

“Valley of Wolves” as a Nationalist Text

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MEHMET CELİL ÇELEBİ

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Prof. Dr. Sencer Ayata
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of
Master of Science/Arts / Doctor of Philosophy.

Prof. Dr. Raşit Kaya
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully
adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of
Science/Arts/Doctor of Philosophy.

Assist. Prof. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan

**Examining Committee Members (first name belongs to the chairperson of the
jury and the second name belongs to supervisor)**

Assist. Prof. Dr. Necmi Erdoğan	(METU,MCS)	_____
Assist. Prof. Dr. Fahriye Üstüner	(METU,ADM)	_____
Dr. Barış Çakmur	(METU,MCS)	_____

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Çelebi, Mehmet Celil:

Signature :

ABSTRACT

“Valley of Wolves” as a Nationalist Text

Çelebi, Mehmet Celil

M.S., Program of Media and Cultural Studies

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This thesis is an attempt to analyze the discourse of “Valley of Wolves”, a television serial which gained a significant popularity in recent years. To understand the serial’s discourse I have first analyzed the general aspects of the narrative and approached to it as a televisual text. Concerning the political discourse two arguments, both connected to nationalism, is provided. First one concerns the psychology of the serial. Psychological mechanisms that the serial make use of is similar to Adorno’s insights concerning fascism which may be formulated as “acknowledgement of the weakness, identification with the victor”. The serial interpellates weak ordinary citizens who are impotent in front of powerful conspirators, and invites him to identify with the hero who is able to save him from these malicious uncontrollable forces. Nationalism constitutes the kernel of this psychology. Nation is the community of simple-minded ordinary people free of conflict: its inner harmony is disturbed only by external forces through conspiracies. In that respect, the serial depends on the logic of conspiracy and xenophobia. Secondly, the serial overtly advocates “deep state”, that is the breakdown between legality and legitimacy as far as “the survival of the state” is concerned. It has sympathy for traditional mafia, but it essentially backs up illegal activities on behalf of state. Thereby, it articulates a nationalist mentality and carries some important features of the Turkish Nationalism.

Keywords: “Valley of Wolves”, Turkish Nationalism, Television Drama

ÖZ

MİLLİYETÇİ BİR METİN OLARAK “KURTLAR VADİSİ”

Çelebi, Mehmet Celil

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Kültürel Çalışmalar Anabilim Dalı

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Bu tez son yıllarda önemli ölçüde başarılı olan “Kurtlar Vadisi” isimli televizyon dizisinin söylemini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Dizinin söylemini açıklayabilmek için, öncelikle anlatının genel niteliklerini inceledim ve ona bir televizyon metni olarak yaklaştım. Siyasi söylemle ilgili olarak ikisi de milliyetçilikle bağlantılı iki argüman öne sürüldü. İlki dizinin psikolojisi ile ilgili: dizinin kullandığı psikolojik mekanizmalar Adorno’nun “zayıflığını kabullenmek, güçlüyle özdeşleşmek” şeklinde özetlenebilecek faşizmin psikolojisi ile ilgili tesbitleriyle benzerlik gösteriyor. Dizi, sıradan vatandaşı güçlü komplocular karşısında tamamen iktidarsız olarak gösteriyor ve onu, onu kurtarmaya muktedir kahrmanla özdeşleşmeye davet ediyor. Milliyetçilik bu psikolojinin çekirdeğini oluşturuyor. Millet, sıradan basit insanların çelişkiden azad topluluğu olarak görülüyor: onun iç uyumu ancak dış güçlerin komplolarıyla bozulabilir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, dizinin komplo mantığı ve zenofobi ile içsel bağlar vardır. İkinci olarak, dizi açıkça “derin devlet”i, yani “devletin bekası” söz konusu olduğunda meşruiyetin yasallıktan kopuşunu savunuyor. Geleneksel mafya için sempati beslense de, esas olarak devlet adına yapılan yasadışı eylemler destekleniyor. Böylece dizi milliyetçi bir zihniyete ekleniyor ve milliyetçiliğinin kimi önemli özelliklerini anlamak için bize yol gösteriyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: “Kurtlar Vadisi”, Türk Milliyetçiliği, Televizyon Draması

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Introduction

In this thesis, my aim is to offer a discourse analysis of the television serial “Valley of Wolves”. I will deal with some of the general aspects of the serial and then try to offer a critical reading. In this endeavor, I will approach to the narrative in two relatively distinct points. I will both develop an argument over the psychological mechanisms used by the serial and also approach to the serial in the context of nationalism and debates over the term “deep state”. Through these two arguments, I will try to locate the serial into the cultural and political landscape of contemporary Turkey.

“Valley of Wolves” is a television serial of ninety-seven episode whose broadcast began in 22 January 2003 and ended in 29 February 2005, and produced by Pana Film¹. The serial was broadcasted first in Show TV and then in Kanal D after the end of the season 2004-2005. From the early days of its broadcast, the serial reached an enormous success. It took the first place in daily ratings first at 16 April 2003 and kept its position thereafter. Even repeated episodes have generally taken the first place in the daily rating lists. New episodes were only beaten by important soccer matches (in 1 December 2005, 20 October 2005, 24 February 2005 and 17 February 2005) after 7 May 2003². Indeed, if we look at the rating lists of the last few years, we see that Turkish Serials took the second place after the extraordinary and temporary successes of important soccer matches (Sönmez, M., 2006). Accordingly, in the 2004-2005 season, nine of the top ten ratings in annual basis belonged to the soccer matches. On the other hand, the seventh place was held

¹ For detailed information about Pana Film and its connections, see “Pana Film”, *Hürriyet Pazar*, 12 February 2006.

² See daily ratings in www.medyatava.net and www.superpoligon.net.

by “Valley of Wolves”³. There is also a film made by the same equip under the name “Valley of Wolves – Iraq”. The film has also gained popularity and become the subject of a public debate.

Besides this popularity, the serial caused an extensive public debate since it was seen as a cause of rising violence especially among youngsters, and became a scapegoat for authorities for that matter⁴. For this reason, Show TV had been penalized by government agencies.⁵ The actual relationships between producers of the serial and the mafia and the Kadirî order have also been discussed extensively by media, and a report prepared by the intelligence service has been published⁶. Indeed, while the serial has been classified as “harmful” and accused of presenting violent role-models to the youngsters by some, others have seen the serial as a nationalist call to duty and an exposure of “the games played upon the country”⁷.

However, all these debates have been generally superficial. To my knowledge, there is no academic study about the serial. In the public debate, its critics generally depended on a questionable “role-model” conceptualization, whereas its advocates shared the same logic of conspiracy with the serial. The movie “Valley of Wolves - Iraq” has provoked more serious criticisms, but the serial demanded a more detailed research. To my knowledge, there is only a book published about the serial, (Solmaz, Y., 2005), but the book’s subject matter is not the serial’s narrative but the news in media and the World Wide Web concerning “Valley of Wolves”. The author interprets the effects of “Valley of Wolves” through such news. Unlike Solmaz’s book, this thesis focuses on the serial’s narrative, and it constitutes an attempt of developing a detailed critical reading of the serial. I will not follow the common criticism which concentrates on the issue of violence. True, there is an extensive use of violence in the serial, but what is more

³See www.medyatava.net/haber.asp?id=25145

⁴ See, for example “‘Kurtlar Vadisi’ne özeniyorlar” Sabah, 24.03.2005 and especially the news of “Çocuklara Neler Oluyor?” Radikal, 23 March 2006.

⁵ www.medyatava.net/haber.asp?id=13520.

⁶ See www.medyatava.net/haber.asp?id=20369

⁷ See for example <http://kurtlar-vadisi-haberleri.blogspot.com/> 1.7.2006

crucial is the psychological mechanisms that the serial uses and its more direct political implications. The most debated issue of violence is only a minor point in the framework of the serial.

On the other hand, characteristics of the serial's narrative make such an analytical approach necessary. Indeed, the serial is overtly political and seeks to intervene to politics. Taking into account its immense popularity, we should not underestimate its ability to generate meanings in an overtly political way. Therefore, a reading "Valley of Wolves" is also a reading about Turkish politics and especially Turkish nationalism. Such an instrument would be beneficial in understanding contemporary ideological landscape in Turkey.

What is the subject matter of the serial? The serial was released by the slogan "This is a serial of Mafia". Indeed, the serials environment is the "world of guilt" and its main concern is the struggle of power between different groups involved in illegal businesses. The hero Polat's journey from bottom to the top of this world mainly progresses by making alliances and destroying the adversaries who are involved in the mafia. However, the slogan is in a way misleading. Polat is not only a patriotic mafioso but a secret agent of state whose true motivation is to accomplish a secret operation which was assigned to him by a senior chief officer in the Turkish intelligence service. The central intrigue may be summarized as follows: Aslan Bey, the chief of an important but legally non-existent sub-division of Turkish intelligence service recalls his most valuable officer from a foreign mission for a major operation. The operation's goal is to destroy a gigantesque criminal organization whose actions determine the fate of the country. For the sake of the operation, Ali Candan, future Polat Alemdar, should undergo a plastic surgery, and thus, both become unrecognizable and cut off from his family, his friends and lover. He starts the operation as the niece of a minor but respected mafia leader who accepted to be involved in the operation because of patriotic sentiments. Then the intrigue develops in three different but interrelated paths. Most important of all is Polat's exploration in the underground and progress in his career of being a mafia leader. A second theme is the exploration of his own dark past; in fact it is rumored that he is the son of his major enemy, Baron. (Towards the end of the

second season, this rumor proves to be true.) Third is his effort to reconstruct his old emotional relationships through his new identity. Thus, the serial presents an immense puzzle which is able to create surprises at each part.

Another important aspect of the intrigue is its constant revision regarding the major political events. Indeed, there are several references to the daily news, and there are analytical speeches and events that interpret recent actual events. Those events are somehow articulated to the main intrigue. For example, the end of Tombalacı Mehmet is related to the events occurring in Caucasia during the days that those parts were shown.⁸

The structure of the whole intrigue has an impact on the structure of each episode; unlike series, each episode has not a story of its own. On the contrary, each episode is meaningful only when considered by reference to previous episodes. This is why a long summary of the previous episode –typically, one hour including commercials- is presented to the spectators; the episode would be meaningless without referring to the whole of the puzzle. While considering the charm of the serial, we should keep in mind that the curiosity over the final of the serial, that is the end of the whole story and the destiny of operation “Valley of Wolves”, is only a minor factor. The main motive of the spectator regarding the puzzle is not this absolute final but the intrigue’s capability to produce questions on the next episode. Indeed, each episode finishes by an exciting question. This question can be most generally formulated as “How Polat (or another positive character) would get rid of the difficult situation?” That is, at the end of each episode, a difficult situation provoking curiosity of the viewer arises, and this trick is supposed to guarantee the viewer interest on the next episode. Fans of the serial enjoy the effort to anticipate the events of the next episode the whole week, and mostly this is a lively subject of conversation among them. One of the main motives behind the success of the serial is the scenario’s ability to create critical situations constantly.

We should indicate that the serial’s intrigue had important break-points where emphasis shifted significantly; however, always in the same direction: towards Polat. The importance of the protagonist rose gradually. In the beginning,

⁸ see episodes between 32nd and 38th.

he shares the role of protagonist with Çakır. Indeed, the character of Çakır is more sympathetic and animated by a more talented actor. With the death of Çakır, Polat really becomes the only protagonist. However, as godfathers are slain one by one, the emphasis shifts to the relationship between Polat and his real father: Baron. Together with Baron's murder, the most obscure question of the serial, that is the true identity of Polat is revealed as well as secret council is totally uncovered, Polat becomes its president. Thereafter, the godfathers lose their importance. Polat, as the unique heroic and powerful character, challenges the new unknown diabolic masters: "the holy knights" as referred in the book *Kurtlar Vadisi, Unutulmaz Sözlür – Diyaloglar*. [Valley of Wolves, Unforgettable Sayings – Dialogues]⁹ (*Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005, p. 226). At the end of second season, nearly every relevant character dies or goes into prison besides Kılıç, Nizammettin and Polat. There is no more any character which may match Polat, and Polat himself is kidnapped. This is the last break-point. Thereafter, the whole emphasis is upon the character Polat.

The argument that I will develop about the serial has two relatively distinct dimensions. First, I will analyze the covert psychological mechanisms. Indeed, I will argue that those psychological mechanisms are found on a nationalist ground and are similar to fascist/anti-semitist discourses. Second, in the overt part, by offering an acquittal and even a sublimation of the state's illegal activities, namely the "deep state", the serial invites us to understand the state as the primary source of all legitimacy and thus develops a fascistic view of politics. These two arguments intersect at one point: the serial's alarming closeness to the fascist discourses of the 1920s and 30s.

In the first chapter, I discuss "Valley of Wolves" as a televisual text, with specific reference to the issue of "realism". Indeed, television always claims to have some unmediated link to the reality, but the way "Valley of Wolves" articulates reality and fiction has some peculiar characteristics: it offers explanations to some concrete events in the near history of Turkey including important unresolved assassinations while staying in the realm of the fictive intrigue. The very first episode includes references to three such important real assassinations, and offers

⁹ This anonymous book will be referred as *Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005.

an explanation. Another striking example is the episode which Rauf Denktaş, president of the Northern Cyprus, plays himself and utters his political position regarding the political events on that date. In the first chapter, I have tried to explain this characteristic of the serial. Moreover, I have provided a catalogue of the main characters of the serial in order to give a general idea to the reader who is not familiar with the serial. The readers familiar to the serial can well skip this part.

In the following two chapters, I present a discourse analysis of Valley of Wolves in two parts: in the second chapter, I focus on the representation of the nation and the way the serial conceives masses and their relationship with politics. Indeed, the serial presents us a notion of “nation” as an organic, homogenous community. However, the harmony within the community is under the threat of malefactor foreigners and invisible forces. Masses which have not the ability to reach this enclosed realm of politics should rely on authority and heroes. In this chapter, following Žižek, I argue that the serial has to make recourse to such paranoid fantasies because of its obsessive dependence upon the fantasy of the “community” free of antagonisms. I will argue that such a fantasy is not only an effort to give meaning to the social life which is not covered by the fantasy of the whole. Moreover, it serves to represent politics as an activity which lies beyond the reach of ordinary people. This discourse of repressedness, “*Kutsal Mazlumluk*” as Fethi Açıkel calls it in the framework of Turkey, results in authoritarian politics and *revanchism*. To understand this point better, I will analyze the sublimation of male authoritarian characters and the rhetoric of national heroes in the framework of the serial. Indeed, once the scene of politics is set up as a fantastic place where masses cannot intervene, but their lives are strongly influenced, there is only one possible way of salvation: the triumph of the hero over villains. I will argue that this diagnosis of re-construction of the harmony of the community is similar to the Adorno’s formula on fascist psychology: “acknowledgement of the weakness, identification with the victors”. The fantasy of harmonious nation results in the supplement of the figure of “obscene master” under the form of secret council(s), and such a fantasy results in the logic of conspiracy where masses are excluded from politics. Consequently, the re-normalization becomes the burden of leaders

and super-heroes having primordial authority. Hence, the sublimation of authority and heroes. Therefore, spectator is located in a place where he/she cannot intervene with major political events that influences his destiny, and then asked to identify and sublimate the authority of the savior hero with strong masculine qualities.

On the other hand, the puzzling identity of the savior, that is the protagonist Polat, is important: the secret agent of legally non-existent unit of Turkish intelligence service disguised in a Mafioso. Such a figure indicates one of the most debated subject and term of the near history: the “deep state”. Indeed, I will argue that the serial overtly advocates the use of illegal means for “the survival of the state” [*devletin bekası*]. In the third chapter, I will try to approach to the narrative under the light of the agenda of the near history concerning the debates of “deep state”, and hence, legality. First, I will analyze how the mafia is represented and it is related to the myth of “noble robber”. Then, I will discuss the representation of state and law, and how the serial advocates the illegal acts committed by the state or in the name of the state. I will finalize the chapter with a brief discussion on Schmitt in order to emphasize the closeness of the serial’s position to the fascism.

It is, however, important to underline a limitation of the thesis concerning the political effects: it is not backed up by a study concerning audience reception. Indeed, especially after the impact of “Cultural Studies”, it is emphasized that the cultural products are not simply “received”, but “decoded” by the audience and therefore, the encoded “message” and the “decoded” one is not necessarily identical (Hall, S. 1992, 136). In other words, the only active side in the production of the meaning is not the producer of the message; the “consumer” is also active in the process. Therefore, to analyze the text itself is not sufficient in order to understand social meaning of the product, it is also necessary to conduct a study concerning the effects on audience. However, such a problematic goes beyond the boundaries of this thesis. We limit the thesis to a reading of the narrative. Therefore, we cannot assume that the audience passively receives the meanings produced by the serial, nor our reading is the only possible one. What we suggest is a detailed reading of the serial.

Chapter I

General Aspects of the “Valley of Wolves” as a Narrative

Before launching a thematic analysis of the serial concentrating on the main political and ideological themes that the serial comprehends, it would be beneficial to familiarize the reader with the serial’s narratives. Indeed, even if my intention is to stress political aspects of the discourse that the serial constructs and to develop a critique of ideology, it is important to understand it as a whole. Therefore, in this first chapter, I would like to introduce the subject in a general way. In the first place, I will define the theoretical context that I use while approaching to the narrative. In the second instance, I will emphasize the particularities of the televisual narrative and discuss serial’s mode of relating reality and fiction in the framework of television. Then, I will present a brief section of the serial trying to familiarize the serial to the reader. This is not a resume of the serial’s sequence of events; such an endeavor would be pointless as much of the meaning generated is located in relatively obscure corners of the serial, which can easily be omitted from the intrigue. Moreover, the narrative combines too many small stories which are sometimes interrelated only marginally. Therefore, I will concentrate upon some important topics and upon main characters that has symbolic relevance. Through this parade of characters, my intention is not to present the minute details of the serial to the reader, but to introduce the characters that have political relevance. The relatively large number of characters mentioned is not the result of an obsession with details, but the serial’s ambition to charge all corners with political messages without tolerating any vacuum. On the other hand, the relatively large number of characters omitted (such as Laz Ziya or Nizammetin Güvenç) is due to the fact that

the relevance of these characters is only conceivable in the framework of the specific topics, therefore it is better to analyze them in this context and postpone their analysis to the later chapters. Indeed, this political intensity is the most distinctive character of the serial. Also, I completely omitted some characters which I find irrelevant for this reading: for example, Erdal Kömürcü is completely dismissed. I will finalize this chapter with a specific reference to this intensity.

A- “Valley of Wolves” as a Televisual Text

Television, as a relatively new medium of communication, has attracted much attention. In cultural theory, it is generally conceived in a negative way. For example, according to Adorno, it constitutes the apogee of diabolic “culture industry” as dreamless dream:

“Television is a means for approaching the entire sensible world once again in a copy satisfying every sensory organ, the dreamless dream; at the same time it holds the possibility of inconspicuously smuggling into this duplicate world whatever is thought to be advantageous for the real one. The gap between private existence and the culture industry, which had remained as long as the latter did not omnipresently dominate all dimensions of the visible, is now being plugged.” (1998, p. 49-50)

Such an approach is not characteristic to Adorno who is usually known by his cultural elitism and pessimism. Bourdieu, whose aim is to criticize the hierarchy of cultures between “low” and “high”, is also critical about television and sees it as a realm where “symbolic violence”¹⁰ is particularly harmful and concentrated since structural degeneration dominates it (2000, p. 21-2). However, there are some scholars assess it more positively. Fiske, in his “Television Culture”, celebrates the medium as an arena of varieties (Thornham and Purvis, 2005, p 9-11), and feminists see feminine virtues in the soap-operas (for example see Geraghty, C. 1991).

However, even pessimistic critiques emphasize that those effects are not inherent in technology and avoids technological determinism. Adorno emphasize that television is only a supplement to the broader logic of “culture industry” whereas Bourdieu calls for intervention. Especially Raymond Williams pictures the

¹⁰ In Bourdieu, “symbolic violence” is a form of latent violence which does not operate in the realm of physical coercion but in the realm of symbols.

history of television as parallel to social history and stresses the inadequacy of technological determinism. While he generally outlines the negative outcomes in his influential book *Television, Technology and Cultural Form*¹¹, he argues that the technological development is motivated by social needs, and alternative uses of the technology are possible.

Another important point Williams emphasizes is the peculiarity of the television as a cultural form. Departing from his own experiments, he argues that television must be analyzed as a flow and not as sequential singular coherent texts: it is produced and consumed in the form of flows where demarcation lines are not clear (Williams, R. 2003, p. 73-6). However, he does define different forms of television programs and does not hesitate to analyze them in isolation, especially television drama. Indeed, as Thornbam and Purvis indicate, the concept of flow, despite its importance, raises an analytical and conceptual difficulty and Williams himself discusses particular television dramas in his reviews (2005, p. 2).

In exploring “Valley of Wolves” as a singular text, while not omitting the characteristics of the television drama, I cannot limit it in its boundaries: Indeed, whereas it is primarily produced as a televisual text, its form of consumption varies: It is sold in form of VCD and it used to be accessible in the Internet. Moreover, the same equip has produced a film that some of the most important characters, including the protagonist reappears: Valley of Wolves: Iraq. Therefore, while analyzing it as a televisual text is important, it is also important to note that it is not exclusively a televisual text. We must see that, as much of television dramas of our era, by the help of the expansion of home-video technologies, especially in the codecs which can be decoded only through computer technologies, the consumption of the serial had gained a variety of forms.

However, we should also be aware of the fact that the serial is primarily produced for television, and it owes its success to television. The very word “serial” demonstrates this fact, because this genre is characteristic to television. (Whereas a similar episodic form was used in novels which were published in daily newspapers, television serial in which the totality of the episode matters more than

¹¹ See especially the chapter concerning forms of the television, (Williams, R. 2003, pp. 37-64)

the whole's coherence is peculiar to television.) Therefore, we need to refer to problems of televisual text when needed.

It is hard to locate the program in the map of televisual text. It is obviously a televisual drama: whereas the articulation of fiction to reality in the serial is problematic, the conventions of television drama are followed by the program. Moreover, it is obviously a serial rather than a series. There, the difference between a series and serials is important. Series consists of episodes where same characters experiences similar events, but each episode has its story of own. On the other hand, a serial told us a single story or a chain of stories (as in soaps) in its whole. Episodes have not any kind of independence. "Valley of Wolves" belongs to the second category.

However, to locate the thematic sub-genre as a television drama that the serial belongs to is more difficult. Indeed, as Çelenk emphasizes, there is a considerable distance between originally American or European genres and their application in Turkey. Çelenk offers a list of genres:

- Detective Series
- Police Series
- Medical Melodramas
- Science-Fiction and Fantasy Serials
- Situation Comedies
- Soap Operas
- Television Films" (2005, p. 291.)

