istanbul". *Sexualities*, *13* (5),645–663.

Peristiany, J. G., & Peristiany, J. G. (1966). *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society,* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Uçkuran, Uğur (2019). *Hasan Ali Toptaş'ın Eserlerinde Hegemonik Erkeklik Karşısında Tutunamayan Erkeklik,* Unpublished Master's Thesis, Ege University.

Venkatesh, V. (2015). *The Body as Capital: Masculinities in Contemporary Latin American Fiction*. The University of Arizona Press.

Hegemonik Erkekliğin *Kırmızı Pazartesi* ve *Ağır Roman* Metinlerindeki Karşılaştırmalı Analizi

Öz: Bu makale, Kolombiya ve Türkiye bağlamlarının ürünü olan iki metindeki hegemonik erkekliği incelemektedir. Bu iki ülke birbirinden uzak ve zıt gibi görünseler de, Gabriel Garcia Marquez'in eserindeki *machismo* kültürüyle, Metin Kaçan'ın kabadayılarının hegemonik erkeklik icrasının ortak olduğu görülmektedir. *Kırmızı Pazartesi*'de, okuyucu, erkeklere kadınlar ve etraflarındaki diğer ast

erkekler üzerinde kontrol sağlatma yoluyla rol atayan bir kültüre rastlar. Metinde, onur kavramına duyulan abartılı takıntı, erkekler ve kadınların cinsel özgürlüklerine dair olan ikiyüzlülüğü yalnızca güçlendirmektedir: Kitaptaki en hegemonik macho olması muhtemel Bayardo San Roman'ın, Angela Vicario'yu bakire olmadığı için baba evine geri götürmesi üzerine, abileri namuslarını "kurtarmak" zorunda kalırlar. Zira tersi olursa erkeklikleri zarar görecek ve bu onları daha az erkek yapacaktır. Benzer bir şekilde, *Ağır Roman*'da da erkek karakterler, varoş kültüründe benzer bir rol üstlenmektedir. Bu erkekliğin icrası Salih'te (ve olay örgüsü boyunca geçirdiği değişimde), Arap Sado'da, Ali'de ve onların diğer karşıt kabadayı figürleri ve kadınlarla ilişkilerinde gözlemlenmektedir. Bu erkeklik metinde katı bir şekilde heteroseksüel olarak açığa çıkmakta ve oldukça kırılgan temeller üzerine inşa edilmektedir. Bu yüzden sürekli bir tehdit altındadır ve daimî bir şekilde sergilenmesi gerekmektedir. Karakterler bu statüyü, duruşları ve diğer erkekler ve kadınlar üzerindeki hâkimiyetleri ile kazanmaktadır. Bu sayede hegemonik erkeklik göstergesi olan "nam" ve namuslarını inşa edip korumaktadırlar. Sonuç olarak, bu makale, karşılaştırmalı analiz yoluyla hegemonik erkekliği ve hem erkekler hem de kadınlar için yarattığı sorunları eleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Hegemonik erkeklik, maçoluk, kabadayı, namus, karşılaştırmalı edebiyat

