

**BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT: EXAMINING THE AFFECTIVE
IMPACTS OF THE *MAGNIFICENT CENTURY***

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IMPACTS OF THE *MAGNIFICENT CENTURY***

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ABSTRACT

BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT: EXAMINING THE AFFECTIVE IMPACTS OF THE *MAGNIFICENT CENTURY*

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construction of truth

This thesis aims to examine the affective bond established between the audience and the series *Magnificent Century*, which aired from 2011 to 2014, and to explore the repercussions of this bond on Turkish politics. In this regard, drawing upon affect theory, I will investigate how the narrative within the storyline of the series interacts with the political understanding of the period in which it was broadcasted and with the contemporary political landscape. *Magnificent Century* narrates the life of Suleiman the Magnificent, through themes such as palace dynamics, love, father-son relationships, and friendship. As asserted by affect theory, I contend that emotions are not detached from rationality but, on the contrary, contribute to establishing social relations and politics along a temporal continuum, a perspective vividly represented in the series. In this context, I argue that the primary reason for the series' impact, both during its original broadcast and its enduring memorability today, lies in the affective bond it establishes with the audience. Within this framework, I will analyze how characters' societal positions are rendered visible through emotions within the representations established by the narrative flow of the series. Additionally, I will analyze the traces of how the neo-Ottoman political ideology in Turkey, in the context of the national and international impact created by *Magnificent Century*, is portrayed in the media both during and after the series.

ÖZET

BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT: EXAMINING THE AFFECTIVE IMPACTS OF THE *MAGNIFICENT CENTURY*

ELIF BERFIN DEMİR

KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, MAYIS 2023

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Hülya Adak

Anahtar Kelimeler: duygulanım, Muhteşem Yüzyıl, Televizyon dizileri, yeni Osmanlılık, hakikat inşası

Bu tez çalışması, 2011-2014 yıllarında yayınlanan "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" dizisi üzerinden, dizinin seyirci ile kurduğu duygusal bağı ve bu bağın Türkiye siyasetindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda duygulanım teorisini temel alarak dizinin hikaye akışındaki anlatı ile yayınlandığı dönemin ve günümüz siyaset anlayışının birbiriyle nasıl etkileşimde bulunduğunu araştıracağım. "Muhteşem Yüzyıl," Osmanlı Dönemi padişahlarından Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın hayatını, saray içi dinamikler, aşk, baba-oğul ilişkisi, dostluk gibi temalar üzerinden ele almaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Osmanlı hanedanlığını kahramanlaştıran bir anlatıdan ziyade, dönemin karakterleriyle kurulan ilişkiler çerçevesinde çelişkileriyle birlikte temsil edilerek eleştiriye açık bir anlatı oluşturulmaktadır. Duygulanım teorisinin öne sürdüğü gibi, duyguların rasyonellikten uzak değil tam aksine toplumsal ilişkileri ve siyaseti kurmanın bir zaman çizgisi alan yaklaşımının, dizide oldukça güçlü bir şekilde temsil edildiğini iddia ediyorum. Bu bağlamda, dizinin hem yayınlandığı dönemdeki etkisinin hem de günümüzde bu denli hatırlanabilir olmasının başlıca nedeninin seyirci ile kurduğu duygusal bağ olduğu kanaatindeyim. Bu çerçevede, dizinin anlatı akışının kurduğu temsiller üzerinden karakterlerin toplumsal pozisyonlarının duygular aracılığıyla nasıl görünür kılındığını inceleyeceğim. Ayrıca "Muhteşem Yüzyıl"ın yarattığı ulusal ve uluslararası etki doğrultusunda Türkiye'deki neo-Osmanlı siyaset anlayışının, "Muhteşem Yüzyıl" ile birlikte ve sonrasında medyada nasıl görünür kılındığının izlerini analiz edeceğim.

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*To my mother
my sisters
and all the children whose dreams have been taken away*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Beginnings have always been hard for me. I guess it is because I did not comprehend the notion of taking only one step at a time. In order to start something, I first have to decompartmentalize big chunks of questions by asking too many questions. It was challenging to accept that this is the way my mind works. And this thesis is the first product of my mind freed from judgements and insecurities. I am aware that this is a bizarre beginning for an academic thesis, but this is how I processed this entire journey. This is why it is an appropriate beginning to my specific thesis.

The topic I chose for my thesis, analyzing *Magnificent Century*, i.e., a television series that I watched many years ago, reveals profound clues about myself. When I was a kid, television was one of my close friends. As a child, I watched many films so as not to feel alone. Stories that flew through my various emotions enabled me to create an imaginary world of my own. Following the stories that evolve through various events and the changings of characters gave me hope to live a joyful journey throughout my life, and for sure brought along some fun. I believe that this imagination has evolved throughout this journey with so many incidents but also with the serials as well. Meaning that, I realized the impact of the things we watched were way beyond just entertainment but the reflection of lives and hopes we encountered throughout life. And through the vided impact of the media those reflections turned into the mass influence that affected our mindsets through that affective bond shaped through the representation of life itself.

Choosing sociology as an undergraduate degree was kind of a coincidence for me. After the university entrance exams, I could not get the adequate points for Boğazici University psychology department and with a great ignorant attitude I chose sociology as a “closer” department. I was planning to change my department afterwards; however, I was kind of blessed with the fundamental issues of sociology dealing with. Even though I could not adequately concentrate on classes for a couple of years, towards the end, I remember feeling like I might turn this department into my playground. I realized that sociology is kind of a similar way for me to deal with

issues: taking a whole chunk of questions and crumble it to get conclusions through way too many questions. At that point, I took some really serious sociological theorizations to analyze and evaluate some theatre plays to include my passion to this game. This was my kind of way to make this process fun. In the ensuing years, academia witnessed the poststructuralist turn in theory. In one of my courses, I started reading Affect Theory, and I was amazed. This form of decompartmentalizing the issues was a complete game changer for me because this new perspective enriched my playground towards many different phenomena. It led me into analyzing TV series for my term papers, it led me to transfuse my emotions towards my writings and provided me space to evaluate life in a better and comfortable way through making things meaningful.