Virtually all of these genres have experienced a transformation while being adopted in Turkey. This is especially true for sub-genres concerning crime. Çelenk argues that the reason for this is the failure of these genres to create a sense of reality in the Turkish audience. The complex structure of investigation and the technical and scientific structure of crime scene investigation that the conventions of this genre depend are inadequate for Turkey. Instead, a new sub-genre develops, that Çelenk labels as "Mafia-Gang" serials (2005, p. 299.). The examples that Çelenk has in mind are "Yılan Hikâyesi" and "Deliyürek". Indeed, these serials depend on the complexity of the crime organizations and the heroic deeds of the protagonist rather than intelligent investigation. "Valley of Wolves" belongs to this sub-genre. However, there is a major difference between "Valley of Wolves" and mentioned programmes. These serials nurture from the post-"Susurluk" political climax and

imply the correction of a corrupt justice system by heroes (Çelenk, S. 2005, p. 301). Even serials belonging to different genres (such as Şehnaz Tango) include metaphors of a negative “deep state” (Çelenk, S., 2005, p. 309). However, the protagonist and hero of the “Valley of Wolves” is a member of the “deep state”. Such a difference may be read as a result of a change in politics in Turkey. Despite this difference, the label “gang-mafia” serial is appropriate for “Valley of Wolves”. Moreover, “Valley of Wolves” has been the apogee of a trend. Indeed, as Çelenk argues, television dramas in Turkey are short-lived and subject to continuous changes, which she calls “trends” (2005, p. 287). Imitations of “Valley of Wolves” may be assessed as such a trend. Short-lived serials such as “Köpek”, “Meçhule Gidenler” and lastly, “Hacı” constitute such examples. However, they are far away from the level of popularity that “Valley of Wolves” reached.

However, we cannot evaluate these as clones of “Valley of Wolves”. Indeed, the articulation of reality and fiction in the serial is unique. Therefore, an issue concerning television and the structure of televisual narrative should be studied there in detail as “Valley of Wolves” presents specific difficulties while dealing with that issue: the issue of realism. Indeed, the relationship that the serial establishes between fiction and reality is distinctive.

Here, we try to conceive the text as a narrative, that is as a “sequence of events, settings and characters arranged in a logical order through time, the sequence being driven cause and effect” (Abercrombie, N. 1996, p. 19). Irrespective of the texts’ claim to be fiction or non-fiction, we can conceive them as narratives. However, we generally differentiate between fiction and non-fiction. Films, television dramas and the like constitute the fictive part of the television. However there are situations where the lines of demarcation between “real” and “imaginary” is less clear. Raymond Williams speaks of “docu-drama” as a new form where the line between fiction and non-fiction is confused. (2003, p. 59-61.)

Indeed, television’s relation with reality is different from other media. In Abercrombie’s words:

“Television seems to describe the world as it is. This is the most obvious with news and current affairs programmes. These clearly make a claim to be telling the truth; they are describing the world as it really is. This claim is enhanced by the feeling that television is

operating in the present, unlike any other medium. Not only it is describing reality, it is giving us the events as they happen. As Feuer, puts it, television has the quality of ‘liveness’” (1996, p. 26.)

When considering fictions, this claim of being the unmediated (and real-time) link between spectators and reality becomes obsolete. (Of course, such a claim of reality itself is highly questionable, but this issue lies outside the scope of this work.) It is claimed that television dramas strive for “realism”. According to Abercrombie, the use of the concept “realism” regarding television is appropriate in three ways. First is its rejection of mediation, its claim to appeal directly to the sight. Second is the rational coherence of the narrative structure. Indeed, Lynch’s experience of “Twin Peaks” is only marginal. Third is the covering of production process: as in movie, the primary sin for a television drama is to show a camera on the screen (Abercrombie, N. 1996, p. 27) Christine Geraghty offers a similar understanding of realism in her study of prime time soap-operas. She argues that the claim for close links with reality is an essential part for soap-operas, and this claim for reality is conceived as “a value placed on a specific setting, an “authentic” regional experience and a particular class representation” (Geraghty, C. 1991, p. 35).

We have no room to discuss the problems of the concept “realism” in length. Questions such as “who chooses the reality to screen” or the aesthetic debate between realism and modernism which implies that claiming unmediated reality is a kind of ideological deception, lies outside of our concern here. Rather, I would like to present an analysis of the specific mode of relating reality and fiction that “Valley of Wolves” uses. The question upon the serial does not involve television drama’s realism that I discussed above; or rather, it transcends these. Indeed, “Valley of Wolves” infringes the boundary between drama and documentary, fiction and non-fiction. This is related to the logic of conspiracy whose relation to the serial will be discussed later at length. Advocates of conspiracy mode of thinking such as Erol Mütercimler and Mahir Kaynak, admits that such theories have a fictional element: it is indeed the ability to write “scenarios” in order to be able to see more than we are shown. But the “scenario” of “Valley of Wolves” differs from these in its articulation of reality: it is neither a fiction which takes an

imaginary conspiracy as its subject matter¹², nor a conspiracy theory script in the conventional sense which claims to reveal the truth behind the politics in a pseudo-academic language. This unique aspect is worth considering.

In many historical novels, some characters are real and others fictive, some events are real but most are fictive. Through fictive characters and events, the author tries to build the atmosphere of a known historical era. In “Valley of Wolves”, the relationship between fictive and real realms is more complex than that. Pseudonyms are common and we generally know that some characters are “inspired” from real characters. But in the end, the distance between the real person and fictive characters are obvious. For example take the example of “Cerrahpaşalı Halit”. It is clear that this character is a reference to Nuri Ergin. He is the arch-enemy of Çakır, as Nuri Ergin is the arch-enemy of Çakıcı. Both of their gangs are known by quarter names in İstanbul, Cerrahpaşa and Karagümrük, which are indeed very close locations. Both have a beloved brother. Both are backed up by a coffeehouse culture and both backs a football team in the amateur league. But both Çakıcı and Ergin are alive whereas Çakır and Halit had passed away a while ago. Therefore, the characters who are inspired by real alive persons have different destinies than their counterparts in the real world. In other words, real character and fictive characters are linked, but they do not overlap.

A similar ambiguous point is the question on timing, which is the strong connection between recent political events and serial’s storyline. That is the serial tries to give the impression that each part covers a very close time: The serial covers some interpretations on the recent, well-known developments. Even in the middle of most critical events, a character finds the time to watch news in the television and compare protest of Şemdinli and a ghetto rebellion in Paris out of the blue. Those events are completely irrelevant to the intrigue of the serial, but the serial needs to give a nationalist message about the recent political agenda; which is that Kurds and Turks are inseparable, but French and its minorities are not. On the other hand, the appearance of Rauf Denktaş in the serial has a different notable role.

¹² As in the case of Orhan Pamuk’s novels such as *Kara Kitap* and *Yeni Hayat* or Dostoevsky’s *The Possessed*. However, “Valley of Wolves” is in some ways similar to Dan Brown’s novels. Indeed, in the last episodes, there are some direct references.

Indeed, this episode was singular. Rauf Denktaş, the president of Northern Turkish Republic of Cyprus appears in the serial as himself. In the time that this episode was shown, the affair of Cyprus was on the top of the agenda of Turkish political elite and the media. The mainstream nationalist stance towards the problem which proposed to conserve the *status quo* was being challenged in many ways at the time. First of all, the candidature for European Union made the maintenance of *status quo* difficult; second the elections in Cyprus demonstrated that the Turkish inhabitants of the island was pushed away from the nationalistic opinion in favor of a pro-European one. The symbol of nationalism in Cyprus, the head of republic Rauf Denktaş lied at the heart of these debates between nationalists and pro-Europeans, and at that critical moment, he declared his retirement. And just in that moment, a fictive character, Dogu Bey leaves İstanbul for Lefkoşa and talks with Rauf Denktaş: we witness the dialogue between the actual president of Northern Turkish Republic of Cyprus and the fictive head of a fictive sub-section of Turkish intelligence service. Denktaş plays as himself. They give a narrative about the history of Cyprus affair, provide an explanation, and precise the position which is needed to be taken. A propaganda text which is introduced in between of a television serial might not be a very original idea but the involvement of an actual political agent as an actor of the serial and the fact that they explain their future plans as a part of the scenario certainly is.

Parallel with this strange appearance, the uses of the serial in different media and programs are worth observing. It might not be very surprising that the serial is also a source of profit for other TV companies and other form of media. All companies wanted to take share of the serial's popularity. What was unusual about it was that the serial's events occasionally became a part of news as major information. When a scandalous development shocked the fans, such as the death of Çakır, this was a precious information for the TV channels and newspapers. Whereas it was of course not presented as genuine information, it told that a serial claimed a place in the daily news. However, this phenomenon was not new: serials such as "Dallas" or "İkinci Bahar" had also made similar impacts.

The peak of the serial's place in the media as a subject matter was the death of the central character Çakır, and only there the seriousness of the serial's impact manifested itself. The week that followed the death of Çakır, two interesting news appeared in media. In Adapazarı, there had been a small ceremony for the memory of Çakır before a football match in the amateur league¹³. More interestingly, four friends in Konya, all fans of the serial, gave an obituary notice to a local newspaper, "Yeni Meram". In the notice, all characters of the serial were considered as actual persons, whereas it was emphasized that they were the characters of "Valley of Wolves"¹⁴. Evidently, this did not mean that the boundaries between fiction and reality were cancelled. Besides, this was not a new phenomenon. Till the early days of cinema, the popular reception of cultural products includes a sentimentality that was not distinguishable from the emotions towards "real people". However, this example showed the enormous impact of the serial. Nevertheless pieces of news that appeared in the media were more confusing¹⁵. In a press bulletin published by the advocates of Ergin brothers (Cerrahpaşalılar in the serial), it implied that when Çakır is killed by Cerrahpaşalı Halit in the serial, Alaatin Çakıcı took that as a sign and panicked. Then, he began to take extra measures against Ergin Gang. Therefore, real persons take the events of the serial into account in the real life, or seem to do so. The fiction affects the events in the serial and thus became a part of the reality that it claims to represent. That is, the serial does not only represent the mafia in the realm of a fictive televisual text, but also interacts with it. Indeed, the same is true for the performance of Rauf Denктаş. His appearance in the serial is a political action, which is in accordance with his political strategy. He found the opportunity to blame media for not giving to his opinions enough space¹⁶; he found a formidable place to expose his nationalism, he had the opportunity to present his

¹³ For example see <http://www.medyatava.net/haber.asp?id=12762>. 16.7.2006.

¹⁴ See <http://www.medyatava.net/haber.asp?id=12662> 16.7.2006.

¹⁵ See "Bir iddia da Erginlerden" Radikal 16.08.2004.

¹⁶ "Hürriyet yer vermedi ben de dizi de oynadım", Hürriyet, 22.02.2005. Denктаş claimed that he played in the serial because media and especially Hürriyet did not give him enough space to him and his case. He would not do such a thing if he could express himself by normal means.

arguments on the actual political agenda. Similarly, the argument of the Ergin Gang effaces the boundary between fiction and reality. From the perspective of the serial, all those strengthen the serial's image as the truth revealing fiction.

One last example about the subject is worth mentioning. It happened that the serial's actors gave support to a campaign aiming to meliorate the conditions of education in the country. At first, the actor who plays the role of Polat –Necati Şaşmaz- spoke, in his real person. But obviously it did not satisfy the producers. Than, he spoke as Polat, with dubbing, in the office of Polat. Therefore, it was not the actor who plays Polat who supported the campaign, but Polat himself. This situation illustrates well the serial's relationship with the notions of reality and fiction. The characters claim reality.

I do not want to propose a questioning of the boundaries between reality and fiction in a postmodern world in Baudrillard's fashion. Indeed, this way of relating reality and fiction is not widespread, if not unique in the popular culture; and the essentials of arguments I mentioned above is different. What Baudrillard means by simulation is the breakdown of the relationship between images and reality, the lack of actual referents (1998, p. 13-8). In "Valley of Wolves", we deal with the referents, the fiction does not claim to be more real than reality but representing reality in a fashion avoiding conscious distortions, that is by "reading newspapers in inverse" and thus reaching to the hidden truth. Whereas the news about Ergin brothers mentioned above may seem adequate for such a "postmodern" line of thought, my preference is to assess it as an interaction between fiction and reality, and not a replacement of reality by fiction or "simulation".

What interest me in this work are not such meta-narratives about the nature of reality, but the political and ideological function of such a way to relate the fiction and reality. Indeed, the ambiguity of the borderline between fiction and reality can be seen as a structural property of the conspiracy literature. The structure of pseudo-academic literature which claims to offer explanatory texts involves that the best way to see the hidden truth is to write scenarios through the ability of reading actual political affairs. Therefore, they claim to reach the hidden truth

through an act of creative scenario writing. The ambiguity that I have cited is related to this general pattern.

Indeed, the way that the serial relates reality and fiction is a key to the serial's immense popularity. The "actuality" feeling that is created through occasional references to recent political events and the use of obvious pseudonyms is a part of the strategy of the serial¹⁷. The serial aims to create a feeling of reality, which we may assess as successful when we consider the events that we have explored above. This feeling of reality was very similar to the one that scenario writing procedure aimed. The appearance of Rauf Denktaş as himself was linked to that point. For Denktaş, this might be a simple act of propaganda, but for the producers of the serial, it was obviously a move towards increasing the credibility of the serial's political stance. The real political figure appearing in the serial gave more credibility to the other elements included by the serial. And the confusing events that blurred the borderline between reality and fiction derived from that intention of the producers.

However, we should not underestimate the blurring of the boundaries of the fiction and reality. In "Valley of Wolves", such confusion became a source of spectators pleasure as well as a strength for the direct political message whose content we will discuss later. It supported the logic of conspiracy by strengthening the claim of revealing the truth behind the events, "to read newspapers in inverse" as Polat shouts in the last episode to his judges. Indeed, another question is the source of the knowledge on such matters. However as Raymond Williams emphasizes (2003, p. 45.), this is a widespread phenomenon in the TV: there is some information and knowledge which is unavailable to the spectator and the people who appear in the TV have access to this knowledge. TV is the medium through which the possessors of this secret knowledge agree to share a part of that knowledge for some reason. This situation is more understandable when, say, soccer games are considered. People on the screen both have seen the match in the stadium and moreover they are supposed to have some relationships with the people who are able to influence the scores. But the origin of the knowledge which "Valley

¹⁷ Virtually each episode includes one or more long analysis of recent political events by a character.

of Wolves” exposes is totally invisible. However, it continues claiming to be a kind of unofficial history of the last decade. This is partly what differentiates “Valley of Wolves from the debate on realism. It exposes its political function explicitly, but also hides it. However, the events which refer directly to a well-known event -such as the assassination of Aslan Bey in the 56th episode which is a clone of Hiram Abas’s assassination-, invites people to a particular point of view on the issues known by the public, through the serial’s esoteric knowledge that people are unaware. This is clearly a process of public acknowledgement. Therefore, we should emphasize that the fact that the serial has direct political messages on the concrete political events and the blurring of reality is interrelated.

B- The Political Parade

Before launching the thematic analysis, I find it beneficial to familiarize the reader to the serial. However, to try to summarize the serial would be futile as the intrigue is too complicated and the characters too numerous and politically and symbolically overloaded. Indeed, the serial is similar to a political parade where all important elements show up sequentially. Here, I will try to catalogue relevant characters and themes that are critical in understanding the discursive forms used by the serial. In fact, spectators of the serial may skip this part.

It is both impossible and meaningless to provide a summary of the serial’s intrigue. Indeed, the material of this thesis is huge (97 episodes, approximately one hour each.) and loaded with sub-stories which sometimes have only a marginal connection to the central themes. Therefore, to describe functions of the characters may seem to be a more appropriate way to familiarize the reader to the material, but the length and complexity of the material creates again a major problem. The characters involved are numerous. Here, I will analyze only some of them. I will omit most of the characters which make a short appearance and only take the characters which have involved in the serial for a reasonably long period of time, because my aim here is to introduce the main storyline of the serial. However, I will deal some of them when they have a crucial importance in explaining a larger structure, such as “baron of the world” which appeared only in the final scene. Some characters which made short appearances are really important and

symbolically significant, such as Pala, or the public prosecutor. I will deal with these characters in the concerning chapters. Also, I will group some characters under thematic titles when the significance of personal traits is irrelevant while the function as a group is essential, such as “Russian council” and “Bodyguards”. I will also group these characters in major titles, in relation to their place in the serial, or in other words, their position by reference to the protagonist. The only exception will be the protagonist, who constitutes the reference point of such groupings.

1- Polat Alemdar

Polat Alemdar is clearly the protagonist of the serial. The main theme of the serial is his trajectory and his aims. We will deal with his representation throughout the following chapters; therefore we would limit ourselves here by giving a descriptive summary of his trajectory.

In the beginning of the serial, we meet Ali Candan, a secret agent disguised in Foreign Affairs officer, which will later become Polat Alemdar. However, in the later episodes, we will slowly discover that the transition from Ali to Polat is not his first change of identity. He was born as the son of the “supreme evil” in Turkey, that is Baron, and his name used to be Efe Karahanlı. Later, he had been kidnapped by Aslan Bey, a member of Turkish Intelligence Service for a conspiracy whose results would be seen only thirty years later. Indeed, Aslan Bey’s aim is to drive Baron to an emotional confusion and thus paralyze him. Efe was adopted by a dependable and religious family, namely Candan’s, in Kanlıca, İstanbul and named Ali Candan. Indeed, the choice of family is not random, this family has been chosen by Aslan Bey. Indeed, he has become a family friend of the Candans and heavily influenced Ali. He is influential in his decisions to be educated in Mülkiye, become a Foreign Affairs member and later member of intelligence service. After various missions in foreign countries, being the last one to train Albanian guerillas in Kosovo against Serbians, Ali Candan returns to the country by the directives of his boss Aslan Bey and his new mission is explained to him. He will undergo a plastic surgery, die as Ali Candan and become Polat Alemdar, and slowly ruin the secret council ruling Turkey. He strongly protests, he is not ready to give up on his relatives, notably his life-long love Elif Eylül. However, for the sake of the country,

he accepts the mission. Thereafter, the intrigue develops in two directions. While he is rising in the “underground” in order to destroy it, he also reconstructs his relationship with his relatives as Polat Alemdar. Indeed, he is introduced into mafia in the bottom line, as the nephew of a weak old but respected godfather, Emmi. He quickly becomes the best friend and partners with a more important godfather, Çakır, and takes his place in his death. He gains the confidence of baron through his similitude to his son (which is to sneeze third time each morning), and ultimately replace him in his death. However, he is not completely successful in his tasks. He manages to destroy the mafia in Turkey, but in a larger perspective, it is a stalemate: he is to destroy the roots of the evil lying in the US and secret orders ruling the world. In his private life, he manages to gain the love of his old circle, and ultimately he declares his true identity, but his adventures results in Elif Eylül’s death. Moreover, his meeting with his biological mother and sister get the things complicated. While he saves his sister from malicious powers, he can not do the same for his mother who is killed by mysterious powers.

2- The Circle of Ali Candan

As I have stated above, the reconstruction of old relationships of Ali Candan by Polat Alemdar is an important theme, and the members of these circle should be examined. The functions of this circle would be analyzed later in the Second Chapter; however, I will offer a summary of their place in the narrative. Whereas one can get the opinion that this issue concerns only the private life of Polat, the mafia business and the circle of Kanlıca are interrelated in the “Valley of Wolves”: Elif Eylül is kidnapped more than once for “business” reasons, becomes mafia’s lawyer, his brother becomes a mafioso, Ömer Efendi gives important information to the police etcetera.

a- Ömer and Nazife Candan

A religious and traditional family living in İstanbul, they are chosen to adopt Efe Karahanlı through an examination that they do not realize: that is, they are not informed on the conspiracy in which they are involved. They are a middle-class family who has a modest existence. Ömer Efendi’s knowledge on issues concerning

Islam and eastern arts is completed by Nazife Candan's devotedness to motherhood. Thus, the ideal family embodies in their household. They enforce their child to marry Elif Eylül, but his fake death occurs the day after he proposes to marry. Then, they consider Elif Eylül their own daughter who cannot agree with her mother whose moral values are not as strong as Candans. Later, they will also treat Polat as their son as he manages to gain their love, but only in the last episodes they will learn his true identity.

Ömer Efendi is the stepfather of Polat. His family has been chosen because of the fact that it is a modal, exemplary Turkish family. So his views and life gives us clues on the utopia of serial's imaginary. Ömer Efendi is a *müezzin* [prayer caller]-, a *neyzen* [ney¹⁸ player], *ebru*¹⁹ artist and a *hattat*²⁰. All those are genuine arts of traditional culture and Ömer Efendi represents an unknown bearer of sublime traditional values values such as are common sense, honesty, modesty, tolerance and religious virtues. He has a vast culture on traditional arts and wisdom. He represents the persistence of Eastern virtues. He always gives precious advices whoever comes to ask him. In these advices, his main reference is Mewlana Celaleddin Rumi's *Mesnev* the *sunni* conformist wing of *Sufi* tradition with close ties to the Ottoman ruling class (İnalçık, H. 1973, p. 201). Obedience to fate and welcoming it in a religious manner is the essence of his philosophy²¹. His wisdom is very much impressive. Indeed, first Baron's daughter Safiye -who had grown up in Canada according to western values- and then her wife visit him and they are

¹⁸ A traditional musical instrument which is often used by *Sufi* orders and thus has mystical connotations.

¹⁹ A traditional visual art based upon the mixture of water and paint.

²⁰ A traditional visual art based upon stylized writing of Arabic alphabet.

²¹ This dialogue is between Ömer Efendi and his wife:

- "I am tired... I am tired of accepting everything. We didn't have children, you accepted. They said that our kid is dead, you accepted. They said that our child is alive, you did not asked where he is, and you accepted that too. Now, a man comes and says that our son is his son, you accept that too. I am now rebelling against all these.
- I am also accepting your rebellion. Who has ever altered faith by not accepting it." (*Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005, p. 161.)

influenced by his philosophy of life²². The rich and westernized does recognize the superiority of the simple and eastern.

Despite his attachment to the religious values, his major virtue is tolerance. This tolerance supposedly originates from his intellectual roots in the *Sufi* tradition. He goes as far as accepting that Elif lives with Polat without marrying him. Indeed, it is just his tolerance which has impressed Safiye -that is Baron's girl- in the first place. His family life also is represented as ideal. He has a life-long marriage with her wife. Despite the fact that her wife can not be as wise and as rational as him, he manages to rule on the family in a soft manner. Therefore, Ömer Efendi has a natural traditional authority deriving from his traditional wisdom, whereas it does not need to be supported by a sanctioning behavior as in the case of Father Nusret in "*Ekmek Teknesi*".