BOOK REVIEWS

Reviewed by: Şahinde Yavuz, Trabzon University, Turkey

ORCID 0000-0002-8592-3327

Geleneksel/pozitivist sosyal bilimlerin öznesi "erkek"tir. Farklı feminizmler (liberal, radikal, sosyalist, Marksist) bu itiraza ilişkin farklı yanıtlar üretmişlerdir. Bu süreçte feminist araştırmacılar, kadınlık ve erkekliğin araştırılma yöntemlerine karşı da esaslı karşı çıkışlarda bulunmuşlardır. Sandra Harding bu soruya istinaden yazmış olduğu "feminist yöntem diye bir şey var mı" başlıklı makalede, ilgili soruyu cevaplarken, sınırları belirlenmiş net bir feminist yöntem fikrine karşı çıkmamızı, zira bu tavrın bizim feminist araştırma aşamalarının en ilginç yanlarını görmemizi engelleyeceğini belirtir (1995, s. 35). Sınırları belli bir yöntem oluşturma fikri, feminizmin doğa bilimleri temelinde şekillenen ve aynı mantıkla sosyal bilimlere uygulanan pozitivizmle aralarına koymak istedikleri mesafeden beslenir. Çünkü pozitivist epistemolojilerin kuramı verili kabul edip, yöntemlerini kurarken oluşturdukları veri setlerinin nasıl düzenleneceğine ilişkin yoğun kaygıları, nesnellik iddiası ile araştırdıkları her meselede araştırılanı nesneleştirmeleri, feminist araştırmanın başlangıç itirazlarından biridir. Sirman'ın da belirttiği gibi, geleneksel araştırmalarda araştırma nesnesinin kuramla birlikte düşünülmesi gerekliliği, yöntem ve kuram arasında ayrılmaz bir bağ kurar ve sorduğumuz soruya hangi yöntemin uyacağına ilişkin bir arayış içine iter ve böylece sorulara uygun kuram aramaya başlarız (2020, s. 10). Feminist araştırmacılar, başlangıçtan itibaren geleneksel araştırmanın yok saydığı kadınları özneleştirerek, karanlıkta bırakılana odaklanarak, kadınların bizzat kadınlar tarafından anlaşılabileceğini ifade ederek, erkek merkezliliği yok etmek için kadın deneyimlerini araştırmışlar, araştırmanın katılımcısı kadar yürütücüsünü de eleştirel bir zemine çekmişlerdir.

Türkiye'de feminist yöntemi kullanarak yapılan çalışmalar giderek artmaktadır ancak Türkçe literatüre baktığımız zaman, feminist yöntem

kitaplarının çok az sayıda olduğunu görürüz. Bu zayıflığın iki boyutu bulunuyor: Birinci boyutta İngilizce yazılmış feminist yönteme ilişkin makalelerin Türkçe'ye çok azının çevrilmesi, ikinci boyutta ise Türkiye'de feminist yöntem kullanarak araştırma yapanların deneyimlerini içeren makalelerin görece azlığıdır. Feminist yöntemi Türkçe literatüre katan en önemli çalışma, 1995 yılında Serpil Çakır ve Necla Akgökçe tarafından derlenen ve şimdilerde baskısı tükenmiş olan "Farklı Feminizmler Açısından Kadın Araştırmalarında Yöntem" başlıklı derlemedir. Bunun akabinde birkaç derleme kitap (Harnanşah ve Nahya, 2016; Hattatoğlu ve Ertuğrul, 2009) yayınlanarak alan ve yönteme ilişkin literatür canlandırılmaya çalışılmıştır.

Emine Erdoğan ve Nehir Gündoğdu bu derleme ile feminist yönteme ilişkin yaşanan boşluğu doldurma yolunda önemli bir girişimde bulunmuşlardır. Metis tarafından Şubat 2020'de ilk baskısı yapılan bu kitap, aynı yılın Mayıs ayında ikinci baskıyı görmüştür. Bu durum, feminist yöntemle ilgili literatür boşluğuna verilen yanıt açısından anlamlıdır. Emine Erdoğan ve Nehir Gündoğdu Amerika'da Warwick Üniversitesi'nde doktoralarını yapmışlardır.

Türkiye'de Feminist Yöntem başlığını taşıyan bu derleme iki bölümden ve on bir makaleden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölüm "Feminist Yöntem Nedir, Ne Değildir?" başlığını taşımaktadır. Bu bölümde yazarlar daha çok feminist yöntemin olanaklarına odaklanmışlardır. "Feminist Yöntemin Nasılı" başlıklı ikinci bölümde ise, feminist yöntemle yapılan Türkiye'deki araştırmacıların deneyimleri aktarılmaktadır.