But of course, this academic pursuit/quest was not as easy as I am writing about here. In addition to all the anxieties and uncertainties that come with being in your 20s, since the time I started university, there has been, and still is, a long period in Turkey and in the world where it has become increasingly impossible to keep the notion of hope alive in life. About three months before I started university, the Suruç Massacre (July 20, 2015) happened. Then, about 15 days after I started my preparatory year at university, the Ankara Train Station explosion (October 10, 2015) shook us to the core, followed by many more explosions, assassinations¹, many deaths, so much pain, the events in Sur, Dicle and the surrounding provinces. Elections took place, followed by arrests, days of violence, our colleagues who were arrested, and many other things... When I think about the chain of events, when I applied for a master's degree, I only wanted to use my enthusiasm for academia and my insight, which I thought did not mislead me, to produce something meaningful. For this reason, I wanted to investigate the dramaturgical choices in the plays performed by Kurdish-language amateur theater companies in Turkey and examine the relationship with Turkey's political history. I wanted to see what stories were being told and the affective impact of the suffering on shaping these stories and make them visible. However, with the courses I took at Sabancı University and the new perspectives I gained, the scale of this study started to expand. Therefore, at the end of the summer before I started my second year, I made a sudden decision to change my position and work on *Magnificent Century*. It was quite difficult for me to come to terms with this decision in good conscience, because I felt like I was betraying the meaningful thing I was trying to do. However, looking back, I think this was the right decision at the time, even though it brought much pain with

¹On 28 November 2015, lawyer and human rights defender Tahir Elçi was killed in Diyarbakır. Before his murder, he was the President of the Diyarbakır Bar Association and a supporter of the peace process. His killing took place amidst a deepening atmosphere of internal conflicts and security challenges in Turkey and caused widespread concern in the country. His death was recognized as a great loss among human rights defenders and lawyers in Turkey.

it. In the first year of my master's degree, I started watching *Magnificent Century* mostly for entertainment. The impact it had on me was so immense that the series, which at first, I thought presented a critical view of the Ottoman dynasty with its contradictory characters, turned into a huge, difficult-to-solve web of relationships that included a wide array of/a panorama of emotions.

In one of my courses, I started writing a paper on the politics of emotion in the series in order to make sense of this complexity. The more I asked questions, the more questions emerged, and when I finally decided to study this series in my thesis, I came face to face with more complexity than ever before. Conceptualizing the thesis gave vent to so many questions, and so many answers. After a while I realized that all the questions resembled questions that I had been asking myself over the years.

When I started to see the setting as a story of people trying to live in a place surrounded by fears, the fact that it was surrounded by fears became quite visible to me. This made it very difficult for me to distance myself from the series at times. I had indeed established an affective bond with the series. It was a very difficult and laborious process to see what my own emotions were doing to me and how I had turned my back on them while dealing with the theory of affect, which I addressed with the question "What do emotions do to us?" My story and the series became entangled, I found myself asking questions to the series that were questions that I also needed to direct to myself.

Analyzing this long series by taking it apart and interpreting it was not just any entertainment and I think this is exactly the point where I realized that I had made the right decision. Being confronted with such an influential series, even years after its airing, made me realize that researching its cultural impact on society went beyond entertainment as well. Seeing the importance and place of the media and this series in the transformation we are experiencing in Turkey has been a relief in my effort to engage in meaningful production. In this regard, I think that the reason why the series is still so strong ten years after it was broadcast is because of the affective connection with the audience. When I first chose this topic, I was surrounded by people who supported me because I listened to my inner voice. There were also quite a few people who did not take me seriously because I chose this "frivolous" topic. But now, when I look at the path, I set out to add some fun to the process, I see a work in which I was able to go beyond the boundaries I had set for myself and put my heart in line with my work. And the space that this thesis has given me, besides its academic value, is one of the most meaningful things I have done for myself throughout my life.

1.1 Literature Review

When I decided to study *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (the *Magnificent Century*), which aired on national TV in Turkey between 2011 and 2014, as my thesis topic, the first issues that came to mind were the then contemporary debates that took place around me and in Turkey. I was a middle school student when the series started. I remember that *Magnificent Century* was discussed in history class for more than one week in my class, which came from different socio-cultural backgrounds, as it would be in any public school in a small city. At the same time, as 13-14 year old children who grew up with different ideological approaches, we would have very heated discussions about the narrative of the series in class. There were also times when *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* was often the subject of discussion programs on television. Two main points of discussion still linger in my mind. Conservative voters who were close to the ideology of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) were uncomfortable with the show's portrayal of the story of Suleiman the Magnificent within the framework of the harem and the palace and questioned the historical authenticity of the show. People with relatively secular views, on the other hand, would embrace and support the narrative of Suleiman the Magnificent, represented by his faults, by supporting the engaging narrative of the exciting and vibrant harem life conveyed in the series. When I consider what remains in my mind from the past decade about *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, I observe the intensity of scenes and events ranging from the micro to the macro, such as the murder of *Şehzade* Mustafa and *Pargalı* Ibrahim, the love between Hürrem and Süleyman, Mahidevran's jealousies, and Süleyman's suffering during his reign, rather than the historical accuracy or inaccuracy of the established story. In this respect, when I re-watched the series last year, my own impression is that one of the most important reasons why the series is still talked about and remembered all these years is the strong affective bond created by the series.

I will address the cultural significance of the series in the next section, but beyond its impact, the narrative constructed in the series reaches out to a wide range of ideological approaches in Turkey, just as it did in the class of about 30 people of which I was a part, with quite different Ottoman memories and ideological affinities. From this perspective, the first thing I noticed while watching the series was that *Magnificent Century* critically exposed the dynastic system of the Ottoman Empire. Especially in the first season and the first half of the second season, which was written by the first screenwriter Meral Okay, the series deals with the dynamics of dynastic relations through the conflict between the inner worlds of the characters, especially Süleyman, Ibrahim and Hürrem, and their social positions, with rules

that are almost impossible to break and bend. Since the characters in the story are the sultan, the grand vizier and the sultan's common-law wife, we cannot treat these characters as a singular story in isolation from their social positions. With the narrative of the centuries-old state tradition, which is frequently repeated in the series, each event experienced by the characters thus ceases to belong only to that period and turns into a narrative of representation produced about the Ottoman Empire. At this point, while watching the series and thinking about how to approach the thesis, I first tried to explore Brechtian theatrical methods within the series and analyze the meanings formed in this direction in order to reveal the ideology of the series. However, as the series, which lasted 139 episodes, progressed, I realized that the critical narrative established was broken at many points and promoted a position that invited the audience to make peace with Ottoman nostalgia. The part of the series that had the potential to create these two positions was that it managed and manipulated emotions within the series. The series uses the suffering of the characters, the fears brought about by their social positions, love, compassion and many other emotions, and in this context, the series is constructed in a way that both calls the audience to identify with the narrative it constructs and at times alienates the audience and may enable them to approach it critically. It is for this reason that I have decided that it would be more accurate to focus my work on the theory of affect.