However, he is not a realist. His way of behavior fails in front of harsh realities. So Polat and others have to listen and respect him, but they have to behave differently because of the necessities, facts of life. Ömer Efendi represents the moral consciousness, but in "Valley of Wolves", we do not have the chance to act accordingly to this consciousness. Anyway, we need such a consciousness whose wisdom will be realized when the justice is actualized. In a way, we can detect here a conservative utopia: the corruption of the old values and order brought the impossibility to act according to the truth of moral consciousness, but once the corruption would be defeated, this consciousness will rise again.

b- Elif Eylül

The eternal love of Ali Candan, Elif Eylül is a lawyer who works in İstanbul and lives his mother and his brother. She is in love with Ali since childhood, but they can be together only rarely, as Ali first studied in Ankara, and been abroad because of his occupation. After the "death" of Ali, she experiences psychological difficulties, but as an idealist and gifted lawyer, she continues to seek justice, which she will continue in cooperation with mafia shortly after his meeting with Polat. She experiences familial problems: her mother is materialistic and selfish and his

²² See 70th and 71st episodes.

brother a machist vagabond. So, she embraces Candans as her family. The relationship between her and Polat slowly evolves to a love, but out of the loyalty that she feels to her eternal love to Polat, Elif resists. Then, because of a picture published in the newspapers (by the ruse of Polat's foes), she suspects that Ali is alive, and as a powerful and skilled lawyer, manages to learn that the body which was supposed to be Ali's is fake. However, his investigations are manipulated by superior powers. Then she believes that Ali left him, and expresses his feelings towards Polat more directly. She even begins to live with Polat after some major dangers that she had been subject to, but she never engages in sexual intercourse with Polat. (At least, as Polat. In the first episode, we see Elif and Ali in a bed of a hotel room naked. The widespread opinion that they never engage in sexuality is false, Ali Candan and Elif Eylül sleeps, but not Polat and Elif. Polat even refutes Elif's demand once) At the end of serial, she loses her legs because of a conspiracy against Polat. Polat reveals his true identity and propose to marry in the hospital, but she dies immediately once she hears the proposal.

c- Eren Eylül

The brother of Elif Eylül, he is an unemployed, insolent young man disrespectful to all values and seeking to get rich. This search will end up bad; he will be used by mafia and go in prison where he will meet Çakır and gain some moral values: the ones of mafia and *Racon*. His relatives first warn him about these values, but at the end, as it is better than his earlier attitudes, they decide that it is not so bad and accept him as a mafioso. Then, Polat hires him.

d- Deli Hikmet

Hikmet is the exemplary simple-minded citizen. He is a simple repairman living in Kanlıca and the best friend of the protagonist Despite his interest in the "dark side" of politics and conspiracy theories and his environment including two secret agents, he is unable to understand the nature and meaning of the events he is involved. He is an exemplary nationalist who is aware that the whole media is gigantesque conspiracy. According to him, one should read a lot and carefully to conceive the truth. Through his "reading", he is constantly worried about on "the

games played upon the country”. Indeed, we are briefly informed on the secret nature of international politics through his speeches. But his analyses are less sophisticated than the ones occasionally given by other more important characters. Moreover, he has a major mistake: he insists that the state does not take the necessary precautions. When he complains about that matter to Polat and Aslan Bey, whose real job is unknown to him, they smile. Hikmet is the ordinary honest man they sacrificed all for. The ignorance of Hikmet derives from the fact that they intend to protect him. Simple man should stay simple-minded, heroes should worry for him. His interest in conspiracy theories indicates his honest nationalistic feelings, but he is too simple to get really involved in such matters.

Why Hikmet is “the mad”? For a number of reasons. His relatives consider him mad because of his extreme admiration of conspiracy theories, his pride, his extensive frankness, and his temper. Indeed, whereas those are called as madness, they are also represented as true virtues. Those are the virtues of a real nationalist. His proud is national proud, his frankness and temper is the veritable force that a Turkish citizen has, and his obsession represents nationalist consciousness. However, especially by Ömer Efendi, he is invited to be more tolerant and modest. Concerning his obsession, it is implied that a simple man should be aware of his weakness and be most prominently involved in the quotidian affairs that he is able to. The consciousness of conspiracy is accepted, but the extremities in Hikmet are protested: simple man should not be so much passionate about those matters. Hikmet’s occasional protests to the state have two aspects in the same manner: it is, on the one hand, good to be politicized in a nationalistic way, but on the other hand it reflects simple-mindedness since the state does take the precautions that Hikmet suggests, but only he is not informed. He is too simple and passionate to be able to see that situation. Again, the simple man should stay simple forever.

3- The Hierarchy of Mafia

In the beginning of the serial, we are told that mafia is a hierarchic structure who has “Baron” Mehmet Karahanlı and his council in the top. However, as Polat raises in this hierarchy, it becomes clear that not only there is a pro-Russian

counterpart of the council, but also that the “Baron” of the Turkish mafia is nothing more than a tool of foreign mysterious organization. However, what we in fact face is basically an hierarchy of the Mafia: besides the inner hierarchy of the mafia, there is a hierarchy among godfathers. In the bottom, there are the İstanbul mafias, operating in different quarters and sectors. These are under the authority of the “legate of İstanbul” appointed by the council. Two leaders cooperating with the council may be considered above them: Nedim İplikçi and Tuncay Kantarcı. Indeed, these become members of the council after the death of Testere Necmi. Then we have the council. The members of the council change, but the council basically has six members whom we will discuss each. Then comes its leader, the Baron. In the later stages of the serial, we discover that the baron is under a secret order, and this order takes its directives directly from its leader in the United States. Under this title, I will explain the structure of this hierarchy from bottom to the top, that is, by following Polat’s footsteps.

a- Süleyman Çakır

Süleyman Çakır is one of the minor godfathers of İstanbul, but an ambitious one. His life is a story of success. He has emigrated to İstanbul with his family when his father has been killed in their homeland. He tried to live by selling pilaf in the streets. Here, he has killed a policeman who beats her sister and thus goes to children’s prison. When he gets out of there, he successfully manages to build a small criminal kingdom through violence. When Polat appears, he is in competition with “İstanbul Legate”, that is the leader of İstanbul’s mafia appointed by the council. He makes an alliance with Polat, and they become best friends. After defeating foes one by one, he himself becomes “İstanbul Legate”, but this triggers the competition between factions, and he is assassinated by the ruse of his enemies.

b- Cerrahpaşalı Gang

At the time when Çakır becomes the “Legate of İstanbul”, only one of the mafias operating in İstanbul dares to challenge him: Cerrahpaşalı family. This mafia is different from others in his structure; it is a large family who has two different authorities: The sister who constitutes a moral and familial authority and the elder

brother Halit's business authority. They have a clan-like structure and different traditions based on rituals. Indeed, unlike Çakır and most of the similar godfathers, the values and decors of the spaces belonging to the family connote a traditional and eastern culture. Moreover, unlike Çakır, they are not only involved in narcotic trade, but the whole family, including the elder members is drug addicts. The gang manages to kill Çakır, however, the following night; they are eliminated by Polat along with other leaders at the bottom.

c- Bodyguards

The theme of bodyguards is important in the whole of the serial. Indeed, a character's ability to provide the loyalty of his bodyguard is one of the positive qualities. All of them function as high assistant executives of the godfathers and their loyalty is crucial. Indeed, the failure of the first major and short-lived enemy of Polat, Şevko, is due to the lack of loyalty of his bodyguard. Indeed, characters such as Memati and Orhan Karadeniz are most similar in that respect. However, three of the bodyguards are different. Kılıç, Baron's bodyguard is a member of council, and he is represented as far more intellectually capable and powerful than other bodyguards. The relationship between Tuncay Kantarcı and Abidin is completely different, because of the Kantarcı's personal traits that we will discuss in length in the next chapter. Lastly comes "Seyfo Dayı", who belongs to the earlier generation. His boss is killed in the very beginning of the serial, and he is offered as a residue of good old values, and respected by young generations, till his assassination.

d- Nedim İplikçi

Nedim İplikçi is not a mafia leader despite his strong ties with the "underground". He is a Jewish broker who "launders" money of the council, so he is incredibly rich but powerless in front of other godfathers. He is represented as a coward man whose unique passion is to make money. In the end of the serial, he is assassinated by mysterious powers.

e- Tuncay Kantarcı

Tuncay Kantarcı is also a different godfather. Indeed, he is made a godfather by Baron. Originally, he was a corrupt high bureaucrat in the customs. He had been fired because of corruption, but he is still controlling customs through his connections. Therefore, he is different from other godfathers ruling on streets, his function is to control customs for great smuggling operations of the council. He is a coward man, religious and obsessed with hygiene. His man Abidin manages his business in a great extent. In the final episode, he gets crazy because another member of the council, Laz Ziya is killed in front of his eyes.

f- Tombalacı Mehmet

Tombalacı Mehmet becomes a council member in the first episode, after the elimination of Ömer Zülfi Koşal who is supposed to be the leader of illegal gambling. Indeed, Tombalacı Mehmet is the new ruler of this sector. Whereas he is said to be a poor man which make people gambling, but during the serial he is represented as a powerful man, influential in media and international politics. His wife is a Jew with strong connections with Mossad and his death is due to the fact that his behavior in Caucasia was incoherent with Baron's and United State's policies.

g- Testere Necmi (Necmi the Saw)

Necmi represents the "armed forces" of the Council. Although he behaves a cultured man, he is a sadist killer: he kills his victims with a saw. Indeed, his childhood story is interesting. He is a gentle and polite boy who works for a mechanic and whose father is dead. But both his mother and his boss mistreat him. One day, he traps his mother and his boss in the bed and kills them both by a saw. Indeed, like Çakır, he is represented as a poor boy who becomes a cruel godfather because of the social conditions, but unlike Çakır, he is a close collaborator of Baron unaware of any moral values. Polat will catch him, and he will die in an unknown place that Aslan Bey closed him.

h- Samuel Vanunu

Samuel Vanunu is one of the basic members of the council: his duty is to manage “International Relations” of the council and to manipulate stock market. He is represented as Jew who does not have any kind of moral values: he does not hesitate in using his own wife in a conspiracy. However, his ambition prepares his end: he reaches the identity of Efe Karahanlı and eliminated by mysterious powers shortly.

i- Laz Ziya

Laz Ziya, together with Hüsrev Ağa, does not owe his force directly to the Baron. He was a powerful godfather before the coming into existence of the council. However, he works for the council and he manages his sector, which is weapon smuggling. Again together with Hüsrev Ağa, they form the traditionalist wing of the council and they are in a latent competition with the people more dependent to Baron and which have a less traditional way of thinking. He has a funny and irritating way of speaking, and he is one of the most cruel and self-confident characters of the serial.

His personal tragedy is worth mentioning here although it has of little value regarding the serial’s main intrigue. Laz Ziya falls in love with a girl -Asiye- in his homeland in his youth, and according to the traditions of the country, he “buys” her. On the other hand, she never loves him, and she cheats him with her dentist. Therefore, Laz Ziya kills the dentist and his wife. Their two daughters who were hidden in the closet witness this homicide. After this incident, a mutual hatred develops between Laz Ziya and her daughters. Especially the younger girl, Meral hates her father whereas Laz Ziya ceases to give parental compassion to her daughters. However, whereas Laz Ziya is represented as a cruel man who even hates his daughters, we know that he is in a deep pain. He occasionally close himself in a room decorated in a luxurious and traditional manner, listens to the traditional song “Asiye” from an old gramophone, cry while drinking whiskey and grieve for his love that he killed.

His elder daughter, Nesrin, marries to a rising godfather, Çakır, and Meral also moves to his house. But Laz Ziya, however, does not develop a close relation with son-in-law. Whereas Nesrin has a strong common sense, Meral's character is unbalanced; he attempts to kill his father and once excused, constructs a relationship with his father's main foe in the council, Testere Necmi. After Necmi's death, he attempts to kill his father again, but his sister Nesrin, considering relations of power, kills her own sister just before the attempt. However, the alliance between father and daughter is short-lived. Once the balances of force shifts, they again become again enemies, and this time the rivalry is only ended by Polat's ruse.

Laz Ziya's shift of attitudes and clever maneuvers are influential in the development of the intrigue but the fall of the council prepares also his end: he is killed in the prison.

j- Hüsrev Ağa

Hüsrev Ağa is a godfather of the same generation of Laz Ziya and his pattern of behavior and mentality are most similar. Their primary difference is sectoral; Hüsrev Ağa is in narcotics business. He is represented as a tribal leader of Kurdish origins, and his cultural codes are more rural than urban. Indeed, he does not live in İstanbul but in a nearby farm. He is in a covert competition with the more modern wing of the council: he is on heroine business while Baron finds LSD business more profitable and orders Necmi to kill the "professors", who are heroine makers of Hüsrev. Hüsrev, after loosing his only child Nazlı, (Nazlı begins to use heroine and she is raped, so the bodyguard of Hüsrev kills him) looses his common sense and make the covert war open. He considers cooperating with the prime foe of the council, Russian mafia. Kılıç kills him with a sword.

k- Halil İbrahim Kapar

Halil İbrahim Kapar who is called Halo by everyone is a narcotic dealer who is sentenced to life sentence. He is saved by Polat to replace Hüsrev Ağa. He is represented as a sympathetic, ignorant but intelligent character, and he is together with Polat in all his tasks till the final episode of the serial.

l- Kılıç

Kılıç is the bodyguard of the Baron from the beginning of his career, but as already mentioned, he is different from other bodyguards, he is a member of the council, and he is influential as any godfather. He is represented as an intellectually capable man unlike other bodyguards. At the death of his boss, he wants to replace him but this proves to be impossible. After the fall of the council with the intervention of mysterious powers, he escapes, but Nizammettin finds and kills him.

m- Nizammettin Güvenç

Nizammettin Güvenç seems to be the lawyer of the council, and he is the coldest and thus most unattractive member of the council. But at the last season, he proves to be a more interesting character. Indeed, when mysterious powers manage to get most of the council members confined or killed, Nizammettin is still safe. Slowly, it was discovered that he is indeed more powerful than Baron himself, he is a member of the order that Baron takes the orders and Baron does not know this fact. Indeed, till his assassination by Polat's man, he was one of the true exploitators that we are not informed in detail. We will detail what we know about them under the title "Holy Knights".

n- "Baron" Mehmet Karahanlı

Mehmet Karahanlı seems to be the supreme evil of the serial at the beginning as the leader of the secret council. He used to be a business man working secretly for the state in 1970's. After the operation in Cyprus in 1974, his real intentions become to be apparent. He slowly becomes the secret ruler of the country. He is a civilized, sophisticated and intellectual man. He is active in the geopolitics, in such a way that he may use Turkey to be able to protect his own interests. He is self-confident and there is nothing he cannot do for his interests, both in terms of force and morality. His authority over the secret council is unquestionable. He supports the interests of USA and Israel in point that supreme power "thanks" him after the change of government in Georgia in 2003. However he has some powerful enemies: mainly Russian mafia which is another malicious power wishing to manipulate Turkey and some mysterious powers in Ankara.

After the introduction of Safiye, his daughter, in the serial, the character of Baron became complicated as his familial past is revealed. We learn that his son had been kidnapped, -as we know, by Aslan Bey- than her wife got insane and he had to send his daughter to Canada. Safiye blames him to be irresponsible over her, and by using his guilty consciousness she succeeds to live in his house. Than discovers her mother living in isolation in the roof of the house because of her mental illness that troubled her after the kidnapping of her son, and manage to cure her. And with the emergence of the suspicion that Polat is his own son, the powerful and logical man gets emotional. This is just the weapon that Aslan Bey planned to use against him. He loses his self-control. Familial reasons make him weak. He becomes a human being with flesh and blood from the cold monster he used to be, exposing his human needs of happiness. This situation prepares his end, and he is murdered by a secret order, which he is a member and instrument, the reason being his manifested emotional weakness.

o- Russian Council

Against Karahanlı's Pro-American Council, another foreign force appears. Russians begin to operate in Turkey and shortly forms a rival council. The characters in this council are less emphasized, but they manage to make Baron fail. We know also that they have connections in the state. However, Polat manages to beat all of them and then kill them all by the help of a traitor. This is not the end of Russian activity; the traitor will be killed by a Russian agent as well as most of the minor men of Polat. This point is let open-ended.

p- Holy Knights

"Holy Knight" is the name given to the secret order which appeared late in the serial and which proved to manipulate "Baron". This name and their representation connote "Templar Knights". They wear masks so we do not know their identity. They seem to be related to United States, indeed, they accuse Baron to be unable to protect US interests. They manage to eliminate the whole council in a day, and they manage to control all communication from a dark place. They kidnap Polat and force him to kill Lebanon's president in Syria. (Indeed, second

time. Lebanon's real president was killed in Syria in recent days and Polat's duty was to kill his imaginary successor. The whole thing was an interpretation of the event.) Polat manages to get rid of them, decode Nizammetin's identity, destroys the computer that controls the communications located in a ship and also locate a member of the "Holy Knights". But this unknown member disappears after leaving a message. This message will eventually lead Polat into the house of "Baron of the World". Unlike the "secret Council", "Holy Knights" are really obscure. We do not know anything about their identities and operations. What we know is they manipulate Turkey for US interests.

q- Baron of the World and his Wife

These two characters appear only for a short period in the last episode, but they are important for the serial's imaginary. Indeed, they are represented as the descendents of an old dynasty that secretly rules upon the world, as well as cruel sexual perverts. They are living in an absolute luxury in Washington. However, for unclear reasons, they do not kill Polat with whom they talk in their house, and they send him back in Turkey by unknown means.

4- The State Connection

Under this title, we are going to discuss the state officers that appear in the serial other than Polat. All of such important characters were members of the KGT that we are going to analyze in depth in the third chapter. Indeed, we may say that the state subsists in KGT in the serial. Polat's connection of the state also subsists in KGT. So, we will treat three important members of KGT: its founder Aslan Akbey, his successor Doğu Akbey, and Polat's bodyguard Abdülhey.

a- Aslan Bey

Aslan Bey is the founder of KGT, which is a sub-unit of Turkish Intelligence Service without any legal existence. He was also the descendent of Eşref Kuşçubaşı, a member of Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. Aslan Bey himself the planner of "Operation Valley of Wolves". The KGT and he seem to be isolated in the state; he complains once that nobody but Doğu Akbey listens to his advices and most of the

state is corrupt. Indeed, he challenges in various instances some characters that whose faces cannot be seen but it is understood to be Aslan Bey's his higher-ups. At the end, under the pretext that he went out of the control of the state, he is assassinated.

b- Doğu Eşrefoğlu

Doğu Akbey first appears in the serial as an influential but retired intelligence service member. He is Aslan Akbey's mentor, but he is unable to prevent his disciple's assassination. After the assassination, he become the new president of KGT. Shortly, he discovers the true identity of Polat as Ali Candan and cooperates with him. He manages to eliminate a major chief in the Intelligence Service betraying to the country. Indeed, Doğu Akbey seems to be more influential while this man -namely, Mito- seems to be in a more prestigious office. However, he is killed by the "Holy Knight"s during the elimination of the council.

c- Abdülhey

When Polat realize that he needs a bodyguard as all godfathers, he picks up a poor man on the street which in fact proved to be a KGT agent under cover without Polat knowing it. It was Aslan Bey who arranged this coincidence, and Polat obeyed despite he was aware of Aslan Bey's plans. Abdülhey is a Kurdish man who worked for KGT in the Northern Iraq. Indeed, the fact that he is a Kurdish is emphasized. Polat and Abdülhey make their state connection known to each other after Aslan Bey's death and work together thereafter.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter was dedicated to give a mostly descriptive account of "Valley of Wolves", and so to prepare a basis for more in-depth analysis that we would engage in the following chapters. In order to achieve this goal, we have first emphasized that despite the fact that it may be consumed through other media, "Valley of Wolves" is above all a television serial, and we have briefly resumed some points which needs to be taken into consideration while dealing with the

televisual texts. There, we paid special attention to an aspect of the narrative seeming to be peculiar: its way to relate fiction and reality. There we have concluded that serial's endeavor to identify reality and fiction is different than "liveness" of television medium and "realism" of television drama. We have tried to relate this phenomenon with the politically overloaded character of the "message" and "logic of conspiracy", a point that we are going to analyze further in the following chapters. Finally, we have tried to familiarize the reader with the story narrated. There, we have preferred to give a resume of the central intrigue, and give an analysis based upon characters. From now on, I will try to assess the content and logic of the serial more in-depth, and emphasize political, social and ideological results that we can derive. In other words, I will present a critical reading, which I will relate with the critique of ideology.

Chapter II

Psychology of “Valley of Wolves”: Nation and its Heroes

In this chapter, my aim is to analyze the psychological mechanisms lying behind “Valley of Wolves”. My argument will pursue the Adornian formula on the psychology of fascism: “Acknowledgement of the weakness, identification with the victor”²³. This formula implies that the ordinary man is invited to seize his impotence towards the forces that influences his life no matter these are templar knights or stars moving from a sign to another; while in the meantime developing a belief that these same forces will take care of the individual. In this chapter, I will divide my argument into two. In the first section, I will focus upon the first part of the formula, that is, I will discuss the “impotence of the masses”, whereas in the second, how the “ordinary people” are invited to identify with the authority. However, the identity of this authority, which is a very controversial issue in the narrative of the serial, will be discussed in the next chapter. In other words, I will provide a partial answer to our main question which is “where does the charm of “Valley of Wolves” derive and what are the political outcomes of the rhetoric which supplies this charm”.

²³ This sentence is formulated by Crook in the introduction that he wrote for a selection of Adorno’s essays (See Crook, S. 1994, p. 11.). A similar formulation upon the issue of astrology may be found in the same volume. (see Adorno, T. W, 1994, p. 57) This is not surprising since Adorno, and the Frankfurt School in general, sees the phenomenon of fascism and “culture industry” as the parts of the same dialectics, namely “dialectic of enlightenment”.

As I have mentioned above, the insights of Adorno's arguments on the psychology of "masses" will be used here in order to grasp this answer²⁴. What is in question here is one of Adorno's insights that he argues to be common in the rhetoric of fascism and what he calls "culture industry". He argues that people feeling impotent in front of social life are vulnerable to the pathologies such as paranoia. However, paranoia as a neurotic disease in the individual level is quite frequently replaced by other "defense mechanisms" more social in nature. Astrology is one of them. Astrology externalizes the powers which affects the life of individual, but also takes care of him (Adorno, 1994, p. 57). So, it is conservative in its nature:

"By strengthening the sense of fatality, dependence and obedience, it paralyzes the will to change objective conditions in any respect and relegates all worries to a private plane promising a cure-all by the very same compliance which prevents change of conditions. It can easily be seen how well this suits the over-all purpose of the prevailing ideology of today's culture industry; to reproduce the *status quo* within the mind of people." (Adorno, T. W. 1994, p. 121).

On the other hand, the televisual program that we are dealing is different in the issue of identification:

"Soap operas, television shows and above all movies are characterized by heroes, persons who positively or negatively solve their own problems. They stand vicariously for the spectator. By identifying himself with the hero, he believes to participate in the very power that is denied him in as much as he conceives himself as weak and dependent. While the column also works with identifications, they are organized differently." (Adorno, T. W. 1994, p. 56).