Birinci bölümün ilk makalesi, Uma Narayan tarafından yazılan "Feminist Epistemoloji: Batılı Olmayan Bir Feministten Perspektifler" başlığını taşımaktadır. Narayan, feminizmin Batı'da yaşayan kadınların toplumsal mücadeleleri sonucunda oluşmuş bir ideoloji/yol olduğunu belirttikten sonra, Batı'nın koşullarından üretilmiş bir ideolojinin Batı dışı ülkelere nasıl uyacağını ya da uymayabileceğini tartışıyor. Narayan bu çalışmasında, feminist epistemolojinin içgörü ve savlarının epistemolojik dogmalara dönüşmemesinin yollarını arıyor. Bunu üç yoldan gerçekleştiriyor. Birinci önermesi, Batılı olmayan feminist siyaset ve feminist epistemolojinin Batı dışı ülkelerde dar alanda hüküm sürmesidir. Feministler bu yapı içinde hareket etmek zorundadırlar. Narayan'ın üzerinde durduğu ikinci konu, pozitivizmdir. Narayan Batılı olmayan feministlere pozitivist olmayan yöntemleri sorgulamadan, kendilerine müttefik olarak

seçmemelerini çünkü karşılaştıkları pek çok sorunun pozitivist olmayan bağlamlarca üretildiğini söylemektedir. Batılı olmayan feministlere bu baskıyı yaşamayanların kaygı ve destekleri konusunda dikkatli olmalarını öğütleyen Narayan, siyasi olarak cevapları farklı olan grupların arasındaki iletişimin doğasının da farklı olacağını belirtmektedir. Çünkü onun ifadesine göre, ezilen grubun üyesi olmayan, ancak bu grupların sorunlarına duygudaşlıkla yaklaşabilen bireyler kendi yaşamadıkları baskıyı anlayamayabilirler.

"Bakış Açısı Epistemolojisini Yeniden Düşünmek: Güçlü Nesnellik Nedir?" başlıklı makalede Sandra Harding, bakış açısı epistemolojisinin diğer bilgi kuramlarından farklılıklarını ortaya koyarak, ilgili epistemolojiyi tanıtıyor, bunu yaparken merkezde olanların merkezdışında kalanların bilgisini nasıl elde edeceğini, nesnellik üzerinden sorguluyor. Harding merkezdışı hayatların bakış açısı kuramları için bilimsel sorunlar ve araştırma gündemleri sağlarken, çözüm sağlamadığını belirtir. Merkezdışı hayatlar üzerine düşünmek, kişiyi doğa ve toplum bilimlerinin kendileri ve etraflarındaki dünyayı açıklamak için oluşturdukları kavramsal çerçeveyi sorgulamaya iter. Harding'e göre, kadınlar feminist bilginin biricik üreticileri değildir, erkekler de kendi toplumsal konumlarından yola çıkarak, feminist düşünceye farklı katkılar yapmak zorundadır. Nesnellik kavramı, Harding için belli bir birey ya da grubun dünyanın olmasını istediği hali ile gerçekte olduğu hali arasında bulunması gereken mesafe hakkında düşünebilmemizi sağladığı için yararlı bir yoldur.

"Hepimizi Likeniz: Feminist Yaşam ve Dünyayla Akrabalık" adlı makalesinde Sibel Yardımcı, makalesine şu soruyla başlıyor: Normatif kalıplardan ve idealize edilmiş hayatlardan hareket etmeyeceksek, "başka türlü" bir yaşam, bir "başka yer", bir "başka zaman" inşa etmek için ne yapmalı? (s. 93). Temelinde bu sorunun hareket noktası olduğu yazıda Yardımcı, feminist yöntemin tartışmak zorunda olduğu zeminin neler olması gerektiğini sorguluyor. Sorguya tabi sorunlardan ilki, feminizmin "biz"inin kim olduğu sorusudur. Feminizmin "biz"i basitçe kadınlara işaret etmez yazara göre, çünkü işaret ya da zorunluluk olarak atanan kadınlık kategorisi, bizi şekillendiren, var eden bir kategoridir. Bu nedenle biz kadınlar dediğimiz kategoriler de sorunludur. İkinci olarak yazar, feminist araştırma içinde araştırmaya konu ettiğimiz, haklarında sonuçlara vardığımız yaşamları hiçbir zaman tümüyle anlayamayacağımızı kabul

etmemiz gerektiğini belirtiyor. Bu anlamda feminizm temsil iddiasını hem politik hem de epistemolojik açıdan yeniden gözden geçirmek zorundadır.