Before delving into the details of Affect theory and its function in this series, I would like to discuss other studies published on the Muhteşem Yüzyıl series. As I mentioned before, the starting point of the criticism of Muhteşem Yüzyıl in the social discourse is how the series handles historical reality. For example, Aytekin Gezici, who was writing for Zaman Newspaper, a publication of the Fettullah Gülen Community, which was known to be close to the government at the time, published a book titled *Muhteşem Yüzyıl Yalanları: Fitne-i Tarih* in 2011, before the first season of the series had even ended. Describing *Magnificent Century* as a project circulated to denigrate the Ottoman legacy, Gezici states that the series is full of historical errors (Gezici 2011)—Ottoman historian Yılmaz Kurt, on the other hand, in his 2012 book *Muhteşem Yüzyıl (the Magnificent Century)*, compiled from the writings of Mizancı Murad, refutes the depiction of the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent in the series and discusses the period in terms of Suleiman's warfare and administrative abilities (Murad 2012). Journalist and author Yavuz Bahadıroğlu further said that *Magnificent Century* series was responsible for the ruination of traditional values (Bahadıroğlu 2011). He stressed that *Magnificent Century* presents a distorted and untrue interpretation of history, and that viewers cannot learn about the past via the television show. Additionally, he asserted that reading the writings of national

writers is necessary for understanding history accurately.²

Before concluding the discussion on historical reality, I would like to mention Emine Yıldırım's master's thesis in which she discusses Muhteşem Yüzyıl within the framework of orientalism. In her thesis, Yıldırım (2016) first broadly argues how the orientalist perspective feeds Islamophobia and how this leads to the emergence of people without religion and identity in many societies in the East. She argues that Muhteşem Yüzyıl adopts this understanding and insults "our" history with a self-orientalist perspective and insults "our religion and morality" by distorting the "historical reality" of "the most glorious period of the Ottoman Empire" (ibid.) The points that I find unreliable in Yıldırım's thesis are endless, but the most absurd point is that the different and non-fixed meanings created by the representation are ignored and Turkish society is treated as a homogeneous entity that embraces the legacy of the Ottoman Empire in the uniform way. In this direction, Yıldırım's attitude, which is obsessively in search of historical reality, is quite ironic as she is unaware of the cultural and political dynamics of this geography, where there are deep divisions over the idea of Ottomanism even before the Ottoman Empire collapsed. Accordingly, although the criticisms of *Magnificent Century* based on historical reality are not academically reliable, it is critical to understand the extent of the social impact and reaction that these criticisms generate. Based on my personal admiration and affection for the screenwriter Meral Okay, I would like to refer to an interview she delivered in 2011. Okay states that the criticisms against the series and its performers started immediately after the first trailer was released and that there were petitions for the series to be taken off the air, that some sects issued a "death warrant" against her, and that she requested protection from the state as a result of the threats she received.³

Ezgi Veyisoğlu's (2019) master thesis titled "Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Historical Fiction in TV Series" emphasizes a quite crucial point at this point. Treating historiography as inevitably a fiction, Veyisoğlu explains that history can never be literary factual. Addressing the difference between history and historiography, Veyisoğlu argues, in line with Jenkins' argument, that history, with its fictitious characteristics, cannot be literary fact, or cannot be found or real at all. Hence, all historical narratives are ultimately metaphorical, hence meta-historical (Jenkins 1995, 19). Thus, in light of the Muhteşem Yüzyıl series, Veyisoğlu moves away from a futile understanding of historical reality and focuses on the cultural impact of the series, arguing that it is a soft power tool within the narrative of Ottoman heritage that the AKP government

²<http://www.yontemgazetesi.com/haber-arsiv-8545.html>

³<https://m.t24.com.tr/haber/meral-okay-bana-dinsiz-allahsiz-dediler-ama-ben-yara-almam,124774>

tries to keep alive in its policies. (Veyisoğlu 2019) Considering the series as a soft power tool at this stage is a fairly accurate analysis. The term "soft power", coined by Joseph Nye, describes the capacity of a state to achieve desired outcomes in international relations through charm and influence rather than coercion. A state's ability to exercise soft power is directly related to the success of its public diplomacy efforts. Turkey's foreign policy is based on its historical, geographical and cultural ties with neighboring states, best represented by Ahmet Davutoğlu's "zero problems with neighbors" approach. Turkey's public diplomacy efforts have sought to expand its spheres of influence based on historical and cultural principles intricately tied to its Ottoman ancestry. Turkey's historical ties enable it to enjoy widespread popularity in a region that includes the Middle East and the Balkans.

Based on this line, the most discussed elements in the studies on *Magnificent Century* are the concept of nostalgia and the concept of neo-Ottomanism. Yağmur Karakaya brings up the concept of Ottomania, which includes the intersectionality of popular culture, everyday life, identity construction and the rewriting of history, and examines the relations of production and consumption created by the series. While looking at how materials that remind us of the Ottoman Empire are utilized in the series, she also evaluates the agency of individuals and sees consumption and consumption preferences as a production of meaning. She formulates the theoretical perspective to comprehend Ottomania as a popular cultural phenomenon is provided by the Neo-Gramscian view, which sees popular culture as a domain of negotiation between various sets of meanings and worldviews, and a particular area of post-modern theory, which captures the intermingling between the so-called real and the TV (Karakaya 2012). In this context, Karakaya argues that the meanings produced and the market created by *Magnificent Century* are consumed in varying ways with different ideological approaches in Turkey. I agree with Karakaya's argument that the circulation and popularity of the series has created a nostalgic effect about the Ottoman Empire on everyone who likes or dislikes the series, supports or does not support the narrative. The nostalgia created by *Magnificent Century* can be shaped or changed by social policies as well as one's own ideology. At this point, it is necessary to see the relationship between *Magnificent Century* and the AKP's neo-Ottomanism, which I will also discuss in my thesis. Although Ottomanism has never been a disappearing ideology in Turkey, it has been a critical pillar of the AKP's political agenda, especially since the early 2010s. Positioning itself as the bearer of the Ottoman heritage, the AKP has gradually increased its capacity to disseminate this ideology to society, especially through the use and control of the media. Analyzing the relationship between *Magnificent Century* and the AKP's neo-Ottomanist ideology, Leyla Oter argues that the series feeds the new identity that the party

aims to construct through the market it creates and the nostalgic approach in its narrative (Oter 2021). Although I agree with Oter’s argument, where I differ with her is the intention of the series. Oter argues that the aim of the series was to evoke this nostalgia and bring the audience closer to the Ottoman heritage and ideology, but I do not agree that the series aimed for such an ideological transformation, even if this was the result.