²⁴ However, I should emphasize that I will not depend on an Adornian theoretical stance. First of all, this would be meaningless while we consider Adorno's approach to the dialectics. Adorno does not propose a clear-cut theoretical stance. In his view philosophical systems such as the ones of Kant and Hegel were the products of the consolidation of bourgeoisie as a ruling class; their will to embrace totality and infinity spontaneously is a result of the stabilization of the capitalist society as an infinite advance in frontiers. In opposition to that way of philosophizing, Adorno uses fragments instead of all encompassing system building books. Indeed, "Only a philosophy in fragment form would give their proper place to the monads those illusory idealistic drafts. They would be conceptions, in the particular, of the totality that is inconceivable as such." (Adorno, T. W. 1973, p. 28). Therefore, it would be meaningless to pursue Adorno in a systematic way. Moreover, his overgeneralizations such as the omnipresence of reification and complete manipulation of masses are irrelevant in our scope. What we do here is simply to inspire from Adorno's analysis over the dialectics of impotence and identification.

In Adorno's view, the identification mechanisms that astrology relies upon belong to a more abstract level, i.e. people identifies to the system *in abstracto* (Adorno, T. W. 1994, p. 57). So the feeling of impotence is both nurtured and neutralized through astrology. "Culture industry" and fascist propaganda works in a similar way. Whereas in "culture industry" the hero is to be identified, in fascism, it is the leader (Adorno, T. W. 1992, pp. 120-1). Thus, the feeling of inability to change material conditions combines with identification and idealization of the ones who can alter it. This is the psychological mechanism underlying the conservative stance which makes individuals vulnerable to fascist propaganda. My argument in this chapter is that the psychology of "Valley of Wolves" can be juxtaposed with this psychological mechanism. That is, it once nurtures the feeling of impotence against the malefactor conspirator, while inviting us to identify with authority and hero.

In the first section, I will deal with the first part of the formula, that is, I will discuss the feeling of impotence that the serial involves through logic of conspiracy. However, my starting point will be how the ordinary man is conceived. In fact, he/she is conceived as a member of a community of nation, which he/she is interpellated as "citizen of Turkey". Following Žižek, I will argue that this fantasy of "homogenous nation" results in a complementary fantasy of the other conspiring against the nation. Only then, I will be able to discuss how the political realm defined through the deeds of conspirators and heroes excludes masses.

In the second section, I will deal with the second part, which involves identification. In this chapter, I will relate the serial with Fethi Açıkel's understanding of "*Kutsal Mazlumluk*" and use his insights in order to grasp the mechanism how the serial is able to sublimate authority and aggressive masculinity. Then, I will explore a second theme, which is the cult of hero. In doing so, I will explain how the spectators are invited to identify with superior powers.

A-Nation and its Exterior: Acknowledgement of the Weakness

1- Homogenous Community and “Symbolic Jew”

In this section, I will argue that the serial has in mind a specific notion of “nation”; this notion is to conceive the “nation” as an organic community free of antagonisms. Nation as community has a harmonious and peaceful existence, and the only threat to this harmony comes from exterior. I will describe how this community is conceived in the serial’s imaginary and discuss how this notion ultimately fails. In this description, I will use two different tools: I will assess implicit representation of the nation as the people of “Kanlıca”. Then, I will focus on the nature of the threat, and try to provide an explanation.

The way that the serial represents “Kanlıca” can be conceived as a metaphor of the “nation” in the discourse of the serial. Some criticisms may be raised against this argument. First, “Valley of Wolves” is not a serial whose main focus is “neighborhood”, we only see the circle of Ali Candan, and so we cannot make comments about a community as a whole. Second, it is questionable that this circle may be used as a metaphor of nation.

Against the first criticism, I will argue that even the serial’s focus does not lie in the life of the neighborhood some features of the serial lets us to consider it as a community. The protagonist has been raised in Kanlıca, an old and traditional quarter along the Bosphorus; and his entire social circle are settled in this quarter, including his family, lover and best friend. In the very beginning of the serial the quarter itself is under threat. Mafia desires to destroy the old houses in the neighborhood and thus built modern and expensive dwellings instead. But the inhabitants are reluctant to leave the place which is their “homeland”. This theme is a much repeated theme both in Yeşilçam representing the resistance of human sentiments to the materialism of modernity. Taken as it is in “Valley of Wolves”, it tends to become a conservative reaction. The neighborhood is represented as a communitarian utopia under the threat of modernism.²⁵

²⁵ This theme is not necessarily conservative. For example Marshall Berman in his *All What is Solid Melts to Air* defines the destruction of the old quarter of Bronx for the construction of highways as

Moreover, I will support my arguments by a discussion of “Ekmek Teknesi”, a serial that the producer, scenarist and director is identical, but the focus is the daily life in a neighborhood rather than macro-political conspiracies. The serial as a whole is a call to the return to the traditional values and a warning against the dangers of trespassing on the limits that is set by the traditional authority²⁶. The neighborhood is not an egalitarian community but it is under the fatherly authority. Without him, all quarter would be doomed. I will argue that the role of Kanlıca in “Valley of Wolves” is similar; even if the elderly wise man of Kanlıca, i.e. Ömer Efendi does not have such a role, the attitude towards authority and traditional quarter is the same.

Against the second criticism, I will argue that the sublimation of the life in Kanlıca by the nationalist heroes justifies the discussion of this circle as a metaphor of “nation”. The hero’s task is to save the country which is no more than the beloved ones; this definition is repeatedly given. Therefore, the protagonist himself approaches to his circle as a metaphor of country and nation. Polat emphasize that his duty of “saving the country is identical with saving the beloved ones, it is implied that the love of country (i.e. nationalism) is the logical outcome for the beloved people, Kanlıca in the case of Polat.

Moreover, two people, namely protagonist’s step father Ömer Efendi and best friend Deli Hikmet (Hikmet the Mad) are represented as role-modals for simple

the clash of two kinds of modernism, one destructive and second re-territorializing. In his account, the quest for a dwelling does not have to be conservative. (Berman, M. 2003, p. 422) The television serial “Yeditepe İstanbul” involved also a similar story, but the emphasis was upon old leftists and sentiment of solidarity.

²⁶ Indeed, these two serials also intersect in the second episode of “Valley of Wolves”. The protagonist of “Valley of Wolves” and his step father come by to the bakehouse called “*Ekmek Teknesi*” to buy bread and chat with his owner, Father Nusret [*Nusret Baba*]. The bakehouse is the one which the serial owes his name and Father Nusret is one of its most important figures of the mentioned serial. This serial may be located in a specific thematic-genre widespread in Turkish televisions that we may call “neighborhood serials” which takes the neighborhood as a central theme. “*Ekmek Teknesi*” illustrates the life on a neighborhood -namely Kuzguncuk, a quarter close to Kanlıca with similar characteristics- with a style close to both comedy and soap-opera. In “*Ekmek Teknesi*”, a neighborhood with communitarian characteristics is represented. The whole neighborhood is centered on the figure of “Father”. Father always knows what to do and what is the right thing to do. However, the youngsters of the neighborhood engage in secret and wrong businesses despite their respect for him. At the end of each business, “Father” saves the day, humiliates the young, and youngsters understand that they should obey the authority of the wise “father” for their own benefice.

citizens. Ömer Efendi represents the moral consciousness of the serial, he is a religious man who still defends traditional eastern values and virtues. However, it is underlined that he is not a realist; his values are not conform to the brutal world. He is not aware of the true evils that surround the world, but he is aware of his shortcoming. On the contrary, Hikmet is unaware of his ill-informed situation. If Ömer Efendi represents the “wise” aspect of the Turkish Nation, Hikmet the Mad represents the “mad” aspect. The extreme passion of Hikmet with conspiracy theories is seen as a nationalist awareness, his honesty and virtues are appraised, but he is also mocked: he does not know his place, which is simple-mindedness. These two characters represent the virtuous character of the Turkish nation, but they also expose its naïve nature.

While considering the world of the “common people” in opposition to underground world, we should also emphasize the absence of the conflict. Whereas the world of godfathers and intelligence services is a world of struggle and conflict of interest, the life of the common people does not bear any genuine conflict: It would be a world of complete peace and justice if it was not manipulated by alien powers. The community values that Kanlıca is grounded upon are pure, conflict-free and excellent, but this simple world is under the threat of dreadful and mysterious exterior, which is unnatural.

To put it briefly, the community and the ordinary citizens constituting it, who are protected by the heroes, have some basic characteristics. The community is based upon and bound by a patriarchal authority that legitimizes this authority through his traditional wisdom. This patriarch is a resort to consult rather than a violent power²⁷. Indeed, traditional and religious values are important and respected in the daily life of the community. However, it is strongly emphasized that the attitude towards religion is not radical; the occasional references to Mewlana are

²⁷ This situation is more or less the same in “Ekmek Teknesi”. Indeed, in the early episodes, the whole people of the coffee-house leaves the coffeehouse to ask advice from Father Nusret after the story that the storyteller tells, because they were unable to figure it out. On the other hand, Father Nusret always offers a solution. However, unlike Ömer Efendi, Father Nusret has a power ready to sanction his subjects.

used in emphasizing the importance of tolerance²⁸. Politically, all are nationalists emphasizing their loyalty to the state -Ömer Efendi always refers to it as “our state”-, but they are simple-minded people who cannot reach real politics. Most important of all, in its inner dynamics, a community is antagonism free, any problem, any conflict, any breakdown on peace is the result of malefaction of external forces. This absence is clearer in “*Ekmek Teknesi*” whose main intrigue is upon the life in neighborhood’s community. Another important characteristic is that ordinary people are always represented as unaware of the macro-political events which undertake just in their very environment, and they are unable to intervene in political events.

How possible sources of conflict within the nation are covered? The issue of class or differences of wealth are not much emphasized. In the discourse of the serial, it is implied that the origin of the poverty is exploitation: it is not capitalist exploitation but exploitation of imperialists and their domestic collaborators. Both Polat and Aslan Bey occasionally states that their duty is to destroy the exploitators. In this way, any class antagonism is externalized. Indeed, patriotic rich people, including Çakır and Polat, behave in a benevolent way: they help people in all means, they avoid harming the poor. So, patriotic rich people are the protectors of the poor whereas foreigners are the exploitators.

Another possible problem, the Kurdish issue, is also denied with strong emphasis. Unlike Osman Sınav’s precedent movie, “Deli Yürek”, “Valley of Wolves” does not directly deal with this issue but occasional references show us that the serial sees it not as a true conflict but an artificial one which is provoked by malicious foreign powers. The killing of the Kurdish godfathers by the orders of the Council illustrates that point: the conflict between Turkish State and Kurdish guerilla’s is profitable only for foreigners and their domestic instruments. Another example is the case of “Kürt Bedo” -a pseudonym for “Kürt Beco” or “Kürt Idris”.

²⁸ Indeed, the same attitude is shared in “*Ekmek Teknesi*” and “Valley of Wolves- Iraq”. In the “*Ekmek Teknesi*”, one of the youngsters falls in love with a woman who he later discovers to be non-Muslim. This results in a general crisis which Father Nusret tries hard to calm down. Similarly, in the movie, the Sufi sheikh resisting American Invaders is also a spokesman for tolerance and he is against violence: he resists and theoretically, i.e. theologically, confutes suicide bombers and killing of journalists. So, religion is not let to turn amok.

While Çakır was “ruling” upon İstanbul, Bedo was one of his important supporters, so their enemies try to incite people against him saying that he is a “Kurdish”, but Çakır’s men intervene by replying “There is no distinction between Kurds and Turks.”²⁹ Such a conflict is omitted and seen as arbitrary by the sub-text of the serial. Also, in the last episode, Hikmet the mad comments on events in Şemdinli³⁰ after the bombings of 9 November 2005, and repeats the official discourse, i.e. Turks and Kurds are inseparable, such events are foreign conspiracies³¹. In brief, Kurdish conflict is not accepted as a genuine one and seen as foreign conspiracy.

We may also speak of a xenophobic attitude in the “Valley of Wolves”. Not only foreigners are always represented as the absolute other conspiring constantly against the nation, but also the representation of non-Muslim minorities is always negative. Considering that we encounter only one non-Muslim who is not Jewish, we may call this anti-Semitism. The elaboration of the stereotypical Jew is worth mentioning at this point.

Indeed, Jewish characters such as Nedim İplikci and Samuel Vanunu are represented in a stereotypical way. Here, the case of Esther Hirsh may be useful who is a powerful feminine character having a mysterious power which derives from her relationship with Mossad and Israeli government may be useful. She uses this power and her relationships with men to acquire power, but in the affair of Tombalacı Mehmet, she fails and has to accept the councils will³², and then disappears from the serial. By reference to these characters, we can say that the serial’s imaginary see Jews in terms of stereotypes: cunning, obsessed with money, and malicious. One can easily say that the serial has strong anti-semitist tones. This

²⁹ See 38th episode. This episode has provoked some reaction in racist circles active in the internet: the hero should have punished the Kurds and save repressed Turks. See <http://www.nihalatsiz.org/forum/viewthread.php?tid=2746>

³⁰ In that date, some members of army were caught by the people around after a major bombing. It event provoked a considerable popular protest in the region and some army members had been sentenced to prison some months later. The news which drives Hikmet mad concerns protests, not bombing itself.

³¹ See for example Hürriyet’s new on Prime Minister Erdoğan’s views: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/4209108.asp>

³² 36th episode

is not only because of the representation of Jews as stereotypes, but also the supposed Israeli activity. It is supposed that Turkey's interests are under the threat of Zionist ambitions of Israel³³. For example Aslan Bey manages to making fail a great smuggling operation, which is to send to Kurds weapons of Israel. Occasional references to "Larger Middle East Project" represent it as an Israeli conspiracy against Turkey. Mossad is always in motion in Turkish territory and they once kidnap Polat by the ruse of Esther. So, Jews are enemies of the people. However, we should notice that Zionists are not the primary "Conspirator Other". Although the serial refers to a stereotypical Jew, the main "enemy of the people" is not explicitly Jewish. On the other hand, the villains carry the qualities and functions of the "symbolic Jew" that I will discuss later.

Therefore, in the serial, we are dealing with a fantasy of homogenous community free of antagonisms. Any conflict is no doubt related to foreign conspiracies and their domestic collaborators. Indeed, "Valley of Wolves" is only a component of such psychology. Indeed, if one looks at some popular novels recently published we see that they are nationalist fantasies. "*Şu Çılgın Türkler*" of Turgut Özakman is a collection of anecdotes about Turkish Liberation War with a minimum degree of fictions. It is mainly a historical narrative about a nation ready to make any sacrifice against a gigantesque conspiracy including all West³⁴. "*Metal Fırtına*" is a fantasy, "a political-fiction" about an American invasion in Turkey and heroic resistance. There also, the motif of nation under foreign threat constitutes the main tension³⁵. To state all columns, essays and TV programs that express similar motifs would be impossible. However, it is important to state that the theme of "nation" under threat can be traced back to the formation of the Turkish National identity. Its traces can be found in the Ottoman Empire's last decades; however, the

³³ In general, Turkish right distinguishes between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. However, this anti-Zionism includes a stereotypical bias against Jews, just like the serial. Therefore, the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is not relevant regarding the serial and also more generally Turkish Right.

³⁴ See for example Özakman, T. 2005, p. 113.

³⁵ And, just as "Valley of Wolves" and "Valley of Wolves – Iraq", it is a story of revenge. Indeed, the heroic Turkish agent kills the business man responsible of invasion by strangling him in his own feces. (Ucar and Turna, , 2005, p. 301-2.

impact of Kemalism is in fact crucial. Kemalism conceived a homogenous public space that religion, social classes and ethnicity cannot appear as visible identities (Yıldız, A. 2001, p. 215). Indeed, this understanding has persisted both as an official view and as a theme of popular nationalism. For example, the speech that Kenan Evren made in radio and television on 12 September 1980 put the emphasis upon the homogeneity of the nation and provocateurs under the influence of foreign ideologies (National Security Board, General Secretariat, 2001, especially p. 682). Another example is a recently published book by the name *Milliyetçilik: Neden Şimdi?* [Nationalism: Why Now?]. The book consists of selective answers to question asked by the publishers by various intellectuals and politicians including Marxists with nationalist tendencies, Kemalists, moderate and extremist rightists, ex-bureaucrats and even Süleyman Demirel, ex-president. Virtually all seems to think that Turkey is experiencing a crisis and proposes nationalism (whereas the alternative terms “ulusçuluk”, “ulusalcılık” and “milliyetçilik”, all meaning nationalism, are severely competing). The crisis focus on three different problematics: the difficulties in containing the Kurdish identity, the problem of covering Islam as a component of Nationalism without loosing the reference of Kemalism, and the foreign policies which are affected by the EU and US, and which are considered as a threat to sovereignty. All these problems are generally considered as a “foreign/imperialist” conspiracy in cooperation with domestic “traitors”. The most proverbial expression belongs to Erol Bilibik: “today, circles who interpose to Nationalism are the circles who say, “Kemalism is dead”, and “Principles of Atatürk are dead”, and thus, “Kemalist Nationalism is dead”. Domestic circles who say these are collaborators of imperialism.” (2006, p. 36) All of the writers who choose to answer the question, “How do you evaluate the attitude of foreign and domestic circles interposing to nationalism in Turkey today?”, imply that the critics of nationalism are conscious or unconscious turncoats.³⁶

In brief, Turkish nationalism gets a seemingly paradoxical position: on the one hand, it believes in a homogenous national body, on the second hand, it

³⁶ The only exception is, surprisingly enough, ex-president Süleyman Demirel who gave a brief and critical analysis of the critics of nationalism (2006, p. 69).

discovers constantly traitors in the Kurdish Separatism, Islamic movement, and foreign policies of the governments which aims EU membership or strongly under the influence of the United States, and intellectuals critical of nationalist postulates. Indeed, such a situation is not peculiar to Turkey. Balibar calls that the antinomy of the contemporary world:

“The indefinitely continuing paradox results from this: to imagine in a regressive way a nation-state where individuals will be naturally “in home” because “between themselves” (between semblables) and to render this state inhabitable. Trying to produce a community unified in front of “external” enemies while discovering constantly that the enemy is in “interior”, by identifying them to the signs which are nothing else than the fantasmatic elaboration of *its* divisions. Such a society is exactly a society politically alienated.” (Balibar, 1988, p. 287-8).

Therefore, the relationship between the community and the threat is a widespread contemporary phenomenon. This relationship should be examined more in depth. The Žižekian understanding of ideology may be useful for such an explanation.

In Žižek’s understanding of ideology, which guarantees the survival of capitalism, does not reside in the Marxist formula of “they do not know, but they are doing it”, but in the cynical formula of “they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it.” (Žižek, 1997, p. 312). In his view, the ideology is not “false consciousness”, but it is located in the cynical distance to the ideological fantasy. But, the cynical distance forms only an aspect of the ideological edifice since cynical distance and complete dependency towards the public scenario are interdependent (Žižek, 1996, p. 64). In the case of Anti-Semitism, these two interdependent fantasies take the form of a belief in an organic community as a whole and the figure of “Jew” threatening the society’s, or nation’s harmonious existence. The “symbolic Jew” is the fantasmatic support of the fantasy of “nation”.

Why the notion of “Nation” needs such a fantasmatic support? Does it suffice to state that nations are “imagined communities” without ontological existence, as Anderson does, which are constituted individuals who are not supposed to interfere with each other in a material way in the course of their life? (1995, p. 20) Balibar argues that such a statement is useless, because each community is “imaginary” as far as it is reproduced through the operations of various institutions. (1988, p. 127) He explains the need for nationalism from an

Althusserian perspective. Therefore, ideology is not manipulation of individuals, but the very formation of individuals as subjects. According to Balibar, nationalism interpellates subjects as citizens. It fixes the emotions of love and hatred of individuals and so, it becomes “a primary condition of the communication between individuals and social groups” but it does so not by denying all difference but by formulating a symbolic difference between “us” and foreigner, a difference that cannot be overcome (Balibar, E., 1988, p. 129). For Balibar such a fixation operates through the interference between myths of race and language, and apparatuses such as family and schooling, strongly tied to the state. Antagonisms are ethnicized as a cleavage between true and false citizens. Indeed, such ethnicization fits in place in the examples portraying the mentality of Turkish nationalism and more specifically, in the “Valley of Wolves”: the enemies are always “turncoats”, “traitors” and collaborators of “foreign powers”. However, the interdependency between the “integrity of the nation” and the “symbolic Jew” needs more clarification. In our framework, the fantasmatic qualities of “traitors” is more important, since the serial’s fantasies turn wilder and wilder as the enemy becomes even more irrationally imagined. The image of enemy slides from a secret council that rules on Turkey since the 1970s to a Templar-like secret community, and then comes some references to an order similar to the fantasy of the “order of Zion” ruling upon the world since generations³⁷. Also, some features of Dan Brown’s best-seller novel “Da Vinci Code” are adopted in the serial, such as the criptex³⁸.

So, the irrationality of such fantasies is most important for our purposes. Žižek states that the more the fantasies are proved to be false, the more their influence increases because the distance between really existing Jews and the “Symbolic Jew” is the very strength of anti-Semitism since this void itself represents the main anti-Semitic argument (1996, p. 68). This void justifies the uncanny nature of Jews. In other words, we cannot stop by explaining that the

³⁷ For a detailed description of the “Order of Zion” and similar organizations as it is imagined by conspiracy theorists in Turkey, see Altındal, A., 2004. Altındal, here, “proves” that European Union is indeed a masonic project dating back to Templars.

³⁸ Criptex is an object invented by Brown following some ideas of Da Vinci. The same object occupies a major place in the serial. See Brown, D. 2005, p. 224.

ideological form “nationalism” neither annihilates the antagonisms, nor cover them; we should also understand the paranoid form it takes.

For Žižek, any ideology needs this fantasy of the “Symbolic Jew”. The reason is that any attempt of symbolization of the reality ultimately fails, or in other words, any narrative aims to resolve some fundamental antagonisms, but such solutions are never completely successful (1997, p. 10-11). As a result, the fantasy of omnipotent Jew is the necessary supplement of the fantasy of organic community. In other words, whilst the notion of community inevitably fails in front of irrepressible antagonisms, the notion of “obscene master” intervenes. So, two fantasies are interdependent. I will argue that the understanding of the realm of politics through the logic of conspiracy becomes a necessity as long as the nation is conceived as a community free of any kind of antagonisms (Žižek, S. 1996, p. 75)³⁹. Or, we can put that in a more straightforward way: to fantasize about the nation as a compassionate mother’s house, as a true dwelling where absolute harmony reigns, we have to fantasize about an obscene master who threatens and corrupts this harmony.

Once put this interdependence between two fantasies, I will discuss the nature of the threat from a different angle. Indeed, the logic of conspiracy that results from this perception of threat or the fantasy of “obscene master” has some paralyzing results.