Marksizm, Feminizm ve "Kesişimsellik" başlıklı makalede ise Shahrzad Mojab ve Sara Carpenter, 1970'lerde Siyah Feminist Hareket öncülüğünde başlayan ve akademide kabul gören feminizmin ırk, toplumsal cinsiyet, sınıf ve yeterlik gibi değişkenlerin kesişimselliğine yaptıkları vurguyu, Marksizm'in bakış açısıyla yeniden ele alıyorlar. Onlara göre, baskının yarattığı toplumsal ve yapay olan ayrıştırıcı ilişkiler nesnelleştirilmeden, bu toplumsal ilişkiler birbirinden ayrılamaz. Yazarlar Marksist feminist perspektifle dünyayı açıklamak ve anlamak, bilgi ve bilincin dönüştürücü gücünü üretmek ve devrimci bir siyaset oluşturmak amacını taşıyorlar. "Diyalektik toplumsal ilişkiler" kavramını kullanarak yazarlar; ırk, toplumsal cinsiyet, sınıf, cinsellik, yeterlik, ulusal köken gibi bileşenlerin toplumsal yaşamın ve kimliğin ayrı bileşenleri olarak kurgulanması yerine, bunları kapitalist üretim tarzının tarihsel özgüllüğü içinde şekillenen ilişkiler olarak kavramsallaştırmayı önermektedirler.

"Sayıların Kadın Mücadelesinde Yeri" başlıklı makalede Gülay Toksöz, kadınların mücadelesinde politika oluşturmanın önemi ve bu süreçte nicel yöntemlerin gerekliliği üzerinde durmaktadır. Toksöz eşitlik yönündeki politikaların uygulanmasını izlemek için oluşturulan göstergelerin ve uluslararası endekslerin, özellikle kadın emeğini değerlendirme sürecinde işlevsel olarak ortaya konabilmesi için nicel yöntemlerin kullanılmasının gerekliliğini tartışmaktadır. Feminist yöntemin özünde niteliksel araştırma yöntemleriyle özdeşleşmesi, kadınların göz ardı edilen duygu, düşünce ve deneyimlerini ortaya çıkarırken, niceliksel teknikler kadın araştırmalarında cinsiyet temelli yaşanan eşitsizlikleri ortaya koymayı ve ülkeler arası değişimini gösterme konusunda ışık tutmaktadır. Toksöz makalesinde, kadınların yaşamlarının ürettiği sonuçlara ilişkin sayıların, istatistiklerin ve grafiklerin hem ulusal hem uluslararası süreçlerde politika belirlemede çok etkili enstrümanlar olduğunu belirtmektedir.

Derlemenin ikinci bölümünün ilk makalesi, Atilla Barutçu'nun "(Pro)Feminist Araştırmalarda Erkekler Arası Güç İlişkileri: Yöntemsel Sorunlar ve Defansta Duran Ben" başlığını taşımaktadır. Bu makalede Barutçu, erkeklerle erkeklerarası araştırmalar yaparken, yaşanan yöntem sorunlarını, feminist yöntemin, eleştirel erkeklik incelemelerinde kesişimsel bir metot olarak

kullanılıp kullanılamayacağını anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Barutçu, feminist araştırmanın "kadınlar üzerine kadınlar tarafından yapılan araştırma" mottosunu sorgulamakta ve feminist yöntemin kabullerini, profeminist bir erkek olarak eril bakıştan sıyrılıp, erkekler üzerine yapılan araştırmalara uyarlamayı denemektedir. Amacı, erkeklerden edinilen bilgiyi feminizm için yararlı hale getirerek, her türlü erkek deneyimini görünür kılmak olan Barutçu'nun bu yolda yaşadığı zorluklar, bu makalenin can alıcı noktasıdır. Katılımcıları ötekileştirmeyen araştırmacı (Barutçu), araştırmanın içerisinde araştırmanın "öteki"sine dönüşmektedir. İlgili gözlemin üzerine Barutçu, erkeklere ilişkin araştırmalarda feminist yöntem çıkmaza düştüğünde, queer yöntemin yaşanan yöntemsel zorlukları aşmada yararlı olabileceğini söyler. Çünkü feminist yöntemle bilgi üretme yolunda aşılamayan engeller, queer yöntemin belli bir izleği takip etme zorunluluğunu bir yana bırakan tavrı ile aşılabilir.