1.2 Theoretical Background

“For the affective subject, there is always the weight of the world in what can be hoped for and what must be feared, in what flourishes and what matters. Life is an experiment of being in a world, of finding ways to be in circuits of force and form, an aspiration to get something out of the alchemical transmogrifications of things that twist off on trajectories far beyond humanist models of suffering or the usual hyperlegible registers of normativity and the state. Life takes place in the inhuman gestures of demons and angels, in the struggles of addicts and the rage of racists, in the endurance of the unbelievably injured or the oddly still curious (Stewart 2017)”.

As it can be grasped from the studies mentioned in the previous section, *Magnificent Century* series is a production that has caused social and cultural transformations in relation to Turkish politics, rather than just being met with popular interest. However, I believe that there are gaps in the literature on how *Magnificent Century* series uses the possibilities of the soap opera genre quite efficiently to create a world of governance full of emotions. Dealing with the contradictory sides of the characters through their social position, the series also deals with the emotional trajectory of the characters by constantly establishing cause-and-effect relationships. A father killing his son, a love that has not been forgotten for centuries, jealousy, the drowning of a friend of forty years after eating at the same table, a woman’s struggle to survive in the harem... All these points are the most tangible elements that remain in the contemporary mind about *Magnificent Century* and I think they are one of the primary reasons why the series is still so memorable. In this direction, *Magnificent Century* exposes the relationality of social positions such as being a padishah, being a pasha, being a sultan, which are no longer valid in present-day Turkey, and constructs a bond by conveying the emotions of these characters to the audience. Thus, emotions that move on a very thin line between life and death

and are shaped by social conditions and positions are conveyed to the audience. However, before addressing how *Magnificent Century* constructs this mutual affect, I would like to examine the concept of affect and affect theory.

In order to understand what affect is, we must first disengage from the dichotomy between emotion and reason. According to Spinoza, who establishes a connection between emotions and reason, people are constantly guided by reason and thought when they react emotionally (Spinoza 1985). For Spinoza, affect, which is a very difficult concept to understand, is the effect of emotions and thoughts on human beings and is impulsive. According to him, affect determines human joy and sorrow, suggesting that the emotional life of human beings is formed by the interaction of complex affects. According to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, affect is a fundamental part of human experience and includes all aspects of experience, not just positive or negative emotions (Gilles Deleuze 1987). For Deleuze, affect goes beyond the emotional state left on a person by a situation and involves an inter-bodily interaction and a state of energy. Affect is a means of creating meaning between bodies. Thus, in addition to the dualism of reason and emotion, he establishes a more complex and large-scale theorization in which reason and emotion are not free from the body. According to this theorization, affect is not an individual experience but an interaction that includes and shapes human social, political and cultural experiences. Affect is an experiential force or a source of power that can challenge systems of knowledge, history, memory and circuits of power, as Deleuze describes it, where affect becomes an idea and is surrounded by affect through encounters and mingling with other bodies (organic or inorganic) (ibid.).

For Brian Massumi (2002), affect is a term used to understand the nature of emotional experiences. The term suggests that personal experiences have social and political implications. Furthermore, affect is considered as a phenomenon that refers to the combination of physical, emotional and mental experiences. Massumi's work, although controversial for its prelinguistic treatment of affect, contributes to our understanding of the complexity and importance of emotional experiences in the postmodern world. Massumi defines affect as an instantaneous bodily response to pre-thought, consciousness and trans-linguistics, and characterizes it as the pure intensity of a force (ibid.). He argues that affects function as an expression of the transition from one bodily experience to another, and therefore point to the inter-conversion of ever-changing sensations rather than determinate and fixed emotional states. The ever-fluctuating nature has the potential to allow the subject to break free from the constraints of hegemonic discourses and escape from dominant structures of thought (ibid.). In this way, established beliefs, ideas and codes of behavior, with their sheer power, can momentarily destabilize the power structures that un-

derpin them. However, many theorists are critical of the emancipatory potential of affect. For instance, in *The Political Economy of Affect and Emotion in East Asia*, Jie Yang describes power itself as affective and argues that it is based on and operates through the manipulation of human emotions (Yang 2014). In other words, affect is not always a mechanism that emancipates the individual and separates the individual from hegemony, but it can also function as a tool to ensure control by power. As Jason Read points out, affects exist at the intersection of the individual and the collective and give rise to both collective structures and subjectivity (Read 2016, 14). Consequently, it is crucial to acknowledge the dual function of affects; they "bind us to a particular set of circumstances, but they also have the potential to destabilize them" (Hemmings 2015, 150).

To recap, although affect is a concept that emerged from the subjectivity of the person and as an impulse that leads the person to good or bad feelings, it has evolved into a very complex and layered theory that attempts to make sense of social power relations, cultural interactions and politics with poststructuralist theories. "They're (ordinary affects) things that happen. They happen in impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of relating, in strategies and their failures, in forms of persuasion, contagion, and compulsion, in modes of attention, attachment, and agency, and in publics and social worlds of all kinds that catch people up in something that feels like something" (Stewart 2007, 2). The concept of affect challenges the idea that they are mere by-products of external systems, codes, or imaginaries. Instead, it sees affect as an integral part of life, arising from the interplay of elements in a dynamic aesthetics of contact. According to Kathleen Stewart, affect-infused worlds transcend the boundaries of humanist subjectivity and traditional categories of thought, embracing a state of constant evolution in which individuals navigate life through adaptive responses to their circumstances. The affective subject emerges from ongoing interaction with the forces of life, from learning to anticipate and interpret events, and from the intermingling of social, natural and aesthetic elements. This perspective recognizes the weight of the world in shaping hopes, fears, development and significance. Life becomes an ongoing experiment that challenges traditional models of suffering and normative standards (Stewart 2017). In this worldview, life is an experiment in relating to diverse actors and complex interactions. Affect subverts established notions of structure, mediation, representation and code, emphasizing the importance of surprise and unexpected moments in its unfolding. This is a deliteralized world where there is no clear distinction between a given natural order and exceptional occurrences (Stewart 2017).