2- Logic of Conspiracy

In the previous section, I have dealt with the understanding of “Nation” that “Valley of Wolves” offers us, and I have argued that the serial, in conformity with the Nationalist postulates and especially the postulates of Turkish Nationalism, conceives Nation as a homogenous identity wherein there is no antagonism. Then, I have argued that this notion results in a paranoid state of mind: a fantasy of “other” constantly conspiring against the harmony of “Nation”. In this section, I will deal with a different aspect of the same phenomena, in a way, the role of the “other”. I

³⁹ It is also important to note that this master is not only omnipotent, but also in extreme *jouissance*. So, it does not only secretly conspire against the nation, but he also steals its enjoyment. This point has been elaborated by Arslan in its relation to the “secret council”s of 70’s Yeşilçam by reference to Lacanian/ Žižekian psycho-analysis. (Arslan, T. 2004)

will take a look to the other side of the curtain that the ordinary man has no reach, and focus on the side of conspirators. First of all, I will analyze how “the logic of conspiracy” works in “Valley of Wolves” and how the conspirators are represented. Then, I will discuss the dominance of this logic in Turkey and underline the motifs that “Valley of Wolves” uses. Finally, I will argue that this feature has a politically paralyzing effect, besides its epistemological shortcomings.

To begin with, we should remember the aim of operation “Valley of Wolves”, which is to save the country from a secret council that covertly rules the country. However, in our eyes, the secret council is by no means secret. We witness it wholly with its inner conflicts, private life of its members, and we know about the latter’s ambitions, habits, desires and goals⁴⁰. Therefore, we know its structure. At the beginning, the division of work was sector based. Karahanlı was the leader, Kılıç was his bodyguard, Necmi the Saw represented the “armed forces”, Laz Ziya was an arm smuggler, Hüsrev Ağa dealing with narcotics, Nizamettin Güvenç manipulated the legal system and the media, Samuel Vanunu –naturally a Jew- was interested in international affairs and bearish operations in the stock exchange market, Tombalacı Mehmet ruled illegal gambling business. During Polat’s journey to the top, all of these people are eliminated one by one.

However, the sentiments that true politics are unreachable and masters are omnipotent have not been altered. Indeed, Baron and his council represents the supreme evil, but the character of Baron is slowly revealed through weaknesses deriving from his familial problems, and Polat proves to be a stronger character. Then, the omnipotence of baron loses its credibility. As the character of

⁴⁰ However, a paradox appears in that point. The knowledge that masses lack is no more a lack, because those serials inform them about the truth. Whereas party politics is never involved in those serials, the people are the addressees of those serial. “Valley of Wolves” emphasizes in the beginning of each part: “What we narrate about this dark valley of Turkey is completely fictional.” This statement is self-defeating. The dark valley belongs to an existing, no-fictional country; it may not be fictional. Even names are allegoric: Hiram Abas- Abbas Ustaoglu, Nesim Maliki-Nedim Iplikçi, Alaattin Çakıcı-Süleyman Çakır, Lucky S-Şanslı S. etcetera. Events and persons have strong similarities with the events and persons publicly known. Fans are trying to solve the puzzle: I witnessed a discussion in the web on the question “Who is represented by the character “Kirve”? Kürt İdris or Mehmet Açar?” (see www.turkforum.net/archive/index.php?t-33167.html) The serial informs us about the true hidden nature of politics. One remembers Žižek’s thesis that “the phantasmatic narrative always involves an impossible gaze”. (1997, p. 16).

Baron becomes transparent, his weakness becomes manifested, as he becomes vulnerable, other forces appear. “Holy Knights”, a clear reference to Templar Knights, appears as supreme evil able to manipulate all politics. Indeed, Baron was nothing more than their instrument. Then, Polat manages to discover some of their secrets, but he is unable to defeat them totally. In the last episode, he faces the “Baron of the World” in Washington, who is the forerunner of an old dynasty secretly ruling upon the world. But Polat is unable to eliminate him. How he manages to elude from him is left unanswered. What is sure that we cannot reach the dark side politics during the serial: as we get closer, it goes far away.

The most important point in this narrative is that, as I have mentioned above, the realm of politics is located in a place where ordinary man cannot reach. The fate of the country lies in the result of the struggle between Baron’s conspiracy and Intelligence Service’s counter-conspiracy. The serial, which constantly refuses to remain silent in any matter, is silent on party politics: the reason for this is that party politics does not matter. They can be manipulated, but as they are nothing more than puppets or good intentioned fools, the real antagonisms are located in a different place, in “deep state” and “secret councils”. So there is no domestic politics. The only politics is the geo-strategic macro-politics. Indeed, in the occasional speeches that a character evaluates current political events, only states or better said “deep states” and intelligence services appear as actors. The serials imaginary conceives politics as a gigantesque chess game. Turkey is the arena of a war where different forces struggle for power, and ordinary people are unaware of this game generally. This is not only the externalization of inner antagonisms. In such a way, depoliticization of masses is justified. As the politics is out of reach, there is no way that simple man can intervene in politics. So, the politics should be left to the elites, or better said, to the heroes.

Consider the example of Nizammetin Güvenç’s explanation of the economic crisis of 2001. Nizammetin explains to Polat how politics works:

“For example, we want something. Ankara finds it difficult to execute it, or it tarries. Samuel intervenes immediately and makes such manipulations in stock exchanges that, the economy is doomed and Ankara fulfils our wishes. Of course, with interest.

- As in the crisis of 2001?
- Exactly.

- So, what would you do if the president had not shot the booklet of constitution?
- We would find something else. The prime minister had coughed, he got a cold. What is important is to prepare the conditions. To take the money out of stock exchange market takes only a second.” (*Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005, p. 213)

So, in the emergence of the crisis, the political events and cleavages, economic structures, governmental tensions do not have any importance. What counts is only the wills of secret actors. Indeed, there is no need to refer structural relations while interpreting events: Look who benefits from it; that is his conspiracy, the materialization of his will.

Such logic is widespread in Turkey (Tanıl Bora calls Turkey the exemplary country of the mentality of conspiracy” (1996, p. 42) and Şerif Mardin called it “the only genuine political philosophy in Turkey (Mardin, Ş., 1991, p.122, quoted by Bozarslan, H., 2004, p. 19)), not because the Turkish “spirit” has a natural tendency towards such explanations, but because objective causes created an appropriate climax for such paranoid state of mind. The long and painful vanishing process of Ottoman Empire caused the governing elites during the construction of national identity to be extremely sensitive on the subject of “foreign threat” (Akçam, T. 2001, p.60 and Yeğen, 2001, p. 886) and this, combined with the mentality considering the popular masses incapable of political action create an appropriate basis for the flourishing of logic of conspiracy (Bora, T., 1996, p. 42). Indeed, its history is also long in Turkey⁴¹. Anti-Communist conspiracy theories became widespread immediately in the 1950’s, and the 70’s witnessed a plenitude of such theories seeking the foreign “focus” conspiring in order to threat the order in Turkey. Meanwhile, Islamists were propagating Anti-Semitist conspiracy theories. In the 1990s, theories looking for the conspiracy behind separatist actions of PKK

⁴¹ Approaches which dates the propagation of conspiracy theories to the rise of neo-liberalism (see Nefes, T., p. 4.) or a post-sovietic phenomenon (see Yaşlı, F. 2006, p. 82.) are questionable. The *opus magnum* of the logic of conspiracy is no doubt “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” first published in Russia in 1905 (see Larsson,G. 2005, p. 18). When we consider McCarthyism and the fear of crypto-communists also widespread in Turkey, it is hard to speak of conspiracy theories as a newly rising phenomenon.

(Kurdistan Worker's Party) were numerous⁴². Today, each political line has its own theories.

Obviously, such logic is not peculiar to Turkish case. There exists a large and popular library in global scope trying to persuade us to different theories of conspiracy, that the world is ruled by Templar Knights, Masons, Wises of Zion and extraterrestrial powers. Not all of them so fantastic, many "scholars" argue that known subjects of World Politics have unpronounced conspiracy plans, and only through a specific logic of analysis and esoteric knowledge that we can penetrate to the true nature of geopolitics. Beyond symptoms of paranoia, such theories have a complex relationship with the scientific mode of thinking; in fact, they reclaim to be more scientific than other theories. As Bozarlsan argues, those theories should be distinguished from scientific knowledge for various reasons, even if we reject a definite singular rigid method for science. The first reason is epistemological, those theories are impossible to falsify, reclaiming a monopoly of explanation excluding all kinds of multi-variant approaches (Bozarlsan, H., 2004, p. 22). But more serious than that, they took all actors they are accusing as compact and the rest as simple puppets lacking any kind of conscious will. The political result of such logic would be Blanquism, manipulation against manipulation and conspiracy against conspiracy, therefore an elitist politics excluding unconscious masses and involving only the possessors of the esoteric knowledge of the truth of conspiracy theories (Bozarlsan, H., 2004, p. 23). Of course, as a political instrument, conspiracy exists, but the literature on conspiracy theories replaces the whole with the part. Even in the less fantastic versions, the whole domain of politics is reduced to a global chess game, where given monolithic actors with pre-defined interests are involved, and each important event has a secret meaning related to that game. In this sense, each conspiracy theory is by definition essentialist. This secret meaning is reachable only to the analysts possessing an esoteric knowledge and the simple man can know only what is explained to him. Each political event is a move of such actors, and the analyst has the power to see its true meaning, which constitutes only a necessity of geopolitics.

⁴² See Bora, T. 1996, for a short history of conspiracy theories in Turkey.

Resuming the argument, “Valley of Wolves” takes a homogenous national community for granted. However, conflicts are constant in that community. Instead of acknowledging the existences of antagonisms which causes these conflicts, the rhetoric of the serial choose to externalize the source of the conflicts: Foreign powers and its domestic collaborators causes these troubles. Such powers are omnipotent enemies of the nation. Following Žižek, I have argued that such a fantasy is necessary in order to complete (or support) the first one, which is the fantasy of homogenous community. Then, I have showed how logic of conspiracy fits in this picture. Indeed, the fantasies about omnipresent and omnipotent enemies, together with the ideal of simple-minded citizen results in the logic of conspiracy. Such logic brings the total alienation from political realm: Politics is a game between invisible and unreachable actors.

Therefore, the first psychological mechanism of the serial is the following: the ego tries to conceive itself as a totality, but as in the case of paranoia, in the face of impossibility of this *suture*, fantasizes about a constantly threatening exterior⁴³. The fantasy of constant threat, in the case of the serial, becomes apparent in the message: simple man as Hikmet the Mad or somebody as you, the spectator, are impotent against the conspiracies of great actors. You are good, but simple people. You must acknowledge your weakness. With such a gesture, the first step of Adorno’s formula is taken. In the next chapter, I will deal with the second one, through the introduction of the “savior”.

B- Nation and its Heroes: Identification with the Victors

In this second chapter, I will focus on the mechanisms of identification that “Valley of Wolves” involves. Indeed, the serial, through its bipolar structure (good guys vs. bad guys), strongly seizes its spectators to identify with the positive heroes. Whereas the approaches that counts the serial among the factors that contributed the rise of violence among the youth through a methodology of “role-modeling” is questionable (since the culture of violence should be pursued in the deeper roots of

⁴³ See for example Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 196. Also see more recent work about the link between paranoia and conspiracy theories. Özmen E. 2006, p. 69-70.

the culture), the impact of the serial can still be mentioned. Yusuf Solmaz, in the beginning of his book about “Valley of Wolves”, mentions the event which motivated him writing this book: he is a psychological mentor in a high school and one of his students was pretending to be a mafioso. I want to quote the dialogue that motivated him. The dialogue is between him and one of his students known as “Bıçakçı Nedim”, a student he says to have strong inclination to violence.

“-What do you want to be?

-I will be Mafia.

-What is to be mafia? Is there such a job?

-There is Valley of Wolves, mister.

-What about Valley of Wolves?”

-Nedim wants to be like the actors in that serial. Like Çakır, for example” (Solmaz, Y., 2004, p. 23)

Whereas I do not argue that all “fans” of the serial identifies with the characters in such a degree, I will argue that the serial, by sublimating and idealizing some values and by emphasizing the need for heroes, offers his spectators figures to be identified. In this section, I will discuss what values are idealized and how the cult of hero works. I will discuss the issue of identification under two titles. First, I will discuss the values of authority and masculinity and second, the cult of hero. In such a way, I will offer a picture of the identification mechanism.

1-Authority and Masculinity

In this section, I will analyze two interrelated values that the serial uses and idealizes: Authority (and obedience) and aggressive masculinity. After discussing how these values are idealized in the discourse of the serial, I will put these in a larger picture through Fethi Açıkel’s discussion on the psychopathologies of Turkish Right.

Most of the characters in the serial are somehow involved in the strict hierarchical structures, whether is it mafia or intelligence services, and therefore, are subject to intensive authority or possess it. Another issue is that both of these positions include extensive use of violence. As far as the godfathers are considered, we can add to these the element of living a rich and luxurious life. The claim for authority is absolute even if it is discovered in the process that this is not so much true. Their major common denominator is the ambition for power. Each leader

seeks to maintain its present power and moves further to the top, through cunning and violence. Each controls a criminal network in which the orders cannot be questioned. Each claims to be omnipotent. The self-confidence of Baron is exemplary: “I start wars. I say the direction of bullets, I prepare the mud. If the blood will drizzle on me, I create a blood lake, and I take a bath within.” (*Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005, p. 158). They enjoy money and luxuries, but they emphasize that money is only a necessary instrument for acquiring of power.

The life of a mafia leader is offered as the idealized masculine life, whose most clear example is Çakır. He used to be the most popular character of the serial till his death, even more popular than the hero Polat. This situation mostly derives from the fact that his character is far more identifiable than Polat’s complex and hypocrite role .

Çakır is a child of a family originating from the East Black Sea region. (Indeed, he sometimes use the dialect characteristic to that region) His father had been killed by his enemies in his presence while he was a child. Then, his family migrated to İstanbul. (Sometimes he talks to İstanbul as talking to a cruel enemy or a women waiting to be conquered, a typical Arabesque scene.) There, they lived under conditions of misery, trying to survive by selling pilaf in the streets, an illegal act. There a police tries to stop them and he beats his sister. Çakır loses his temper and kills him, and then is sent to the juvenile prison. When he gets out of there, he becomes an important mafia leader. In that respect, he symbolizes the dream of the urban poor; despite the cruelty of living conditions, he reaches power and money. He is the victorious boy of the people. His moment of death is very telling in its relation to the subject of the banditry. He is ambushed by his enemies in a dishonest way, and despite the fact that he senses the ambush, he walks on it. In that moment, he begins to sing the famous folk song, “Hekimoğlu”. Hekimoğlu tells the story of a famous bandit who becomes an outlaw because of an injustice –just as the most famous bandit of Turkish history Çakırcalı Mehmet Efe did⁴⁴-, become powerful but at the end defeated by outnumbering enemies. This universal myth of banditry is constitutive for Çakır. The established order had been cruel to him; therefore he

⁴⁴ See Yetkin, S. 2003, p. 84 and Dural, H. 1999 p. 79-80.

has chosen to be an outlaw. But his power and money did not make him alienated to the people, he still shares their values. He is courageous, just, and loyal to his family and to his friends, but above all a patriarch which constructs a cruel and violent authority above his family and crime organization. He is cruel against his enemies and betrayers; he is merciful against ordinary man, especially the poor. Sometimes he works as a mechanism of social justice. He is a self-made man which had built his present powerful and rich position from nothing in İstanbul as a poor emigrant whose roots lies on the difficult and violent world of suburbs. On the other hand, despite all his power, he is only a pawn in the chessboard of greater underground powers. Therefore, as a character he presents the realization of desires but also he is easily identifiable. The richness and authority that he had built manly, that is by his courage and his ability to use arms is just the future projection of the young man of suburbs. However, just like them, he is also weak; he is ill-informed and impotent against the conspiracies of the power acting in the international arena. He represents both the desire of violent power and the impotence of suburban youth, such as Bıçakçı Nedim mentioned. Just as bandits of the pre-modern era, he is weak despite all his power. "The bandit can not rule upon the world." As the tragic heroes of folk songs, his destiny is to die in the face of the great powers he challenges.

The sublimation of obedience is also relevant in this framework. Mafia is understood by the serial as a hierarchic structure. Despite the existence of competing groups and hidden competitions between the members of the same group, there exists a formal hierarchical structure where each has a specific, narrowly defined status. The penalty of disobedience, and (sometimes) failure is death. However, one does not expect from big players true loyalty, they are involved in a game of power where cunning is legitimate. Only under the status of godfather that obedience takes the form of loyalty. There, the death of Orhan is telling. Orhan is the bodyguard of Laz Ziya since forty years, a gentle character whose loyalty and capabilities are emphasized. After a major failure, his boss tells

him to call someone who can replace him and then “accomplish his last duty for him”. Orhan obediently finds his successor and then commits suicide⁴⁵.

The whole theme of bodyguards explores the virtue of loyalty. In the serial, each important mafia leader has a bodyguard, who is in the same time an executive. As long as those characters are considered, loyalty is their main concern. They are not allowed to question, and even think about decisions of their bosses. In this relationship, mafia’s sense of loyalty and absolute obedience crystallizes. The hierarchy is unbreakable. Bodyguards functioning at the same time as high executives demand the same loyalty from the man they supervise.

Çakır’s bodyguard Memati is an exemplary case. Since Çakır saved him from rape in the juvenile prison, he calls Çakır as “Big Brother”. Both are enjoying killing and violence. Their relationship is close to friendship, but the hierarchic distance is always present. We see Memati as the loyal bodyguard and executive of Çakır. His loyalty and obedience is extreme, and he considers suicide after his death. Memati does not think -He utters himself “I do not think!”-, he only accomplish orders, as most of the bodyguards. He does not have interests and thoughts of his own; his desires are identified absolutely with Çakır⁴⁶. This is why after Çakır’s death he makes wrong moves. Since his loyalty is absolute to his former boss, despite his respect to his new boss Polat, the loyalty is not the same, and first, he tries to commit suicide and then, he became rebellious, which prepares a bad chain of events for him⁴⁷. Indeed, Polat will replace Çakır as the absolute authority in the long run.

The sublimation of authority and obedience is also related to the issue of masculinity. Indeed, the quest for authority is at the same time the quest for proving the masculinity, to be a “man enough”. We should emphasize that most of the times masculinity is always seen as a performance rather than a situation as Gilmore

⁴⁵ See 46th episode.

⁴⁶ See 24th episode.

⁴⁷ The relationship between Tuncay and his bodyguard Abidin forms an exception. As Tuncay is not man enough, Abidin’s role in the management of the criminal organization is greater, but the loyalty is still unquestionable. Abidin protects and sometimes mentors his boss, but his respect and obedience is still emphasized.

emphasize. As Gilmore's classical anthropological work demonstrates, there is no universal masculinity finding its roots in some anatomical or psychological process. That is, we cannot derive masculinity from some basic essence rooted in the males and females by birth, and thus, the universality of western socialization process. A short glance to the ethnographic studies would easily show that exceptions exist as well as regularities. Gilmore however insists that once the need for fighting is present, -and often, it is- the socialization of boys as warriors begins and some ubiquitous masculine qualities emerge. But anyway we should not take masculinity as a universal essential quality. Not only it differs significantly from culture to culture, but it also has marginal and heterodox versions besides the hegemonic version (Connell, R.W., 1993, p. 610). In other words, it is a cultural product, not a god-given must. More importantly, it is more an ideal to approximate, or rather a performance than a situation, especially in the modern society. The quality of being a man is not only something to be attained but also protected. It is tested everyday, and a single mistake can destroy the credit of manhood at once and for all. As Gilmore argues, the view of masculinity is a "big impossible", a never attained ideal, which has no concrete embodiment (1990, p. 188 and 242-3). Though, masculinity is not merely a way to assure the patriarchal order but also a burden over its claimer: dominants are dominated by their dominance (Atay, T. 2004, p. 21).

So, manhood is put as an ideal to achieve. The spectators are far away from that ideal. Their class positions put them as subordinates of the hierarchy, unable to control their own destiny. Their masculinity is in question; every situation is a difficult test. Their position as breadwinners is threatened, their authority and independence in the society is most limited. In the figure of godfather, they see a man who is closer to achieve this impossible task. They are struggling with similar difficulties, but they have a hope to acquire the status of "the master".

The theme of *Racon* is also important in that context. The clear-cut rules of honor that *Racon* draws and the ability to persist on it, is another important part of

idealized masculinity that the spectators find attractive. This theme of *Racon* is what makes the position of authority legitimate and moral.⁴⁸

Women's role as an irrational, emotional and weak creature enforces that function. Women in the serial are generally represented as the "second sex" –while not exclusively- and their acts are in general predestinated to be manipulated by men. Therefore, their prime duty is to obey. The emphasis put on obedience as loyalty and its representation as a virtue constitutes the counterpart of the image of powerful men: where there are independent authorities, there ought to be dependent subordinates. If someone who is supposed to be obedient tries to act on his/her own, tragedy is inevitable. For instance, two female characters –Nesrin Çakır and Elif Eylül- involves in a conspiracy against Laz Ziya without consulting to any man, and they insist upon it despite all warnings. Nesrin's motivation is her hatred from his father and Elif's motivation is her complicated feelings towards Polat. Far from achieving their goals, they become a pawn in the game of the men. And a man who is important to both -Memati- is seriously wounded as a result of their acts. Polat – the main hero- resolves the turmoil, then shows them the wounded man and shouts: "He had been wounded because of your childish, womanly behavior!"⁴⁹ This story illuminates the basic character of the distinction made between masculine and feminine by the serial. Women are unable to survive on their own because of their lack of rationality and the ability to repress emotions, even if they are relatively intelligent and powerful. In the big game of power, which is the life itself, feminine sensibility is a harmful weakness. If women are not managed by man, they end up bad. There is a clear division of labor between decision-makers and subordinates. Beyond the anti-democratic tunes of this situation, this is related to the matter of masculinity. Indeed each godfather exercises a fatherly authority; they protect their subordinates who are unable to survive if left alone. Whereas for the main actor's of the "Valley of Wolves", independence is a virtue, to their dependents, loyalty is the prime virtue, no matter they are man or woman. This implies again an ideal of a hierarchical society where each one occupies his/her proper place. Only the ones

⁴⁸ I will discuss its function in depth later in the chapter concerning the conceptualization of mafia.

⁴⁹ 72nd episode

who are “man enough” to rule have the right and capability to struggle for improving their positions in the hierarchy through cunning and violence. The position of second man, able to exercise violence and authority upon others while being loyal without hesitation, i.e. occupying a middle range place in the absolute hierarchy where loyalty is a must is also charming. This is an honorable and attainable place in the society. A conservative imaginary of well-ordered society where each one’s social role and place in the hierarchy has its own function works here⁵⁰.

Therefore the image of men in opposition to children and women constitutes one of the important sources of the charm of the serial. This manhood ideal that the serial offers aims to address the spectator’s desire for a complete authoritarian manly social role. Even the less powerful mafioso’s obedience have a similar function. Not only a conservative image of hierarchy is drawn but also semi-loyal semi-independent figures such as Memati and Abidin are idealized as identifiable role-models. In other words, the masculine qualities that I have tried to summarize above which are offered by the serial are unreachable for its spectators, and this fact is one of the factors constituting the attractiveness of the serial.