Nehir Gündoğdu da "Çocuklar" ve "Yetişkinler", "Kızlar" ve "Erkekler": Anasınıfındaki Güç İlişkilerine Feminist Yöntem ile Bakış adlı makalesinde doktora tezinin bir parçası olarak yaptığı araştırmada feminist çalışmalarla çocukluk çalışmalarını birleştirmeyi deniyor. Bu makale için yaptığı araştırmada Gündoğdu altı aylık bir zaman dilimi içinde iki anasınıfında gözlem ve inceleme yapmıştır. Araştırmacı anasınıflarındaki çocuklar arasındaki ilişkiyi incelerken araştırmanın merkezine sahadaki güç ilişkilerini, toplumsal cinsiyeti ve yaş faktörlerini koymuştur. Gündoğdu, anasınıflarında güç ilişkilerinin her gün yeniden üretildiğini belirtirken, araştırma sahasında kendi varoluşunu alışılmadık yetişkin bir kadın olarak konumlamıştır. Anasınıflarında toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerini de gözleyen yazar, belli kalıplarla kızların naif, duygusal; erkeklerin sert, saldırgan ve güçlü konumda önkabullerle görüldüğünü fark etmiştir. Bu kabul kızları korunacak varlıklar haline getirirken, erkeklerin kapladıkları alanı genişletmektedir.

"Saklanmış Kadınlar"dan "Saklanmış Hayvanlar"a ve Tersi: Türler Arası Karşılaşmalarda Feminist Yöntem başlıklı makalede Ezgi Burgan ve Mehtap Öztürk kırsal yaşamda insan ve hayvan ilişkisinin kesişimselliğinin, cinsiyetli karşılaşmalar olarak nasıl oluştuğunu anlamaya çalışıyorlar. Bunun için araştırmacılar Karadeniz'in iki yaylası Balahor ve Kavrun yaylalarında bir süre bulunup, yaylada yaşayan kadınlar ve hayvanlar arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemişlerdir. Araştırmacılar, farklı coğrafyalarda yaşayan kadınların

hayvanlarla ilişkilerindeki farklılığın var olup olmadığını da sorgulamışlardır. Bu sorgulamada ilk kabulleri, yaylada yaşayan kadınları "ezilen kadın" ve "yaylacı kadın" kategorileri ile araştırmamak. Araştırmalarını alanda karşılaştıkları en önemli bulgulardan -ki bizim yaptığımız Hes direnişlerini araştıran makalede de benzerini deneyimlediğimiz gibi (Yavuz ve Şendeniz, 2013)- yayladaki kadınlar yayladaki gündelik hayatlarını ve hayvanları ile ilişkilerini bilim için kayda değer bulmadıklarını söylemektedirler. Araştırmacılar yaylada yaşayan kadınların hayatında hayvanların yaşamının/doğumunun/ölümünün ne ifade ettiğini araştırırken, bunun araştırılan kadınların da yaşama/ölüme ve doğuma nasıl yaklaştıklarını anlamaya yol açtığını bulgulamışlardır. Bu araştırmanın alanda tasarımı ve konusu ile ilgili olarak hiç yapılmamış bir araştırma özelliği taşıdığını da belirtmek gereklidir.

"Bedenden Mekâna Taşan İktidara Özdüşünümsel Bir Bakış: Heteroseksüel Bir Kadının LGBTİ Bireylerin Ankarası'na Yolculuğundan Notlar" başlıklı araştırmada Ayla Deniz, bizlerle oldukça erkek yoğun bir alan olan coğrafya bilim dalından edindiği bilgiyle, LGBTİ bireylerin Ankara'da kullandığı kentsel mekanlarını haritalandırma ve modelleme çalışmasının saha notlarını paylaşmaktadır. Deniz, mekanların salt fiziksel unsurlardan oluşmadığını, fiziksel ve sosyal olanın karşılıklı ilişkisellikle şekillendiğini, belli mekanların bazılarını içine alırken, bazı kişileri dışladığını, feminist araştırmacıların sosyo-mekansallığın farkına vararak araştırmalarını yapmalarının gerekli olduğunu söylemektedir. Deniz makalesinin ikinci yarısında Hesse-Biber ve Piatelli'nin (2007) feminist bir araştırmada özdüşünümsel süreçlerin nasıl kullanılması gerektiğine ilişkin önerilerini kendi araştırmasına uyarlamış ve madde madde bu yönergeyi nasıl uyguladığını anlatmıştır.