In this context, affect is both a "thing" that constitutes meanings and relationalities and a method of understanding the world. And one of the most prominent scholars to

develop the scale and formulation of this methodology in a highly sophisticated way is undoubtedly Sara Ahmed. Ahmed's theorization is the one that I personally visit most often and feel close to in order to grasp affect. For Ahmed, who treats affect as a form of interaction that encompasses and constitutes societies, cultures and power relations beyond individual lives, affect is both about the objects it shapes and is shaped by its contacts with objects (Ahmed 2015, 16). In other words, affect is not something produced within the subject, but rather, it filters into the subject from the world of signs, images and meaning. The body and the process of its shaping does not start from the past, but from the present, and operates backwards, or from the outside and inwards (Ahmed 2015). The human body is not a naturally non-existent and unchanging mold. Affect sticks to the body, which is constantly exposed to an influence from the outside and forms the boundaries and surfaces of the body with the reaction produced by the body. The boundaries shaped by the circulation of objects of emotion and the reactions of individuals and collectives to these objects do not break the body's connection with its dwelling place, on the contrary, they form collectives by connecting bodies to each other (ibid.) In this direction, one of the most critical points of Ahmed's theorization is the relationship he establishes between affect and psychoanalysis. In essence, emotions can only emerge as a kind of dwelling as a result of a certain past, a past that operates by concealing its own traces. This method derives from psychoanalysis, which argues that the subject has no positive dwelling place and is better described as the "unconscious". In his essay on the unconscious, Freud introduces the concept of unconscious emotions, where an emotional impulse is misinterpreted, experienced and associated with another idea (Freud 1961). It is not the experience per se that is repressed from consciousness, but rather the concept with which the emotion may have originally (if only loosely) been associated. Psychoanalysis does, in fact, give a theory of emotion as economics, involving relationships of difference and displacement without positive worth, to the extent that it is a theory of the subject as lacking in the present (Ahmed 2004, 120). In other words, emotions function as a type of capital; affect is created solely as a result of a sign or commodity's circulation rather than positively existing in it. By saying "the economic," she adapts Marxian critique of the logic of capital and implying that feelings go through and are dispersed over both the social and mental domains (Ahmed 2004). To sum up, with Ahmed's theorization, affect becomes a constructor of the social and expands the domain of emotional management. In order to better understand this expansion, I think it would be helpful to look at the boundary expansion between Foucault's disciplinary society and Deleuze's society of control. In Foucault's analysis of biopower, power exercises its domination over bodies within institutions such as schools, armies, factories and families (Foucault 1995). However, in the society of control, power does not operate through such

closed institutions, the distinction between outside and inside disappears (Deleuze 1992). Affect infiltrates the ideological apparatuses (Althusser 1970) that power uses to rule the masses, and especially in today's world, it experiences its sphere of influence and its potential to create boundaries on a very large scale through television and the internet.

In this respect, I would like to address the phenomenological approach of Deniz Zorlu (2017), who contributed greatly to the theoretical framework of my thesis and to understanding the affective impact of the series. Zorlu's doctoral dissertation "Constructing Magnificence and its Discontents: Analysis of the Series the *Magnificent Century*" differs from the studies I mentioned in the literature review section in terms of its scope and approach. Her thesis primarily explores the phenomenological implications of the series and aims to understand the essential meaning structures of the series' impact on our contemporary lived experiences. The research investigates the series' portrayal of various forms of neoliberal imaginaries and affectivities and the cultural influence of *Magnificent Century* on Turkey's collective memory. It analyzes how the series contributes to the Turkish populace's perceptions of innocence, original identity, and imperial nostalgia (Zorlu 2017). Phenomenological approach states that our bodily interactions with the outside world, contending that our relationships with objects and things are what always direct and enable our consciousness (Ahmed 2006, 2). Accordingly, human knowledge is never fully abstract; rather, it results from our bodily experiences, and all of the knowledge we possess is preexisting, embodied and experiential (Willox 2009). On that regard, phenomenological understanding stands that subject's analytical gaze cannot distinguish between the material world of objects; therefore, our relations with social and material circumstances are interwoven through conscious and unconscious meanings (Zorlu 2017, 46).

Following this realization, even our most ordinary acts, ideas, and interactions with everyday objects, when examined, can reveal significant details about the construction of our subjectivities. Through that understanding, the meaning of a movie is ultimately derived in the same manner that an appearance and an object may be comprehended by isolating them from their immediate settings and the world around them (Merleau-Ponty 1964). As a result, we examine film as an appearance, an event, or a thing that exists in an intersubjective space between the viewer, the world, and the visual text itself (Zorlu 2017, 47). Moving images create space for the viewer to coexist with them, and specific narrative and audiovisual composition portions contact and move in tandem with the audience's physical being. Films are notable sites of analysis in this regard, primarily because they work at the intersections of the personal, filmic, and collective, and because they reveal to

us simultaneously knowledge about all of these associated realms (Costello 2012).

In line with this context, in this thesis, I aim to address the cultural impact and transformation created by *Magnificent Century* through the emotional structure of the series. I argue that in order to understand the impact of *Magnificent Century*, it is essential to see the universe that the series establishes within the framework of emotions and how this universe interacts with the Turkish audience, rather than the reactions that occur during and after the broadcast of the series. *Magnificent Century* both presents a critical dynasty narrative to the audience, which approaches the Ottoman memory from quite different perspectives, and makes the dynasty open to criticism, and invites the audience to Ottoman nostalgia and ultimately ideology through the shared affect. In this respect, one of the most critical points of the series worthy of research is that it establishes dichotomies in its impact, just as it approaches the characters in its content. However, when removed from the world of meaning of the series, *Magnificent Century*, which I see as a breakthrough in the Turkish TV series industry, paves the way for the AKP government's neo-Ottomanist approach to have a strong presence in the cultural sphere and becomes instrumentalized in structuring the government's control mechanisms in the media along with the discussions on the representation of history.