It is difficult to say that violence as such is sublimated; indeed in some cases, it is condemned as cruelty. But positive characters also use extreme violence in the name of justice. So violence is a neutral instrument which can be used either way, just or cruel. But its use is far from being evaluated negatively. Rather, it is represented as a necessary masculine quality. Especially Polat’s capacity to exercise violence when necessary is the indication of its positive understanding in the serial’s imaginary. What makes Polat the hero is both its occasional pity and his superior quality in the exercise of violence, he is able to defeat all kinds of enemies by his courage, education and cunning in a fight. Pity and violence are faces of the same coin for the masculine hero.

Two marginal examples may be illustrating in the matter of masculinity. The first one is Nedim İplikçi, a pseudonym for Nesim Maliki. He is not a mafia leader but he is highly involved in the domain of illegal business as the banker of mafia.

⁵⁰ On the other hand, this second feature is more obvious in the structure “*Ekmek Teknesi*”.

Being a stereo-typical Jew, his only passion is money, and he does not share the brutal masculinity of other powerful characters. He is coward, and easily steps back in front of others' will. In sum, he is not a major actor despite his gigantesque treasure and importance in the struggle for power and generally he is presented as a ridiculous character.

Another different character is Tuncay Kantarcı. The relationship between Tuncay and Abidin is unique in the serial, as the portrait of Tuncay is unique also. Tuncay, despite its importance in the illegal business, is not a typical mafia leader. He was once a high bureaucrat in the customs, but had been fired because of corruption. Since then, he is in the service of the council in the issues concerning the customs; he is a key player in the smuggling businesses and manages a small mafia. But as a type, he is highly different than other mafia leaders who are represented as powerful and impressive authorities. He is a caricature of Freud's "anal fixated type". Obsessive on the issue of hygiene and illnesses, coward, religious in an obsessive way, he finds himself on ridiculous positions frequently. He emphasizes that he is a well-educated man and is proud of that. He is always unwilling to involve in narcotic business, but he cannot avoid it. He has the politeness of a civil servant, which does not serve him much as a mafia leader. To summarize, he is not appropriate to be a godfather. Even his bodyguard, despite his loyalty, mocks of him and when the recourse to violence is needed, he takes control. To sum up, he is not man enough, so his presence in the serial is an element of comedy.

The fact that these two types that do not fit in the masculine authoritarian type of mafia world are mocked is telling. These types are not offered as types to be identified with, but as characters to be avoided in performing the manhood. They represent weakness to be avoided. Therefore, they constitute bad examples. They fall short of the ideal of manhood that the serial suggest to its spectators.

To summarize, values involving authority and violence are idealized and sublimated in the serial's rhetoric. Naturally, such an approach is generic to conservatism. However, the popularity of such an ideal may be discussed more in depth in the framework of Turkey. I will argue that this situation may be linked to

what Açıkel calls *Kutsal Mazlumluk* [Holy Persecutedness or Synthesis]. For him, we are in front of a rightist ideological system which articulates the feeling of repressed-ness and persecuted-ness into neurotic-repressive political agenda (1996, p.159). Through this discussion, Açıkel aims to give an appropriate description of the psychology underlying behind the popularity of recent rightist discourse and lay out the pathological aspects of this psychology. According to Açıkel, this psychology, “embodies an authoritarian political apparatus and neurotic will to power.” (1996, p.157) The “persecuted” subject lacks power, and hence his desire of power (Açıkel, F. 1996, p.187). However, this lack does not result in hostility towards upper classes, in the opposite; it becomes an effort to be articulated to them . Persecuted are not the foes of “persecutors”, but potential persecutors. Their will to power frequently takes the form of revanchism. Indeed, taking the revenge of persecuted ones is Polat’s duty. Let alone the serial, main theme of the movie version was “how Polat took the revenge Turkish soldiers who were humiliated by the Americans ?” In the serial, he took revenge of the underdevelopment of Turkey from the conspirators and exploiters. In a larger picture, the serial supports this kind of will to power: In positive figures such as Çakır and Polat, people who Açıkel names “Holy Persecuted”s see their ego-ideal: authoritarian leaders performing aggressive masculinity. Indeed, as men of honor, these people are excellent performers of aggressive masculinity, and they therefore become models to be identified in relation to gender roles. On the other hand, as far as loyalty and obedience are sublimated, people are called to acknowledge their position in the hierarchical structure of the study once more. Therefore, there is an ambivalent structure again: people identifies with authority while learning to obey it.

While Polat plays the avenger, Çakır forms a more identifiable role-model. As I have argued above, Çakır is at the same time weak and strong, he is a self-made man who built his reputation and welfare from nothing but violence. This explains the attitude of Bıçakçı Nedim that Solmaz mentions. It can also be related to Adorno’s theory of Fascism. For him, identification is one of the main mechanisms of fascist rhetoric. People, while expected to perform “responsibility towards above, authority towards below”, are also invited to identify with *Führer*.

Führer is idealized and then identified (Adorno, T. W. 1992, p. 121). However, he is in the same time weak and strong: “While appearing as a superman, the leader must at the same time work the miracle of appearing as an average person, just as Hitler posed as a composite of King Kong and suburban barber.” (Adorno, T. W. 1992, p. 122) Indeed, Çakır is both an average man, playing football with children⁵¹ and omnipotent superman.

Figures such as Çakır and Polat invite the “persecuted” to compensate their loss by identifying with them. This brings us to our primary formula. The acknowledgement of the weakness is in parallelism with identifying with authoritarian, omnipotent positive figures. The aggressive masculinity of these characters perform compensate the same lack of power that Fethi Açıkel juxtaposes with the rightist ideology. Indeed, the cult of hero works in a similar way.

2-Ordinary Man vs. Extra-Ordinary Man and the Cult of Hero

First of all, we should remember a point mentioned when discussing the homogeneity of the nation: although the nation is homogenous, it may be divided into two, i.e. ordinary and extraordinary man. Indeed, people in the serial are divided into two: simple-minded ordinary people, and heroes who can alter reality. Here, the following dialogue from the serial is explanatory. Just after the aesthetic surgery that protagonist undergoes, Polat drinks with his supervisor. He looks at the people entertaining around him and asks:

- Chief, is these people’s life real?
- Yes, it is.... People are divided into two. Some are offered a reality, and they live into this reality since they die.
- Others?
- They intervene to the reality, they alter it. They recreate another reality.
- Like us?
- There were others before us. Yakup Cemil, İsmail Canbulat, Kuşçubaşı Eşref, whole Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa⁵².
- Then you.
- Now, it’s your turn
- I feel like an alien.”⁵³

⁵¹ 2nd episode.

⁵² I will discuss the meaning of the references to Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa in the next chapter. See p. 81 below.

The serial's subject matter is the deeds of the second type: of powerful man who can alter reality. However, people are not invited to wake up: heroes are here to suffer for great causes; they will alter reality for people's sake. This opinion provokes a series of questions, but here, I will pursue one of them: What is the "great cause" of heroes and how is this related to the "mass" of ordinary people?

From the beginning to the end, the cause of the protagonist and his allies who are aware of his true but secret motivation is clear: to save the nation. Polat puts it in a "poetic" way: "Our target is obvious... Until the mafia is destroyed, we are the state, after the Mafia is destroyed, we are Mehmet."⁵⁴ [*Bizim hedefimiz belli... Mafya kalmayana kadar devlet, mafya bittikten sonra Mehmet.*] Therefore, the aim is to destroy mafia and then to become ordinary people. Indeed, it is one of the main tensions that the narrative is built on: the protagonist does not live the life he is willing to live; he does not pursue any personal interest. His true will is to live an ordinary life with his beloved. But the fact that the nation and the community he belongs to are in danger makes this wish impossible to actualize. So, he acquires more and more power, fame and richness despite his unwillingness. Let alone being a threat, his true duty is to protect the vulnerable innocent from any threats. Who are these people that need to be saved? From the first episode to the last, a speech that stress that our hero's duty is to protect the country, which is equivalent of the "beloved ones" is repeated. Obviously, the altruistic, idealist renunciation of heroes originates from the love of country (which is identified in the rhetoric of the serial to the very capacity to love); therefore the drive of the hero is a nationalist one. The human beings who need the hero constitutes the nation. ??

In the discourse of the serial, the nation is the whole of good, honest people who constitutes the citizenry of the state. Our point here is that it is represented as undivided. For example, the serial says absolutely nothing on the matter of party politics. This is surprising, as it seems to be the unique subject that it chooses to remain silent. It is not only an effort to keep a neutral position. In the imaginary of

⁵³ 2nd episode.

⁵⁴ See *Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005, p. 47.

the serial, party politics, voting and citizenship does not make sense. The true politics is in the backstage, the real forces are *éminences grises*. And the salvation of the country does not depend upon citizen's acts but in the efforts, capabilities and sacrifices of heroes. But more important, domestic politics has only two sides, idealist nationalists and self-interested foreign collaborators. The nation does not have any genuine contradiction. This is what justifies the acts of the heroes. As they know what the interests of the nation are, they can act in its name. In other words, as the nation is a homogenous whole, its interests are absolutely common.

The protagonist as hero occupies a specific place in the serial. Therefore,, we should give specific emphasis upon the function of the hero in the serial. Polat Alemdar is the hero of the serial in the two senses. Of course he is the central figure of the intrigue, its engine. The story that we watch is precisely his story, and we are asked to identify with him more than any other character. We take his side and we conceive him as the source of the positive functions. (At least, we are asked to do these.) In other words, he is the heroic protagonist. However, he is a hero in a more precise sense: He is the national hero. Besides, he himself presents a definition of hero and he conceives himself as a hero. During the serial he repeats more than once the repic: "Whoever thinks about afterwards can't be a hero!" This is also the last repic of the serial. Moreover, he acts according to that "wisdom". So the serial gives us in the personality of Polat a prescription of heroism and national duty.

But, what makes Polat "the hero"? Above all, his sense of duty. He is presented as a man who does sacrifice everything valuable to him for the sake of operation, and thus for the sake of state and nation⁵⁵. With his fake death, he loses all he loves: his great love, his friends and his family. Indeed, he hesitates: he says that he would die without hesitation but this situation of being a living dead is worse than that. But he accepts the mission. His efforts to construct his old relationships as Ali Candan under the disguise of Polat Alemdar constitute an essential conflict of the serial feeding the intrigue. His hesitation between those relations and his duty is constantly reproducing itself but the duty triumphs in each

⁵⁵ But, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, there is something cynical in this altruism. What he has been condemned is absolute authority, fame and wealth.

case. Also, his life is dedicated to the operation and he stresses that point himself. He is not pursuing any personal goal; his goal is only “to die for the sake of the country”. In a sense, this is the typical tragic theme of the altruist hero sacrificing all his ordinary desires for higher purposes.

A second issue concerning this point is his superior qualities: he has an extraordinary ability to analyze conspiracies, a bright intelligence, a vast culture and knowledge of foreign languages, he is a genius in organizing armed assaults, an incredible fighter with his naked hands and he uses every kind of arm masterly. His courage is related to his sense of self-sacrifice. He knows how to command, but also he is sympathetic, sensitive, attractive and handsome. His journey to the top of power originates from those extraordinary skills regarding every domain. He is an excellence.

Besides, he is educated to be a hero and a leader. As I have mentioned above, the replic “Whoever thinks about afterward cannot be a hero!” is his motto. This motto does not reflect only a hostile attitude towards critical intellectual capacities; moreover, it implies an absolute loyalty to the mission. The lives taken and given are negligible; it is the sublime mission that counts. Loyalty to sublime values and orders is the part of the definition of heroism. It does not involve only the self-sacrifice as death, but also the sacrifice of mental capacities, the capacity of doubting. Polat is both the subject and the source of that sacrifice. Not only he does not hesitate in involving in such self-sacrifice, but also he expects the same attitude from the men he commands.

We must also indicate that his sense of duty, self-sacrifice and loyalty also include his personal relations. Even in the relationships he builds for the purposes of the operation, he conceives the relationship as a true friendship and he is loyal to those. Indeed, this does not represent a real obstruction for his hidden purpose; on the contrary, through the benevolence of the events, his loyalty and sense of friendship make him a trustworthy man and serve his aim to rise in the secret hierarchy of power.

Therefore, the serial suggests that against the evil forces that Turkey faces, not only there is a need for a counter-conspiracy, but also a hero. This hero with

superior analytic, moral and technical –in weaponry- capacities, achieves the role of the savior. Political engagements are futile, not only the domain is invisible and unreachable to “ordinary man”, but also we have our representative in this domain equipped with the necessary qualities. Whereas the serial makes occasional references to the classical dilemma of corruption of hero, we do not expect such a behavior from Polat during the serial. Indeed, his closer man, Abdülhey, warns him: “If you occupy the throne of Baron, I don’t know what I am going to do. Would I congratulate you, or else would I kill you?” Polat replies: “I do not want any throne. All I want is to die for the sake of my country.” (*Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005, p.147).

Therefore, we may securely delegate the patriotic duties to potent and altruist Polat without any concern. He will suffer instead of us willingly, because he wants us to stay simple. The comfort and authority that he suffers from will be forgotten when all the “vampires exploiting the blood of the Nation” will be destroyed by him.

The recourse to hero is not something new. For example, Ryan and Kellner argue that the frequency of the figure of hero as superhuman in the 80’s Hollywood is an indicator for a psychological need for savior leadership (Ryan, M. and Kellner, D. 1997, p. 338). Indeed, such a need is inscribed in the discourse of the serial. Whoever cannot reach the underground is impotent against the great events in politics. Therefore, only altruistic heroes who have chosen to interfere with the reality can alter great events. However, we are again invited to identify with the hero to defend ourselves against our own impotence: In Adorno’s words:

“Soap operas, television shows and above all movies are characterized by heroes, persons who positively or negatively solve their own problems. They stand vicariously for the spectator. By identifying himself with the hero, he believes to participate in the very power that is denied him in as much as he conceives himself as weak and dependent.” (Adorno, T. W., 1994, p. 56)

Therefore, the function of the hero in the narrative is ambivalent: he is the leader that we are in need of because of our impotence, but also he helps us in dealing with this feeling through the means of identification. This is especially true for “Valley of Wolves”, which emphasize in every aspect the vulnerability of the ordinary

people and the alien⁵⁶ feature of the hero. He has unique qualities which makes him able to alter the truth whereas the spectator is deprived of them. Moreover, this situation is put positively: hero makes the necessary sacrifices for us; it is good to be simple and unaware since the real happiness lies there. This is again an elitist reference since happiness is traded for power.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have given an analysis of the psychology of the serial “Valley of Wolves”. However, it should be emphasized that if we do not assume a totally unresponsive, uncritical audience who is simply a receiver of the message that televisual text bears, we cannot assume that this psychology is identical with the one of spectators. Such an assumption is highly questionable. Therefore, the object of our analysis here is the psychology that the text under examination depends. However, it may be estimated that a good deal of the audience of the serial are receptive readers who develops a reading appropriate to dominant ideology (Hall, S., 1992, p. 136).

After having made this warning, an outline of the argument that this chapter includes can be given. The main argument is that the serial involves an ambivalent psychology. On the one hand, it announces the weakness of the ordinary man and creates a category of “super-humans”. Ill-informed and impotent, the ordinary citizen is simple minded and unable to intervene in the truth offered to him. On the other hand, there are barons, godfathers and heroic secret agents struggling for real power in the scenes that are invisible to ordinary people. The serial informs us on unknowable. Herein, we have the necessary instruments to deal with the feeling impotence. This is identification: the people of the underground have got everything that ordinary man lacks and desires. Especially in the figure of Çakır, we find a formidable character to identify: half-impotent half-omnipotent. However, in Polat we find the perfect hero: altruistic and omnipotent patriot able to save ordinary people from the evil forces that exploit him. So, the serial sublimate authority in

⁵⁶ See p. 57 above.

two ways: by making us feel childish before the life, and by inviting us to identify with authority.

In the kernel of this discourse resides nationalism. Indeed, the community of simple man is the “nation” in the serial’s discourse. Nation is represented as a homogenous body. Following Žižek, we can argue that the fantasy of “invisible master”, composed of the foreign conspirators and their domestic collaborators in the serial, is a complementary fantasy that ensures the efficiency of the fantasy of nation as antagonism-free entity. That is, in the serial, the fantasies of secret council, and “Holy Knights” backs up the first fantasy of homogenous nation. However, invisible master encounters the invisible -but authoritarian anyway- heroic Polat: another support for the first fantasy. The nation is able to struggle its enemies through violence using the hands of his patriotic heroes. Their identity is puzzling, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter III

Political Agenda of “Valley of Wolves”: “Deep State” as Hero

In this chapter, I will mainly deal with more concrete political messages of the serial. The serial broadly gives a nationalist interpretation of the events related to “Susurluk”. Indeed, in the very first episodes, we meet the clones of Alaattin Çakıcı, Savaş Buldan, Ömer Lütfi Mete and Behçet Cantürk, all of which related to “Susurluk”. However, this exploration does not aim to offer a picture of “Susurluk” or better said the illegal actions related to Turkish state and compare it with the picture offered by “Valley of Wolves”. Instead, our aim is to explore the uttermost political aim of the serial which crystallizes in the final episode: Polat and his equip acquit from charges whereas they have already confessed that they committed these crimes for the state. In this chapter, I will deal with the logic which brings this final.⁵⁷

As the primary political agenda of the serial concentrates on “Susurluk” I should at first clarify what it is. However, this endeavor is difficult as there are few serious scientific explanatory approaches to the phenomena. There exist a large literature concerning “Susurluk”, but virtually all consists of explorations on the relationships between people who have links both with criminal organizations and security forces at the same time. Indeed, the subject concerns journalists and conspiracy theorist more than academicians. There are few works that relate the phenomena with concepts of sociology or political science.

⁵⁷ For an argument close to the position which we defend in this chapter, see Paker M. www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale yazdir.aspx?mid=108

All relationships between the state and mafia, and illegal engagements of the state has been covered by the word “Susurluk” -which is a town in Western Anatolia, on the road between İstanbul and İzmir- since the night of 3 November 1996. That day, an automobile crash near the town has occurred, and a large number of unlicensed weapons had been discovered in the baggage of the car. In a short period of time, media discovered the identities of the victims: Sedat Bucak, a deputy of the governing party and the chief of Bucak tribe, an armed tribe combating against PKK, police Chief Hüseyin Kocadağ, Abdullah Çatlı and his girlfriend Gonca Us. Here, the crucial name was Abdullah Çatlı. Çatlı was the leader of *Ülkü Ocakları* before September 12, and was responsible for a number of political homicides. After the incident, it became known by the public that he has been involved in a number of operations in cooperation with the security forces, and from thereon, all illegal activities that the state had been involved started to be juxtaposed with the word “Susurluk”. This crash caused an extensive public debate about the extra-legal means that state used under the pretext of providing security.

Also, the term “deep state” has become a current word after the incident. Whereas it was a strange neologism⁵⁸ in the beginning, it has found a place in official Turkish Language Institution’s [TDK] dictionary later. In this dictionary the definition is as follows: “covered force which is claimed to protect state’s interests”⁵⁹. However, this is not the only definition. For example Wikipedia gives a quite distinct definition: “Deep State is the name given to all illegal structures in the state that are able to influence decision-making mechanisms which has an undefined links with various levels of the state and intelligence services.”⁶⁰ On the other hand, there exists a third current definition that refers to the army’s weight on political decisions. For example, Demirel has used the word in various instances by

⁵⁸ Mahir Kaynak claims to be the first person to use the term. For example, see <http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=5&ArsivAnaID=15669> 16.07.06. Also see Mete, O. L. and Kaynak, M. 2006, p11 and 114.

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<http://www.tdk.gov.tr/TDKSOZLUK/sozbul.ASP?Kelime=%20%20derin%20devlet&EskiSoz=derin&GeriDon=2> 16.07.06

⁶⁰ http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derin_devlet 16.07.06

reference to army and National Security Board.⁶¹ Türköne makes a similar definition and places the “deep state” in front of the government (1997, p. 46.). In a similar but more obscure definition, Kılıçbay defines the term as the core of the state whose main function is to ensure its existence (1997, p. 18.) Ömer Laçiner attributes to the term another expansive meaning. According to him, the term does not refer to the institutions engaged in illegal activities, but the mentality and institution that defend the legitimacy and necessity of such activities (1997, p.18). The first definition, in opposition to the second one, does not necessitate illegality or link to the state, the protection of the state’s interests is sufficient. The deep state of third definition is not secret at all; it implies that *de facto* influence of the army over governments. On the other hand, Laçiner’s definition indicates a mentality, a way to conceive legality rather than specific persons or institutions.

My aim in this chapter is to try to conceive how deep state is represented in the serial, and what is the political meaning of this representation. However, before exploring the issue of state, I will deal with the representation of the mafia, distinctly from the “deep state”. Therefore, in the first section, I will provide an analysis of the representation of the Mafia in the serial. In this analysis, I will explore how mafias are differentiated and argue that the serial pictures a positive, traditional, old-fashioned, patriotic mafia in front of negative, modern, self-interested and foreign related mafia. The representation of mafia nurturing from folkloric bandits justifies the existence of mafia. As negative mafia manipulates and corrupts the state, state becomes weak, and also the lack of authority that this situation creates is filled by the mafia. This paves the way to justify Polat’s illegal acts .

In the second section of the chapter, I will emphasize the similarities between the official discourse on “Susurluk” and the rhetoric of “Valley of Wolves”. In this respect, I will picture two arguments. In the first argument of the official discourse, the state is holy, but some individuals are gone out of control and abused their power as state servants for their self-interest. The serial also holds a

⁶¹ <http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=5&ArsivAnaID=25809>, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2005/04/02/donat.html>, and <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2005/04/01/yaz27-50-112.html> 16.07.06

similar position. Second, the state has the right to use extra-legal means to protect itself: the serial also approves such a statement. In the end, I will relate these arguments to Schmitt and Fascist conceptualization of politics.

A- Representations of Mafia: Çakır as Hekimoğlu

Mafia is the central theme of the serial; indeed, the slogan that the serial has been released through was “This is a serial of Mafia!” The serial deals with organized crime, but the word mafia is not random. The word originally referred to organizations engaged in illegal business in Southern Italy. Turkish criminal organizations are in some extent similar to these organizations, not only because of the nature of the business, but also the earlier “cult of honor” and the later striving for luxuries, power and richness (Arlacchi, P. 2000, p. 138-9).