Leyla Bektaş-Ata "Çocukluk Mahallesinin Kapısını Feminist Bakışla Aralamak" adlı makalesinde çocukluğunun geçtiği İzmir'deki gecekondu mahallesine geri dönerek, eski komşularının mahalleliyle ve kendi evleriyle olan ilişkisini derinlemesine görüşme ve hayat anlatıları yoluyla anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bektaş-Ata'nın araştırmasında kullandığı otoetnografik yöntem, kişisel anlatının kapsamlı bir literatürle birlikte değerlendirilmesiyle oluşmaktadır. Yazarın harika üslubuyla, araştırma yaptığı mahallenin habitusunu aktardığı yazısında, bizlere mahallede yaptığı pek çok gözlemin yanı sıra feminist yöntemi uygulamaya çalışıp da tökezlediği anları aktarmaktadır. Deneyime

vurguda bulunan bu tarz makaleler, okuyucuların araştırmaların arkasında nelerin yaşandığını öğrenme gerekliliğine de vurguda bulunmaktadır kanaatime göre.

"Suçluyum, Çaresizim, Kızgın ve Kırgınım: Feminist Sahanın Duyguları, Gücü ve Etiği" başlıklı bu çalışmada Emine Erdoğan, Türkiye'nin küresel gıda sistemine eklemlenmesinin kadın emeğini nasıl dönüştürdüğü ve kırsal kadın emeğinin bu sürece nasıl dahil olduğunu araştırmak amacını taşıyor. Erdoğan, domates üretimi üzerinden araştırdığı doktora tezi için 2013-2016 yılları arasında Marmara'da ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da yaptığı saha çalışmasındaki çekirdeğine sahada yaşadığı duyguları koyuyor. Erdoğan üretimin her basamağında ilişkilerin nasıl şekillendiğini anlamak için tarlada, fabrikada ve bu alanlarda çalışanların evlerinde katılımlı gözlem yapmıştır. Bu makalede Türkiye'de yapılan feminist araştırmalar içinde bahsedilmeyen; sahada hissedilen duygular, araştırmacı ve katılımcı arasındaki güç ilişkileri, duyguların etik olup olmayışı ve etnografi ve etnografyacının ne kadar "feminist" olabileceği tartışılıyor. Bu makale bizlere, nitel araştırmalarda yaşanan ama birçok araştırmacıdan duymadığımız deneyimleri süzerek veriyor.

Feminist araştırma nedir sorusunu bir yana bırakıp feminist araştırma ne değildir? (s. 20) şiarıyla yola koyulan araştırmacılar, *Türkiye'de Feminist Yöntem* kitabı ile teorik tartışmaları ve alan deneyimini temel alan makaleleri bir araya getirerek, bu alanda çalışmayı düşünenlere ya da halihazırda çalışmakta olanlara fazlasıyla yol gösterecek bir girişimde bulundukları için çok takdir edilecek bir işi gerçekleştirmişlerdir.

Kaynakça

Çakır Serpil ve Necla Akgökçe (1995). *Farklı Feminizmler Açısından Kadın Araştırmalarında Yöntem*, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık

Harmanşah Rabia ve Nilüfer Nahya (ed. 2016). *Etnografik Hikayeler: Türkiye'de Alan Araştırması Deneyimleri,* İstanbul: Metis

Hatatoğlu, Dilek ve Gökçen Ertuğrul (ed. 2009). *Methodos: Kuram ve Yöntem Kenarından*, İstanbul: Anahtar Yayınları

Sirman, Nükhet (2020). Sunuş içinde *Türkiye'de Feminist Yöntem*, (der) Emine Erdoğan ve Nehir Gündoğdu, İstanbul: Metis

Yavuz, Şahinde ve Özlem Şendeniz (2013). HES Direnişlerinde Kadınların Deneyimleri: Fındıklı Örneği, *e-Fe Dergi*, 5 (1), 43-58.