In this regard, in Chapter 2, I will first explain the impact of the series in the section where I examine the importance of *Magnificent Century* within the framework of a brief overview of Turkish political history. In the Suleyman the Ruler chapter, I will first examine the relationship networks that the series establishes through Suleyman and the affective effect of these relationship networks. In this direction, while the Price of Authority section discusses the concept of power and the emotional burden it brings with it, in The Burden of Compassion section, I will discuss the possibility of the feeling of compassion triggering the conscience of the audience and the possibility of reckoning and then reconciling with Ottoman nostalgia. In the Epiphany of Greed section, I will basically open the discussion of acceptable and unacceptable subjectivity through the manifestation relationship established by the character Ibrahim in the series. Lastly, in the Ruthenian Slave chapter, while discussing the sociality of the character of Hürrem in the series, I will first discuss the function of love in the series and the affective bond established with the audience through love. In the Making Sultan Out of a Slave section, I will discuss the social position of Alexandra, a slave who survives in the harem, the most intriguing part of the series, and becomes a sultan, and the acceptable social values she reproduces on her way to becoming a sultan.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *MAGNIFICENT CENTURY*

Magnificent Century series, which made a tremendous impact at the time of its broadcast, is at a critical point not only in terms of its affective impact and viewership records, but also in terms of the position it has gained in the international TV series industry market and the cultural impact it has created in this direction. Sold to 42 different countries and watched by approximately 150 million people, *Magnificent Century* is reported to have grossed 40 million liras in 2012. From 2011 to 2014, the TV series "the *Magnificent Century*" garnered remarkable media attention in Turkey. It was featured in over 22,000 news items in the national press during its run, becoming the most discussed series for 31 months (Kolođlu 2014). The show also set records as the most expensive TV program in Turkey, with a production set based on the Topkapi Palace (Toksabay 2012). It achieved high viewership, breaking rating records and becoming the most-watched TV series in the country.⁴ Netflix later included the series in its programming, marking the first Turkish series on the platform. Additionally, the series generated significant social media buzz, becoming the most tweeted topic in Turkey on multiple occasions. In 2014, an exhibition dedicated to the show, a first for Turkish television, showcased props, costumes, and wax statues of the central characters. The locations and symbolized jewelry such as Hürrem's ring, which are the subject of *Magnificent Century*, which has created a market for itself not only on the screen but also in sectors such as tourism and jewelry, are indicators that the series has also created an economic response in concrete life.⁵ The series, which was also very popular in foreign press sites and blogs, was discussed from quite different perspectives. For instance, when the series was first aired, The New York Times described it as "a sort of Ottoman-era Sex and the City" and wrote that it portrayed a conflict between the Islamist Recep Tayyip Erdoğan administration and its supporters and the secular part of the population.⁶ The TV

⁴<http://www.beyazperde.com/haberler/diziler/haberler-58930/>

⁵<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/tartisilsa-da-hurrem-asil-gelir-muhtesem-22020297>

⁶<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2013/08/magnificent-century-turkey.htmlxzzz8GxjtbqQT>

series has gained significant ratings not only in the West, but also in the Balkan countries, where nationalist sentiments and Ottoman nostalgia were not favored after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Also, the TV series has gained a substantial following in Turkey's neighboring countries, despite doubts about its historical accuracy. It has been broadcast in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina; however, there have been concerns about the show's historical accuracy. In Serbia, there has been a strong public reaction to the series, with claims of dramatic manipulation of Serbian history and accusations of promoting "Turkish propaganda." One example of this distortion is the depiction of the swift occupation of the Serbian capital, whereas in reality, it took four months of intense battles before the final conquest of Belgrade in 1521. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where historical representations have sparked protests, critics argue that the show overlooks the important presence of Bosniak figures of the time, such as Suleiman's mother, Aishe Hafsa Sultan, and Ibrahim Pasha. Despite these historical oversights, "*Magnificent Century*" has achieved unprecedented ratings in the Balkans, earning the nickname "Magnificent Suleiman" (Volarić 2013). Overall, the series became a major cultural phenomenon, prompting an investigation into the socio-cultural factors contributing to its success.

In the West and the Balkans, the interest in *Magnificent Century* and the period it depicts has been driven by different dynamics in Turkey and the Middle East. In order to understand the cultural and sociological impact of *Magnificent Century* in Turkey and the significance of this impact, it is necessary to briefly discuss both the period depicted in the series and recent Turkish politics. During the rule of Selim I, also known as the "Grim", the Ottoman Empire experienced a significant territorial expansion from 1516 to 1517. This expansion resulted in a strategic shift in military operations from West to East and the conquest of vast territories, including Syria, Egypt, Jordan and a significant part of Saudi Arabia. The Ottomans also captured historically important cities such as Jerusalem, Aleppo, Alexandria, Cairo, Mecca and Medina. This period was a transformative phase in Ottoman history. After Selim's death in 1520, his son Suleiman became sultan at the age of 25. Suleiman's 46-year reign is considered the peak of the Ottoman Empire's military and political power (Casale 2010). He earned the nickname "Suleiman the Magnificent" by his Western contemporaries and probably influenced the title of the TV series "*Magnificent Century*". Historians such as Mark Mazower (2007) have noted that Suleiman was regarded as one of the most powerful rulers in the world, and Western depictions of the Ottomans were often a combination of fear and admiration. For example, in 1521, the Venetian ambassador Marco Minio stated that Suleiman seemed to hold the keys to all of Christendom (ibid.) However, the first signs of the decline of the

Ottoman Empire began to appear in the last years of Suleiman's long reign. While his reign marked the peak of Ottoman might, it may also have been the first time the Ottomans saw the impending end of their empire (Mazower 2007). In the process leading to the territorial losses of the 18th century and the subsequent collapse of the state, the multi-cultural and multi-religious structure of Anatolia was tragically altered by the policies advanced by the Ottoman government, while the Anatolian geography was under serious occupation.