Before exploring how the serial represents that phenomenon, I would like to give a brief resume of the story of “Underground” in Turkey. Indeed, any work upon Turkish Mafia seeks its roots in the Ottoman *Kabadayıs*. This is not only an academic effort aiming to invent an origin to a contemporary phenomenon: it is the contemporary mafia itself which seeks its roots in *Kabadayıs* (Bovenkerk, F and Yeşilgöz, Y., 2000, p. 28). *Kabadayıs* were men who levied tribute on a specific neighborhood. According to Kılıç, they were not conceived only as oppressors but also protectors of the neighborhood. Indeed, they had a guild-like self-organization that had a specific argot and a specific set of rules to obey called *Racon* (2004, p. 16). Especially, last years of the empire witnessed an exceptionally lively underground world. However, we have no records of any trace of that world during the one-party rule years of the republic. Bovenkerk and Yeşilgöz argue that this lack results from a real lack caused by the tightness of the one-party rule. However, as Democrat Party lessened the importance of security forces, *Kabadayıs* reappeared. The funeral of famous Oflu Hasan in 1968 emphasized that appearance. The underground hierarchy had been reluctant in giving place to the minister of labor in the first rank, and the directors from the security forces had willingly accepted their place in the second rank (Bovenkerk F. and Yesilgöz, Y. p. 128 and Kılıç, E. p. 29). This scene showed the power that criminal organizations gained.

Despite the “urban knight” rhetoric they used, the economics of this criminal organization differed greatly from traditional *kabadayıs*. Indeed, they benefited from narcotic and weaponry smuggling at the international level. Names such as Dündar Kılıç and İncili Baba managed large sums of money and had important political connections, while keeping some of the codes of *kabadayı* days. On the other hand, political connections were not always reliable: Dündar Kılıç had been imprisoned and tortured during the days following March 12 and later September 12.

After 1980, the “political connections” had been altered, and the mafia has experienced a transformation. As Bora and Can pictures, fascist groups that were actively fighting against rival political groups had confronted a financial crisis after the *coup d’état* of 1980, and turned to illegal business. (2000, p. 384). While many of these groups had been short-lived, some of them, especially Aladdin Çakıcı had gained great influence. Indeed, his power did not only derive from his organization, but also from his obscure relationship with the intelligence service and the state. Since some rival groups were cooperating with the PKK in the meantime, the struggle of power between mafias became deeply interrelated with politics. It was also known that such mafia had cooperated with the Turkish Intelligence Service in its struggle against the Armenian organization of ASALA. Also, the impact of PKK in the Southeastern frontiers of Turkey gave a say to it in the narcotics business, some mafia leaders such as Savaş Buldan and Huseyin Baybaşın co-operated with these organizations. Therefore, the struggle in the “underground” became highly interconnected with political struggles.

The serial seems to represent three different kinds of “godfather”s in line with that history: Good old *kabadayıs* (Emmi, Çakır, Şahin Ağa), traditional chiefs of corporate crimes (Laz Ziya, Hüsrev Ağa) and seemingly legitimate business man behind curtains co-operating with state and international powers (Baron, Nizammettin Güvenç, Samuel Vanunu).⁶²

⁶² Of course there are things that this schematics cannot cover, there are people in small business which indeed become puppets of greater ones, Laz Ziya and Husrev Ağa benefits from their connections, but not as systematically as the later ones.

Traditional *kabadayıs* and their *Racon* as a traditional standing are sublimated, but also considered to be a model of “good old days”. They no longer constitute a real power. The model for this type is “Emmi”, who let Aslan Bey kill him “for the sake of the country”⁶³. Ömer Efendi, the representative of moral consciousness of the serial, despite the objections of Elif the lawyer, demands the help of the old *kabadayı*. But even if Emmi is respected formally as the elder of *Racon*, since he has no actual power, nobody listens to him. Anyway, everybody claims to respect the traditional *Racon*, but this situation is only an appearance.

The middle type is represented in types such as “Laz Ziya”, “Hüsrev Ağa” and “Halo”. Those types have great power and money, and do not wish to accept the novelties that new entrants bring. It is a major conflict. Indeed, in the council, Baron only tolerates Ziya and Hüsrev, but secretly tries to weaken them. The conflict derives both from the wish of elders to continue through old fashioned methods and protect their independence. For example, while Hüsrev wishes to continue in the heroin business, Baron invests on LSD and orders Necmi to kill “professors”, who are Hüsrev’s heroin makers . Later, Hüsrev breaks up from the council saying that council threatens his traditions and he is more comfortable working independently. (He does not live more than two minutes after making this claim.)⁶⁴ This modern/traditional dichotomy is emphasized to its minutest detail, from musics to decoration of houses and words chosen. “Modern”s has a western pleasure while traditionalists have an eastern pleasure.

By “modern”s, I mean respected businessmen who operate not under, but through the state. In fact, the serial occasionally argues that they are even more powerful than the state in terms of force and international relationships. Hüsrev, Ziya, Halo, all had been in prisons for long years, so they had struggled with the state. They are powerful, but everybody knows that they are involved in illegal business. But chief of councils cooperate and even directs the state and they are respected as honest businessmen. In this respect, they are a new generation. Figures

⁶³ See 5th episode.

⁶⁴ 59th episode.

such as Vanunu, Güvenç and Baron are seemingly nothing to do with illegal business, but they are actors in both illegal business and politics.

Whereas the producers state in various occasions (mainly television apparitions) that the serial is against mafia, we can easily identify that there is a distinction between good and bad mafia that the serial implies. Indeed, the serial suggests that Polat collaborates with the better parts of mafia. This is most visible in the case of Çakır. Çakır is represented as a virtuous man whose involvement in the illegal business is mainly due to the injustice that he had been subject to in his adolescence, and as a godfather he is still trying to be fair. This story overlaps with typical folkloric bandit (Hobsbawm, E. 1969 p. 35-36).

The way that the serial represents the “positive mafia” follows the old tradition of banditry. Here, we need to understand the phenomenon of “banditry”. As Hobsbawm puts it, banditry is a nearly universal phenomenon (The examples that Hobsbawm takes covers a wide geography from China to Peru) in the pre-modern agricultural societies and it can be conceived as a form of social protest. For Hobsbawm, even if we cannot conceive banditry as a revolutionary program, it is a symptom of social discontent (1969, p. 20-22). Wherever the state is incapable of providing justice which is its *raison d’être*, the bandit emerges as a corrector and protestor⁶⁵. However, the ways in which the bandits were realized in their own social context is more important than their political significance. Indeed, it is impossible for the banditry to survive without the support of the peasantry. This need is not monetary; the bandit can always create the necessary funds by his arms if he can achieve from peasantry the necessary protection and information. However, it would be misleading to think that this support always derives from the consent of peasantry: the fear that the bandit creates is also a considerable factor. Anyway, as Hobsbawm emphasize, each bandit is basically a peasant and shares the same mentality with the peasantry. For the peasantry, the illegal business that the bandit involves is not illegitimate; this is why he is not ashamed of supporting the bandits. It is here that he becomes the hero of folk songs. If we consider why is the

⁶⁵ Of course, in extreme political situations, those armed and easily mobilizing men can easily involve in political conflicts. The case of Pancho Villa in the Mexican revolution and Demirci Mehmet Efe in the Turkish Independence are first to come in mind.

bandit universally taken as a legendary “noble robber”, we may see that he is the manifestation of a desire of resisting against injustice, being courageous and powerful enough to challenge the rulers and oppressors. It is meaningful that many folk songs on banditry are tragic. The hero’s destiny is to lose.

This old and powerful folkloric theme is referred several times, but the most characteristic of all is the scene of the assassination of Çakır. One of his superiors whose hostile attitude towards him is known invites Çakır to a house alone. Çakır cannot disobey, but feels the ambush and enters to the warehouse by singing the famous folk song “Hekimoğlu” which narrates the unavoidable death of a powerful bandit in the East Black Sea region -which is also Çakır’s fatherland. There he is killed by one of his enemies.

The identification of Çakır with Hekimoğlu is also the identification of the “positive mafia” with the older myth of “noble robber” who distributes the wealth he steals from rich to the poor. Indeed, in the serial each mafia has as objective the acquirement of more power and they are all cruel. However, there is a moral line between “positive” and “negative” mafia. The “positive” mafia protects the rights of the weak and thus it becomes the spokesman of justice, it has a moral code of honor and *racon* that it respects meticulously. On the contrary, their “negative” counterparts do not respect honor and their unique concern is their self-interest. There is a paradoxical situation: there are a number of forces struggling for power and money in an illegal, cunning and violent way. But some are legitimate whereas others are illegitimate in their moral attitude. Indeed, the legitimacy of the mafia and its positive representation derives from its attitude towards weak and its respect to the tradition.

We should also stress that the positive mafia defends national moral values. Çakır’s gang punishes drug traders and they have an antipathy for prostitution. They occasionally help poor people. This stress upon national-traditional values is extremely important in the representation of mafia. We identify with Çakır and hate his foe Cerrahpaşalı: They share a similar mafiatric attitude, and they both strive for power and honor. But Cerrahpaşalı is meaninglessly cruel, involved in drug trade and use drugs, harms women and children, whereas Çakır is totally opposed to

these. Moreover, it is implied that Cerrahpaşalı gang have Kurdish origins, and disrespectful to the traditional *racon*.

The stress on tradition is the most important point there because indeed, the protection of weak and poor, and the emphasis upon the notion of justice is also a part of tradition. This tradition is related to the image of banditry in folklore but the image of *Kabadayı* is related in a more direct fashion. The traditional *Kabadayı*, as opposed to modern mafia, is supposed to have as its primary function the protection of neighborhood in the serial⁶⁶. In that respect, the very beginning of the operation “Valley of Wolves” requires attention. Ali Candan, after the aesthetic surgery, is lanced as the nephew of “Emmi”. “Emmi” is a retired *Kabadayı* who is respected by everyone in the “underground”. At the same time, an important mafia is trying to buy all houses in the quarter where the former family and lover of Polat live. Ömer Efendi, seeing that the state has no the capacity to help, decides to ask the help of Emmi. Elif Eylül, the lover of Polat, as a lawyer, refuses to ask the help of mafia but she is warned by the wise man: not all mafia is bad. So they ask the help of Emmi and Emmi offers his help without hesitation: the traditional role of *Kabadayı* is to protect the weak against oppressor⁶⁷. Similarly, when Aslan Bey, the boss of Polat declares Emmi his intention of killing him for the benefice of the nation and state, “Emmi” obeys: he lived enough and to die for national purposes is a noble and desirable death for a *Kabadayı* attached to the traditions. He states that he has always been loyal to the state, but if the state left the nation alone, he has been with the nation. His last words are “Let our state survive” [*Devletimiz sağolsun*]⁶⁸. And after his death, his bodyguard “Dayı” will be there to remind traditional values. In the death of “Dayı”, Elif grieves as follows: “There is no more any *Kabadayı* who steps on the back of their shoe!”⁶⁹ Stepping on the back of shoes is seen as an unsuitable behavior indicating rudeness and lack of education. But “Dayı” is

⁶⁶ Serials “Bir Demet Tiyatro” or “Aynalı Tahir” or the novel and film of “Ağır Roman” can be referred for a similar conceptualization of *Kabadayı*.

⁶⁷ 3rd episode.

⁶⁸ 6th episode.

⁶⁹ 64th episode.

praised by that sentence: people in the illegal business are no more poor, “innocent”, and ignorant; and just for that reason, they are more cruel. The death of “Dayı” is the effacement of the last traces of an era that is an object of nostalgia.

Here, there is a conservative point of view: the old mafia which respected the traditions and established rules of *Racon* was good, just and national. The modern mafia is corrupt and harmful as far as it gets far away from the good old values of *Kabadayı*. Indeed, the positivity of Çakır partially derives from his approximation to the old traditions. The good old days are represented as a lost golden age, a typically conservative theme.

On the other pole there are modern types such as “Baron”, Nizammettin Güvenç and Samuel Vanunu. Those have nothing to do with the traditional roles of the *Kabadayı*. What differ are not only the scale, but also the values and the organization. We move from local relationships to the international arena, from the tension with the local policeman to the manipulation of the state in the higher and “deeper” levels, from ignorance and rudeness to the customs of high society, from a modest ordinary life to the most luxurious comfort of richness. And with this transition also a moral threshold is passed: from the social role of the *Kabadayı* that is more or less re-distributive, we move to the exploitation of the nation. State is no longer something that one has to be loyal to, but it is something to be manipulated.

To conclude, there are two important aspects of the representation of mafia in the serial. First one is that the serial conveys a conservative point of view when contrasting the “good old mafia” to the modern traitors. Second and more significant aspect is the possibility of a good, moral, and patriotic mafia. As far as the state is impotent, mafia fulfills the vacuum for the better or worse. The positive mafia is legitimate although illegal. These two themes of lack of state authority and legitimacy vs. legality combined, we face the problem of “Susurluk”, which points out to the relationship of the state to the mafia, and more generally, to the law. This constitutes the subject of the next section.

B- State and Law: “You call it self-defense, we call it operation!”

The representation of mafia has two results concerning the representation of the state. First the state is unable to fulfill its function correctly: it is corrupt. Second, criminal organizations may be legitimate: so legality and legitimacy are not related. Indeed, these two conclusions bring us to the debates over “Susurluk”. In fact, the narrative is not a simple story of love and adventure in the underground, but a specific interpretation of relationships and events that is symbolized by the “Susurluk Incident”.

As I mentioned above, there are very few scientific explorations about the subject. Ahmet Insel provides an interesting explanation: according to him, in 1980’s a new kind of businessman appeared in Turkey. These people had strong links with “underground” and were engaged in illegal business (1998, p. 25). However, prime minister of the era Özal wanted to absorb them in the system and had been successful to some extent.⁷⁰ However, since the narcotics market did not shrink, new actors emerged, the PKK being one of them. With the “*ülküciü* mafia” involved, a complex network competed with the PKK in this realm. The state was involved in this business greatly. The narcotic trade has been carried out by the ex-*ülküciüs* and the state related organizations like JITEM. The combination of a statolatric attitude that took survival of the state above all, and a neo-liberal attitude that justified everything by profit resulted in “Susurluk” (İnsel, A. 1998, p. 25-6).

The official discourse had two different defensive arguments towards the raising criticisms. First, the cause of corruption was not the state itself, but specific persons motivated by self-interest gone out of control. Second, the state had the right to defend itself by the use of illegal means (Sancar, M., 1997, p. 88-9). Both arguments found their place in the serial. But more importantly, both arguments departed from a notion of “holy state”, which could not be guilty. The serial’s imaginary shared this view. Therefore, we should explore the issue of holy state

⁷⁰ See also Bovenkerk F. and Yeşilgöz, Y. 2000, p. 92-3.

briefly before analyzing more specific issues directly related with legitimation of “Susurluk”.

The understanding of “holy state” as a metaphysical entity is hardly new to anybody who is familiar with the Turkish political life. Indeed, “holiness” is attributed to the state in the introduction of Turkish constitution. Nationalist historians, (be it Kemalists or Conservatives) have mystified the notion of state in various ways: Turkish nation is naturally inclined to establish states, all Turkish states are subsequent and holy, the tribal confederations of Central Asia were nation-states, there is a tradition of strong central state tradition in Turkish culture, the Turks is an army-nation etc.⁷¹ The famous “*Devletin Kavramı ve Kapsamı*” [The Concept and Content of State], a book published by National Security Board, defines the nation as a component of state (1990, p. 34) and places the state, distinct from government above society⁷². Concerning “Susurluk”, as İnel states, there are two groups responsible from corruption in the state’s discourse: traitors and self-interested state officials (1998, p. 22). State itself is not responsible for their acts. The secret organizations are legitimate, but some people abused them for their own benefit. The corruption lies only in the corrupt individuals. Yekta Güngör Özden’s words illustrate this view: “State is so great that it cannot diminish. There is no evidence, so I cannot blame the state. State is great and sublime. I never blame the state. If it is evidenced, we can talk of the guilt of persons, state cannot be guilty.” (Quoted in Sancar, M., 2000, p. 64)

The concept of “state” that the serial suggests is distinct from concrete “institutional hierarchy”. The words of Nizammetin Güvenç in the briefing to the newly elected Baron Polat about the state, is telling: “Ankara is deep inasmuch as İstanbul is above⁷³... State itself is deep... Governments administrate the executive but power is *de facto* in the hands of the state. There is no deep state; state is state

⁷¹ For a detailed discussion of the mythical Turkish State in Turkish History writing, see Bora, T. 1998, pp. 83-93.

⁷² Kıvanç offers a detailed analysis of this book. See Kıvanç, Ü. 1997.

⁷³ What is meant here is that İstanbul is superficial so while Ankara, i.e. the state, is invisible.

as far as it is deep and powerful.”⁷⁴ Therefore, state is not visible; the true state is what we cannot see. We do not know anything about the state. It is impenetrable. State is both strong and weak, moral and corrupt, national and un-national, giving and selfish, cruel and just, omnipresent and hidden, fragmented and intact. It is a pawn and it is a player. Therefore, for better or worse, “deep state” is the state.

Indeed, the serial does not give to the “deep state” an unconditional support. We witness that the deep state is fragmented. It is open to manipulations. We know that the forces that the council represents is able to manipulate many parts of the state, from courts –through Nizamettin Güvenç- to customs –through Deve Tuncay-, from prisons -through Kılıç- to foreign affairs -through Baron. It is important to note that council is related to some foreign forces -some mysterious and some profane- and is able to manipulate the state in general. Many of the state and government’s policy is represented as policies of the “Council”. Therefore, a good part of the state is corrupt: it does not represent interests of the nation any longer, but is manipulated by private and foreign interests.

This corruption crystallizes in the opposition between Polat and Pala. Polat struggles against Kirve and Mithat, two important figures within the state manipulated by the council, and/or seek their own interests rather than national interest. Kirve is the leader of a Kurdish tribe involved in illegal business and has an important impact in the deep state and Mithat is a high officer in the Turkish Intelligence Service. These people make use of Pala’s services and equip (a counter-guerilla team that had attended to important operations against PKK during several years). Pala is as qualified and cruel as Polat, and he too claims to be in the service of the state, but he specifically kills the head of KGT, Aslan Bey, by a mysterious order he takes from “Ankara”. In this sense, apparently, he does not have any difference from Polat. However, he is represented as a selfish man who desires to appreciate life and money after the long years which had passed in mountains by fighting with the Kurdish separatists. He sacrificed too much in the sake of the state, and now, the time for repay has come. But unlike Polat who is

⁷⁴80th episode. See also *Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2005, p. 213.

ready to sacrifice all, he cannot manage to keep the loyalty of his equip: this is how Polat manages to defeat this experienced counter-guerilla.⁷⁵

Therefore, the serial's discourse is in perfect harmony with the post-“Susurluk” official reaction. The state is holy, sublime. However, it includes many corrupt elements; indeed, these elements are manipulated by foreign interests. The duty of the state is getting rid of these elements, but this is only possible through illegal means: this is Polat's duty. This brings us to the second justification of the “Susurluk”, i.e. the “survival of the state's” supremacy over legality. There, we must deal with the distinction between legality and legitimacy.

As explained in the first section, such a break down between legitimacy and legality is also valid for mafia. However, when we compare this analysis to the phenomenon of *ülkücü* mafia in the framework of “Susurluk”, we should underline that the serial approves it, but does not give the role of essential savior to it. Indeed, there is no clear reference to the “*ülkücü*” mafia, as any political party or movement does not make any straightforward appearance. Let alone the natural “Robin Hood” function, mafia stays away of party politics. Even Çakır who has strong parallelism with Alaattin Çakıcı is represented as apolitical. After his death, when Polat involves in “big politics” and state, his “chief executive” and the closest man of Çakır, Memati protests: according to him, they should not have any business with the state. Therefore, we cannot argue that the serial is a celebration of “*ülkücü*” mafia. The state manipulated mafia in a deeper and politically neutral way, and vice versa.

Also, such an attitude is in parallel with the attitude of some defenders of “Susurluk”. For example, Soner Yalçın describes an intelligence service member who sneezes at *ex-ülküçüs* claiming to be in the service of state in his book *Teşkilatın İki Silahşörü* (2003, p. 14). Eymür's and Korkut Eken's speeches

⁷⁵ However, there is an interesting point there. Polat, while represented as a modest man which does not wish anything other than “dying for the nation”; he is extremely rich and enjoys all sorts of comfort as an unavoidable side-effect of his duty.

similarly implies that *ülküçüs* such as Çatlı and Çakıcı had been used, their role was not central⁷⁶.

Therefore, the relationship of the serial with the incident of “Susurluk” does not reside in the “*ülküçü*” mafia. The similarity with the rhetoric that legitimizes the incident lies in the conceptualization of mafia as an appropriate instrument for nationalist causes, or from a wider perspective, the legitimization and even sublimation of the use of illegal means by the state under the condition that it supports a genuine nationalism. The KGT, as an official organization that does not exist officially -just as JITEM-, has the authority and capability of suspending any laws that are valid for the common people. The suspension is enabled by the help of the discourse of sublime interests of the state, and this is the main logic lying behind the actual “deep state”.

There, the focus is upon KGT, –*Kamu Güvenliği Teşkilatı* that is Public Safety Organization. KGT is a sub-unit of Turkish intelligence service, a completely hidden organization that does not have a legal existence. The organization operates both in domestic and foreign realms. Its agents are involved in civil war in Yugoslavia, events in Caucasia, in the insurrection in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is also involved in the PKK affair and mafia business. It is represented as the genuine nationalist core of the state. This is why; both of its presidents, Aslan Bey and Doğu Bey utter the phrase “State is me!” more than once. Nevertheless, they both struggle with the state or parts of the state. We may argue that there is competition between different factions of the state. There, KGT represents only a faction. When Aslan Bey is assassinated, an officer says that “he went out of the control of the state”⁷⁷. An organization that identifies so much with the state is at the same time at war with the state. From the perspective serial offers to spectators, this is not simply a competition between different state offices but also a question of approaches. KGT believes that “the state” has parted from the national interests and became corrupt. So it concentrates some of its energy on re-building this relation. This is the goal of operation –or conspiracy- that Aslan Bey calls “Valley of

⁷⁶ See www.atin.org and www.korkuteken.com.tr

⁷⁷ 57th episode

Wolves” and Polat is the major player. The state is no more nationalist, therefore it should be made nationalist. This is the major duty of the KGT, to render the activities of the state nationalist through destroying the corruptive impact of the Council with extensive impact on state. This nationalism is what makes the KGT the genuine state: KGT does not represent the whole of state’s power and goals, but it aims to bring the state to its ideal, authentic function, i.e. independence. Only through independence the country will get rid of its poverty and sufferings.

Since the KGT represents the true interests of the state, it is not bound by legality. The killing of Public prosecutor is emblematic here. Aslan Bey and Polat decide to kill a public prosecutor who rightfully wants to accuse Çakır. They admit that he is an “honest man” who is doing his job well, and who is willing to serve his country in his own fashion. “This man is neither deep nor shallow. A straight man. State also needs straight men. State has also straight, but solid, honest, trusty and practical men who know law.”⁷⁸ But it is KGT who has the ultimate knowledge of the true interests of the nation, and therefore, they have the ultimate right to make decisions even if it is against the law. So, they decide to kill him for the sake of the “Operation”: “In each war vanguard troops are sacrificed.”⁷⁹ This assassination does not occur because council makes the first move, but it is clear that KGT posits itself as the true representative of the “State”, and it is legitimate to kill honest servants of the state when it is for the sake of the state. So the heroes have every right to make criminal acts as far as they behave for the sake of the state. But who determines the holy interests of the state and nation⁸⁰? This question is not asked. It seems that the KGT have a kind of intuitional knowledge of this kind. In the end, as both Aslan Bey and Doğu Bey had been assassinated and the body of KGT becomes obsolete, only one deputy of this genuine state remains: our hero Polat. So what is sublime is not the state but *raison d’état* that the KGT possess. This is the reason that the important figures of KGT may say so insolently “State is me!” in the

⁷⁸ 29th episode

⁷⁹ 29th episode

⁸⁰ The same question is asked and not answered by Ümit Kıvanç in his analysis. Kıvanç, Ü. 1997, p. 35.

fashion of Louis the 14th. Otherwise, the KGT would be only a small part of a gigantesque machine.

The occasional references to *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* made by the KGT officials are also telling⁸¹. Indeed, the mentality that acknowledges the supremacy of the state over legality is traced back to this organization (Belge, M. 1998, p. 16 and İnel, A. 1998, p. 21). According to Belge, Union and Progress was an underground organization seeking to overthrow Abdülhamit II and the habitudes related to the underground organization have persisted when the party came to power. Hence originates the Union and Progress's and *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*'s ignorance of legality (Belge, M. 1998, p. 18. and Koloğlu, O. 1997, p. 46). Belge also suggests continuity over this mentality (Belge, M. 1998, p. 19). The serial also takes this continuity, but this is the continuity of secret heroes who sacrifice all for the country.??

As far as law is considered, a few words upon lawyers and courts should be said. Courts are supposed to be easily influenced by the "council" and other malefactors, just as media. Indeed, one of the prime villains of the serial, Nizamettin Güvenç is a lawyer. From the beginning, he is a member of the council, but at first he was less emphasized. He was the lawyer of the council which deals with the issues regarding law. Unlike other members, he is a modest man which lacks the discourse of aggressive masculinity. But as the serial goes on and malefactors lying deeper than council are discovered, he becomes one of the prime villains: while he was covering himself cunningly, he was more powerful than Baron himself in regard to his relations with the occult powers "ruling the world". And he proves capable of killing in a non-honorable way. He is bound neither by *Racon* nor law, rather he manipulates the law. However, law is not represented as an absolute evil. First of all, there is tension between Nizamettin Güvenç and Elif Eylül, the lover of Polat, the honest lawyer is interesting. For the former, law is an instrument to be manipulated whereas for the latter it is an ideal which constitutes the cement of society. At first glance, it may seem to be a typical good guy- bad guy duality, but it is more than that because Elif Eylül, since the incident of Şevko at the very beginning of the serial, is known as "the advocate of mafia". She is bothered

⁸¹ see p. 61 above.

by this fact, but still she believes that she is serving the genuine justice and keeps defending the “good” mafia. Whereas the powerful manipulate the law, the weak still believe in it. But the weak also makes their own law through mafia. Despite the controversies exhibited, such a view is hold by the serial.

In the final episode, the serial’s message crystallizes; Polat is put before a court. He accepts all of the charges and he is reluctant in hiring a lawyer: As he is a hero, he is ready to go to prison as a further sacrifice for the nation. However, the lawyer that Bar Associations appoint to his defense insists on preparing a defense. This defense is based upon the idea that the illegal acts that the accused are self-defense: the state was in danger, and so they used extra-legal means. More interestingly: the defense is accurate both for Polat and Abdülhey who claim to be state officers and Erhan and Memati who has no such a claim, who are simply mafiosos. The lesson to be taken from there is straightforward: as far as the sublime interests of the state are considered, be it “*ülküci* mafia” or “secret agents”, the patriots have the right to ignore laws, because it is covered by “self-defense”. This is most literally pronounced by the comic of the serial, Erhan: “You call it self-defense, we call it operation.” That is, the operations made by the deep-state are free of laws, because they are self-defense.

As Polat and his men have been released because their acts have been considered as “self-defense”, the attitude of law towards people engaged in “Susurluk” has been protective because they were working “for the benefit of the state”. Mithat Sancar argues that such an approach indicates the supremacy of *raison d’état* over rule of law. According to Sancar, *raison d’état* is a doctrine which essentially belongs to early modernity, which takes state as a supreme entity constituting the reference of legitimacy. Thus, the precautions taken for the survival of the state are exempt from morality and law (Sancar, M. 2000, p. 48). This doctrine has lost its popularity after the enlightenment and the rise of rule of Law. However, the modern states are in-between; the rule of law is forgotten and *raison d’état* dominates as soon as a crisis emerges (Sancar, M. 2000, p. 57). The crisis that Turkish National identity experienced in front of Kurdish opposition constitutes

the reason of “Susurluk”. According to Sancar, the tradition of *raison d'état* is most solid in Turkey.

“The concept or fear of “survival of the state” is the ultimate reference of legitimacy of state actions; the accuracy of legality is subject to it. If the survival of the state is considered under threat, for the precautions to be taken in order to get rid of this threat, legality is not assessed as an absolute must.” (2000, p. 95)

Therefore, the people who have committed crimes for the state are not bound with laws. This argument is perfectly in harmony with Polat’s acquittal. His illegal acts were legitimate because since the survival of the state was in danger, these could be covered by “self-defense”. The patriots had the right to defend the state; it was their “self”.

Here, I want to stress the parallelisms between Schmitt’s and the serial’s approaches to law. Schmitt, in his endeavor to clarify the meaning of the concept of political, argues that the vicious circle of defining state by reference to political and political by reference to state is fruitless, because both concepts are ambiguous. Such a conceptualization would be meaningful only if the state was a distinct entity, but in the 20th century where state is “total state”, that is a situation in which state and civil society penetrates to each other (Schmitt, C., 1976, p. 22). Therefore, Schmitt introduces the duality of friend/enemy in order to define the political. For Schmitt, just as aesthetics is defined by the duality of beautiful and ugly, moral is defined by the duality of good and evil, and economics is defined by the duality of profitable and unprofitable, the political is defined by the duality of friend and enemy. The state is the ultimate form of political entity as it has the means of war in its hands. So the world is full of states struggling for survival in a world full of alien enemies.

“The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic or other distinctions. [...] But he [the political enemy] is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in an especially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible.” (Schmitt, C., 1976, p. 27)

Also, he states that “Sovereign is he who decides in exception” (Schmitt, C., 1988, p. 5). According to Schmitt, exception is more important than routine. Sovereignty and political arises in exceptional cases. Law may regulate the routine, normal

cases, but it is insufficient for extreme cases. “The exception, which is not codified in the existing legal order, can at best be characterized as a case of extreme peril, a danger to the existence of the state, or the like. But it cannot be circumscribed factually and made to conform to a preformed law.” (Schmitt, C., 1988, p. 6)

However, we should stress that Schmitt does not mention any “deep state”. In Schmitt’s account, the state itself is not bound by the law and has the ability to determine exceptions. Therefore, the use of extra-legal means is not peculiar to some dark, obscure, mysterious powers that act in the name of the state, in the contrary, state is defined by its authority to use extra-legal means. Indeed, the serial’s narrative is in a way in harmony with such an argument: when stating that each state is deep, the serial means that the genuine state is the one that is able to use extra-legal means,. However, Schmitt does not mean a bunch of patriotic secret agents while referring to the state. In the serial’s narrative, the sovereignty *a la* Schmitt is concentrated in a non-defined section of intelligence service, and ultimately, to the unknown hero. In that respect, Schmitt and “Valley of Wolves” differs.

On the other hand, I will argue that the approach of “Valley of Wolves” to the legality is in accordance with Schmitt, and it represents a classical approach to the fascism⁸². First of all, the globe that the serial places Turkey is appropriate for the Schmittian approach: a world of existential enemies. Indeed, the KGT and Polat try to defend friends and harm enemies every way they can. Polat backs Albanians in Kosovo and Tchetchens in the Caucuses. However, there is no explicit war situation, but all states seek to weaken each other through extra-legal means. In that context, the KGT’s claim “State is me” becomes meaningful. The KGT acts politically, i.e. as a sovereign/state, because it takes the decision that there is a perilous circumstance, and acts with complete disregard to the rule of law, thereby embodying the exception. The irrational decisionist element in the Schmitt’s work find its correspondent in Polat’s motto: “Whoever thinks about afterwards cannot be a hero.” This explains the acquittal of the Polat’s gang. Law itself accepts that they

⁸² Even if criticisms that he raises to liberalism and legal positivism are interesting, his theoretical approach is appropriate for fascism throughout his sublimation of exception. See Deveci, C. 2002, p. 37.

can arbitrarily decide on the identity of the enemy and ignore laws in the name of national interest that they decide. Law acknowledges its insufficiency in the face of immediate extra-ordinary cases, and disables itself from judging “deep state”. In the final court, the legitimacy of “deep state” is accepted, as there is no link between legality and legitimacy, in the Schmittian fashion. To sum up, Schmittian fascist understanding of politics is in accordance with the picture “Valley of Wolves” draws concerning the “deep state” and legality.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have tried to explore the main political thesis that the serial holds: the heroic character of the “deep state”, in other words, its very necessity. The paranoid attitude towards secret threats and the resulting bounded structure of politics prepared the ground for the deep state. Against the secret and illegitimate enemy, the hero should hide in the underground and use illegal means. As a whole, the serial paved the way to its final that was the acquittal of the “deep state”.

Three ways are used to provide this acquittal. The first one is the ultimate break down between legality and legitimacy. Neither positive nor negative characters respect laws. Moreover, both parties profits from their illegal business. The borderline between good and bad separates also national/traitor and traditional/degenerated. Second, whereas the existence of corrupt state officials is acknowledged, the duty to punish them is given to the “deep state”, only through illegal means the state will get rid of its corrupt side. Third, the survival of the state is put as the ultimate reference of legitimacy. The defense of state is “self-defense”, so anything goes. Through this third claim, the illegal deeds of the heroes are not only legitimated, but also sublimated.

Finally, I have argued that the serial’s approach approximates a Schmittian understanding of law. That is, law may be valid only in routine situations, but what is relevant considering politics however, it was the sovereign that determined and executed the necessities of exceptional situations. It is the exceptional situations that the sovereign determines and execute its necessities. What is interesting in the serial

is that this authority is given to KGT and later Polat alone. The patriotic secret agent/hero has the ability to determine extraordinary situations at his own. The acquittal of the court gives Polat sovereignty a legal status. The sovereign, the leader which will save the country from his enemies is a single individual, a Mafioso who claims to work for the state (the court has no evidence apart from the testimonies of Abdülhey and Polat about their relationship with the state.) Whereas law is by-passed, the only origin of legitimacy left is state or sovereignty. Indeed, the serial does not suggest to all to ignore laws, this is only the right of powerful people. But not only all powerful people, but the ones connected to state which can decide of an “extra-ordinary” situation where the survival of the state is in danger can and must ignore laws. Therefore, the sovereigns in Schmittian sense are indeed grouped in KGT. These sovereigns are going to punish “bad mafia” and “corrupt state” one by one, and even challenge American threat to national sovereignty.

Conclusion

In this study, I have offered a discourse analysis concerning “Valley of Wolves”. After having offered a mostly descriptive account of the serial, I have underlined two main arguments concerning the serial.

Indeed, in the first chapter, I have tried to locate the serial in the realm of television and televisual genres. In fact, whereas most genres are brought from abroad, they always experience a deep transformation in Turkey. In this context, I have argued that “Valley of Wolves” is not a typical “detective story” but it belongs to a transformed genre that Çelenk calls “Mafia-Gang” serial (2005, p. 301). I have also discussed the realism of “Valley of Wolves”. I have described specific problems that the “liveness” and “reality” of the serial creates. Indeed, the serial claims to be an interpretation of some of the events of near history of Turkey while staying in the realm of fiction, and even try to interpret most recent events. I have argued that this situation originates from the serial’s ambition to generate political messages.

In the second chapter, I have offered an analysis of the psychological mechanisms of which the serial makes use. I have advanced two interconnected arguments. First one follows Žižek’s analysis: a society needs a fantasy that conceptualizes “society” or “nation” as a harmonious whole, but in front of antagonisms, such a fantasy always ultimately fails. Therefore, a second, complementary fantasy intervenes, whose prototype is Anti-Semitism. This fantasy supposes a conspirator other, who secretly rules, exploits and abuses the harmonious whole. By the support of this fantasy, all antagonisms are externalized and the serenity of the first fantasy is secured (Žižek, 1996, p. 64). In parallel to this argument, the serial’s narrative repeats a widespread motif of the Turkish nationalism. All of the conflicts within the country originate from external forces “playing game upon the country” and their “domestic collaborators” betraying their homeland. The serial picture the society similarly. The nation is the community of the honest and simple-minded people (founding its perfect representants in the

circle of Ali Candan) living in harmony. However, external powers such as Israel and the US target this harmony and find the necessary instruments in the “secret council” and “Holy Knights”. Indeed, internally, the country is full of betrayers exploiting it in cooperation with external powers. Moreover, these powers are always covered by a mystical aura. “Secret Council” has Masonic rituals, its leader “Baron” depends on a Templar-like mysterious organization that makes mysterious rituals in which members wear masks and cloaks, and determines governmental policies in a mysterious way. Simple people of Kanlıca are under the direct threat of such mysterious powers. Therefore, the conflicts within the country are externalized by the fantasy of malicious secret councils, rituals and orders whose aim is to abuse the internal harmony, and profit from this disorder.

However, this externalization is a part of a wider psychological mechanism that is in parallel with Adornian formula of “acknowledgement of the weakness, identification with the victor”. In Adorno’s analysis of fascism and “culture industry”, psychological mechanisms has a decisive importance. Adorno’s formula suggests that such a psychology has a paradoxical character: the individual is weak and unable to take the responsibility of his own life, and he can deal with this feeling only through an identification mechanism, that is through identifying with *Führer* (Adorno, T. W. 1992, p. 121), or the movie hero (Adorno, T. W. 1994, p. 56). The fantasy of “conspirator other” in the serial results in the mentality of conspiracy, and the spectator acknowledges his weakness: the macro-political decisions are made in a mysterious place which is out of sight and reach. Any political action that “normal” citizen is involved in carries the risk of being manipulated, as he is unable to see the genuine political agents. Ultimately, he is impotent. To deal with this impotence, the spectator is invited to identify with authority and the protagonist. In the serial, we face omnipotent (or at least potent) characters practicing an absolute authority over their subordinates and represent a violent-aggressive masculinity. Such qualities crystallize in the protagonist Polat. Besides a more general sublimation of authority and aggressive masculinity, we are asked to identify with the hero Polat. Therefore, since we cannot deal with the conspiracies of the “other”, we delegate the struggle against them to the hero with

whom we identify. Such a psychology is in harmony with the one Adorno sees in the fascist propaganda.

In the third chapter, I have offered a distinct analysis, whose focus is upon the identity of the hero. Indeed, the ambivalent status of the hero in-between mafia and state is an overt reference to the debates around “deep state” that continues since 1996. It is questionable what that the serial favors -state or mafia-, but one thing is sure: serial excludes law persistently. Whereas the aim of “Operation Valley of Wolves” is to destroy mafia, we witness that there is a positive, i.e. good patriotic mafia that has a link with the tradition of “noble robber”. Therefore, mafia may work for justice while staying illegal. Janus faced Polat’s mafia aspect illustrates this “Robin Hood” function of the mafia. Its other face -that is the state- is more obscure and complex. Indeed, when we say state, we mean the KGT, which is a legally no-existent sub-unit of Turkish Intelligence Service. The other parts of the state are irrelevant. The KGT, as the genuine possessor of *raison d’état* may ignore decisions of courts, of other security units and even governments, because only it knows the true nature of politics (courts do not), and only it defends the genuine interest of the nation and the state (other security units or governments does not). In this struggle for state’s survival, legality is nothing other than a hobble. So, it is both natural and necessary for the KGT and the state to ignore legality. Such an approach approximates a Schmittian/fascist understanding of law and state (Sancar, M. 2000, p. 57). The ambivalence of the identity of the protagonist gives the same result anyway: legality may be ignored by nationalists⁸³. The serial ends by the acquittal of Polat by a court. Polat’s lawyer argues that his acts can be classified as self-defense as “the country” was in danger. The effacement of the distance between individual’s self and country’s self is indeed in favor of the state and not individual. This acquittal means that the people claiming to work for the state are not subject to law. The survival of the state is the supreme value that cannot be bounded by any legal or ethical principle.

⁸³ And nationalists appoint themselves. The serial does not refer to a strict state hierarchy as state itself is an area of struggle between friends/enemies. Indeed, after the assassination of Aslan Bey, Polat has no genuine link with the state and after the assassination of Doğu Bey, the state is completely unaware of the “operation”.

To understand these arguments better, we should also consider the conjuncture that the serial is located. Since the early 1990's, the agenda of Turkish politics has been occupied by "the rise of Nationalism". Indeed, the last two years has witnessed many lynch attempts and nationalist rallies, the burning of a Turkish flag in 23 March 2005 by two Kurdish kids being a turning point. The best-selling novels of the era were *Metal Fırtına* and *Çılgın Türkler*. And during this period, the most popular television program (besides national soccer matches and clubs match in European arena) was the serial "Valley of Wolves". Under these circumstances, we may claim that nationalist texts had an important success in the realm of popular culture.

I argue that this rise of Nationalism is the result of a crisis of Nationalism. In other words, the rise of nationalism results from the crisis of national identity. Indeed, as Billig emphasize, nationalism is most powerful when it is banal, unnoticed (Billig, M., 1997, p. 41). The emphasis upon "nation" is most powerful when there emerges a crisis such as a war. Turkish nationalism faces threats that it has trouble in explaining: the difficulties of containing Kurdish Identity, the tension between Kemalism and Islam as unifying principles of the Nation, and the weakening of the concept "national sovereignty" and "independence" in front of the attitude towards United States and European Union. Valley of Wolves is a symptom of this rise, and therefore, it provides an answer to this crisis. The most important aspect of this answer is psychological: the serial's narrative externalizes the problems through logic of conspiracy and invites impotent masses to identify with omnipotent hero, who is an embodiment of the "deep state". In the serial, the notion of working on behalf of the state constitutes the primary point of reference which spontaneously justifies any act. So, anyone who acts for the sake of the state is permitted to do anything: there is the logic of nationalist lynching attempts. By provision of an "answer", I neither mean that the serial suggests a concrete political receipt, nor it represents the whole of Turkish Nationalism. Not only Turkish nationalism cannot be assessed as a monolithic ideology, but also different nationalist circles have different attitudes towards the serial. Indeed, Kemalists versions of nationalism distance themselves from the serial. The appraisal of

Islamic and Sufi values is unacceptable to Kemalism and official discourse. According to news published in *Milliyet*, the Movie “Valley of Wolves – Iraq” had been disapproved among the higher ranks of the army. The reasons of that is the absence of references to Atatürk and the positive attitude towards Sufi orders⁸⁴. This approval of Sufism and the lack of emphasis upon the figure of Atatürk are continuous in the whole of the serial. These aspects fit neither to official nationalism, nor to Neo-Kemalism.

The attitude of *ülküçüs* regarding the serial is more sympathetic. For example, in an essay in the website of *Ülkü Ocakları*, Ali Kınık describes the attitude that “nationalists” should take towards “Valley of Wolves”. He states that whereas those who oppose the serial are mainly leftist, the serial cannot constitute a practical reference for the “nationalists”. However, he states that the serial shows us the force of nationalist feelings and say the truth about the enemies of the country. The punishment of the non-national conspirators, drug-dealers and procurers by altruist heroes satisfies the wishes of the Turkish nation. But, according to Kınık, this is a mere escape, which expresses a potential rage able to destroy the corrupt order. The only concrete criticism brought to the serial is that protagonist is a state official: the NAP which is a “civil movement” cannot agree with that aspect⁸⁵.

To assess “Valley of Wolves” as a propaganda text is not relevant: whereas it is overtly political, it has neither a clear link with a political movement nor a concrete political program. What is alarming about the narrative is not its unmediated political arguments but its use of fascist notions and psychology. By fascism, we do not mean fascist political regime or movement, but its “banal” level.⁸⁶ That is, as the philosophers of Frankfurt School emphasize, fascism is not only a question of state, party, army, police and doctrine. It has also a spontaneous

⁸⁴ See “Polat, askerın gözüne giremedi”, *Milliyet*, 20 February 2006.

⁸⁵ This essay which is no more available has been published in www.ulkuocaklari.com in two parts. Kınık, A. 2004a and 2004b.

⁸⁶ For a detailed discussion of these levels in the Turkish context, see Bora, T. 2006, p. 135-61 and amore detailed discussion over “banal fascism” in Turkey, see p. 165-81 in the same volume.

aspect that transcends these; it is a matter of daily life, of “authoritarian character”, psychological short-comings of individuals and cultural tendencies⁸⁷. To evaluate “Valley of Wolves” within the framework of “Banal Fascism” would be more exact. Indeed, “Valley of Wolves” does not indicate a political shift, but a cultural tendency that has strong parallelisms with classical fascism. As I have analyzed in the third chapter, the psychological mechanisms that the narrative offers are strikingly parallel with the fascist rhetoric, not to mention its anti-Semitism⁸⁸. Moreover, the notion of state that it manifests is similar to fascist understanding. The elaboration of such a notion in the popular imaginary has naturally fascistic tunes. However, I have preferred to be cautious while evaluating the serial in the framework of fascism and label it simply as fascist. Such a cautious approach is necessary since we consider widespread misuses that result in a call to use of violence. Also, we should stress that the serial’s aesthetic is not especially fascist. In terms of the use of visual means, it is not completely different from other serials. Also, we cannot argue that all elements of fascism are represented in the serial. Nevertheless, we can assess “Valley of Wolves” as an alarming indicator of a cultural tendency with strong authoritarian and fascist qualities. I hope this thesis would serve to Umberto Eco’s call: “Our mission is to unmask [fascism] and to indicate each one of its signs -each day and everywhere in the world.” (Eco, U. 1998, p. 47.)

However, this thesis has some shortcomings regarding such a task. First of all, it is limited to a reading of the narrative. As I have emphasized, I agree that the reception of the audience may be well distinct from the intended reception, but this study does not include an analysis of the audience. On the other hand, even if we limit ourselves to the narrative as the subject of analysis, different readings are possible: one could have read the narrative with emphasis to gender or violence. Moreover, I believe that the serial should be read in along with similar nationalist

⁸⁷ See for example *Minima Moralia*, fragment 123, in <http://www.efn.org/~dredmond/MinimaMoralia.html> 24 June 2006.

⁸⁸ However, unlike Nazism, anti-Semitism is only a minor element. We are not informed of ethnic origin of “Baron of the World”. We only know that he lives in Washington.

texts to understand the situation of nationalism in the cultural landscape of contemporary Turkey.

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