In 1915, the Ottoman government enacted the "Deportation Law", ostensibly to temporarily relocate the Armenian population from their homes to designated areas. However, this law is now widely regarded as the pretext for a deliberate campaign to exterminate the Armenian people from Anatolia, culminating in the organized murder of 800,000 to 1,500,000 Armenians, now widely known as the Armenian Genocide. In 1923, an agreement was reached between the Turkish and Greek governments to carry out a population exchange. This exchange involved about 400,000 Muslims living in Greece and about 1.2 million Greeks who remained in Turkey, excluding Istanbul. Due to these migrations, acts of genocide and forced population movements, by 1923, the newly established Turkey had become a predominantly Muslim and Turks, marking a significant departure from its demographic composition of the previous millennium. Approached from this perspective, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire through occupations after the First World War and massacres can be considered as a traumatic experience in social memory, and the newly established state created not only an ideology but also a discourse to "heal" this trauma. On January 28, 1920, in the last Ottoman parliament, the Misak-ı Milli (National Resolutions), which envisaged the organization of society on a new territorial plane in the process of transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, and which was based on the construction of the nation state by abandoning the Ottoman understanding of *gaza*, was declared. In this way, the ideology of the new state was drawn within the framework of one nation, one flag and one religion, but the construction of a secular state and identity modeled on the West was also initiated by "abandoning the holy cause". Thus, secularism became the cornerstone of the new state. Islam was restricted to the private sphere and even stigmatized in the public sphere. Mustafa Kemal's Turkey was founded on the acceptance of Westernization, a strong sense of nationalism, secularism, and the rejection of Islam as an important component of the country's sociocultural and political life (Eldem 2010).

Another critical element in the stigmatization of Islamic conservatism and the society's move away from Ottoman nostalgia is, I argue that the construction of the narrative of the War of Independence as a war against the order that prevented the

progress of the society. In this way, the Ottoman Empire was also meant to forget the humiliation of defeats were written out of the history that were suffered in the last centuries. It directed the nation to forget the traumatic history of massacres and expulsions of recent history (Göçek 2011). In this way, not only an ideology but also an acceptable identity was constructed and the people who lived the Ottoman subjectivity and were closer to the Islamic ideology were separated from the society through Kemalist ideology. This hegemony, which continued both in the cultural environment and in politics until the mid-1940s, was close to conservative tendencies in the 1950 elections. The Democratic Party (DP), which is close to conservative tendencies, wins the elections in 1950. Through this transition, the Ottoman past eventually emerged as a central element in the nationalist imagery to propagate the notion of Turkish greatness (Eldem 2010, 29). With the line opened by the DP, Turkey, which had experienced very active and painful times with violent right-left fights and military coups until the 1980s, began to form organized Kurdist and Islamist fronts towards the end of the 1980s. After the 1980 coup d'état, the rising Islamist ideology created a religious and Turkist ideology, driving the citizens of the Republic of Turkey, which was founded on the trauma of the loss of a state, into a paranoia of the danger of the state being divided. The extensive media coverage of the war with the Kurds and the glorification of the army increased its potential and power in the political arena.

The Welfare Party (RP), founded after the 1980 coup, played an significant role in setting the political agenda of the period and the present, in a period of growing divergence between conservative and secular voters and escalating state violence against Kurdish citizens. Founded on the National Vision discourse and supporting the ideology of political Islam, the RP emerged as the first party in the 1995 elections and came to power in alliance with the True Path Party (DYP). However, the tension between the army, which embraced the founding secularist Kemalist ideology, and the RP, intensified, and in 1997 the February 28th period, which is now called the post-modern coup, took place. With the memorandum on the government issued by the military fearing the threat of religious insurgency, the pressure on the conservative segment gradually increased and the moves to remove, especially women with headscarves, from public spaces continued with increasing intensity. With this period, the distinction between the secular and conservative sectors gradually increased, while conservative representatives in the political sphere were stigmatized. At the end of this process, which continued with party closure lawsuits, the RP was dissolved. With the dissolution of the Islamist RP, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was founded, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, whose agenda was a "softened" version of the same ideology. In the 2002 national elections, the AKP

came to power and has been in power ever since.

2.1 Neo-ottomanism and the Transformation of Media

The AKP government, which has been the sole bearer of Turkey's neoliberal transformation for 21 years, has successfully used technological developments to transform the ideology it seeks to call its supporters to from an electoral-based understanding to one that extends to every aspect of life. Although there is a widespread argument in secular circles that the AKP has failed to seize cultural hegemony. The AKP first identified a target audience by representing itself as the only hope and savior of conservative citizens. This ideology gradually spread and strengthened over time, and was represented by %51 in the last elections of 2023. Although the AKP's influence on media control was not fully felt at first, it created representation for all segments of society. The diversity of representation established in this way made different ideologies visible and created a grouping accordingly. TV series and programs on mainstream television channels that meet the needs of secular audiences, series such as *Hatırla Sevgili* (2006-2008), which portrayed the ideological conflicts of the 60s and 70s by making the brutality of the period visible while praising the leftist ideology, and TRT6, a Kurdish-language channel that was opened to the state's official institution TRT, provide representation for citizens who are not close to their pro-Islamic and Ottomanist ideology. On the other hand, by establishing its own media, it begins the construction of its own media by representing the Islamist ideology, which has been humiliated and despised for years. At a certain point, pro-AKP channels and media outlets become increasingly visible and represent subjects as an ideological tool. Today, the AKP ideology, which has become increasingly powerful and intervenes on the internet with social media restrictions, does not take over the cultural hegemony of secular voters, but creates a hegemony for itself and dominates this hegemony. In this atmosphere where the people who are AKP voters and non-AKP voters are increasingly segregated, *Magnificent Century* is a very powerful production that both unites audiences from all walks of life and represents the neo-Ottomanist understanding that the AKP has been pursuing since the early 2010s in the media.

The idea of neo-Ottomanism, which was based on his book *Strategic Depth* during the Ahmet Davutoğlu period of the AKP government, and which for a long time was considered only as a foreign policy imaginary, has managed to become visible in many areas of daily life, functioning like a collective self-confidence vaccine, "...

revealing and transforming the desires, ambitions and anger of the social base inside, and mobilizing them" and thus emerging as an alternative memory of national belonging (Tokdoğan 2018, 17). In this context, the transition of Erdoğan and the AKP government, which declares itself as the heir of the Ottoman Empire, to the presidential system with the 2017 Turkish Constitutional Amendment Referendum is one of the indicators of the adoption of the cultural memory of the Ottoman Empire as a state regime as well. With the narrative established in a very affective way in *Magnificent Century*, millions of viewers with different memories and feelings about the Ottoman Empire find a representation in the series. Views such as the cruel aspects of the Ottoman Empire, the traumatic structure of the society at that time, the immense power of the state, the unquestionable structure of the ruler, find representation through the emotions brought by these views. In this way, each subject comes closer to reconciling with the memory of the Ottoman Empire in whichever way they please.

From this juncture, the AKP's strategy of establishing cultural hegemony re-engages. After the broadcast of *Magnificent Century*, many TV series in which the narratives of the Ottoman state are constructed have been broadcast very quickly in recent years. Series depicting different Ottoman periods, such as *Fatih* (2013), *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (2014), *Filinta* (2014), *Payitaht Abdülhamid* (2017), *Mehmed: Bir Cihan Fatihi* (2018), *Kuruluş Osman* (2019), do not meet the impact of *Magnificent Century* either in terms of ratings or cultural impact. The main reason for this situation is the AKP's effort to widen the crack opened by *Magnificent Century* and to identify the voters of its ideology with the familiar Ottoman memory beyond reconciliation. In line with this effort, the aforementioned series are constructed by moving away from the representation of the Ottoman State constructed by *Magnificent Century*, which is at times politically critical, and from the representation of emotions shared by subjects such as love, death, fatherhood, friendship, grief and mourning. Creating a narrative that glorifies the Ottoman Empire and aims to mobilize and connect the audience with nationalist and ummahs sentiments, these series also break the temporality of the narrative and carry the state ideology of the time to the present. TV series such as *Payitaht Abdülhamid*, which transcend the temporality of the narrated period and become the media apparatus of the AKP's political agenda, keep the Ottoman memory alive while at the same time transforming into a media apparatus shaped according to the AKP's political agenda. This new sector established with the aforementioned series thus constructs a new memory and establishes its own truth. In the first periods of its broadcasting, *Magnificent Century*, which represented the dynamics within the palace and the harem life rather than wars and victories, caused a lot of criticism and debate due to this narrative it estab-

lished. From time to time, *Magnificent Century* was also subjected to criticism by government deputies, and interestingly, about two years after it started airing, it was directly targeted by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the prime minister of the time. In his 2012 speech, Erdoğan not only heavily criticized the series, but also announced the foundations of his neo-Ottomanism.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: Our Syrian brothers and sisters who took refuge in Turkey today came fleeing from the oppression of the tyrant Bashar, not the opposition. We act with the mentality of our martyrs in Dumlupınar. We act with the understanding of the spirit that founded the Ottoman Empire in Domaniç. You look at the opposition, "What are you doing in *gaza*? What do you care about Lebanon, Kosovo, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Somalia?" They should have no regrets. We live in this world of 7 billion people. We know very well what our duty is. Wherever our ancestors went on horseback, we also go, we also take care of every place, but these people know our ancestors on the TV screen like in *Magnificent Century* documentary. We do not have such an ancestor. We didn't know such a Kanuni, we didn't know such a Sultan Süleyman. 30 years of his life was spent on horseback. He did not live in the palace like in those TV series you see. We need to know and understand this very well. And I condemn the directors of those TV series and the owners of that television in the presence of our nation. And although we have warned those concerned about this issue, I expect the judiciary to make the necessary decision.⁷

In this regard, fundamentally, Neo-Ottomanism also involves an obsession with a fantastical, mystical era of Turkish Islamic victory. Neo-Ottomanists generally view the Ottoman Empire as "proof of the superior achievements of a 'Turkish' state that accepted Islam as its official religion," as anthropologist Esra Ozyurek points out (Özyürek 2007). With this understanding, AKP creates an idealized Ottoman narrative not only in its discourse but also in its media representation. However, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), the government's media controlling institution, was put in place to outlaw any oppositional narratives that might have been constructed about the Ottoman memory. After Erdoğan's speech, a draft law was submitted to parliament with the proposal of AKP Istanbul MP Oktay Saral. In subparagraph (g) of paragraph 1 of Article 8 of the RTÜK law titled "principles of broadcasting service", which reads "It cannot be praising crime, criminals and criminal organizations, or teaching criminal techniques", the article "It cannot be of a nature that humiliates, degrades, distorts or portrays differently historical

⁷<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/basbakan-erdogandan-muhtesem-yuzyila-agir-elistiri-22009998>

events and personalities that are accepted within the national values of the society." is added.⁸ Thus, historical narratives are restricted to the ideological framework deemed acceptable by the state. Therefore, Muhteşem Yüzyıl becomes a tool that paves the way for the neo-Ottomanist understanding in the media, while creating its own genre with its impact.

With the transformation of the concept of Ottomanism, the foundations of which were laid during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, in the AKP era, the concept of neo-Ottomanism emerges as a fundamental policy in organizing political and social life and determining the political agenda of the AKP. Especially with Erdoğan's Davos appearance, his being referred to as a new Ottoman sultan, his carrying the flag of leadership as "one man" and the recent transition of the Republic of Turkey from a parliamentary system to a presidential system is a representation of the influence and power of the Ottoman system of governance in the political arena. However, neo-Ottomanism aims to transform not only the political sphere but also the social and cultural sphere. In particular, it is argued in social discourse that the political legitimacy ground realized by Erdoğan, who is identified with Sultan Abdülhamid, not only demonstrates the resurgence of the spirit of Abdülhamid against the West, but also establishes an internal return of dignity, pride and self-confidence in terms of identity. Accordingly, the neo-Ottomanist narrative and the spirit that accompanies it are established through a highly charged emotional reservoir (Tokdoğan 2018).

What is critical at this point is that the AKP's affective neo-Ottomanism includes nationalism as well as ummatism in its identity construction and reconstructs the Muslim-Turkish identity. The National Vision of Erbakan's RP is not completely abandoned, but the process of identity construction, which is more integrated into social life, begins. If we consider the new identity as a clustering, the Ottoman Empire provides a broad framework and foundation, including the historical, social and cultural heritage on which this identity is based. Those who advocate this new identity model make use of this broad framework of the Ottoman Empire and give it a place in every aspect of life. Thus, the Ottoman presence begins to be felt in language, dress, writing, art, industry and politics, in short, in all areas of society. As I have mentioned before, the AKP, which gradually increases its control over the media and establishes its own hegemony, controls both knowledge and access to information with the laws it enacts and intensive control tools and becomes a tool of emotion management over citizens.

To sum up, I consider *Magnificent Century* as a breaking point both in the media

⁸<https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/muhtesem-yuzyil-a-yasak-yasasi-22074692>

and in neo-Ottomanist politics, not only with the affective bond it creates within the narrative of the series, but also with the impact of the series on contemporary life. I believe that it is critical to examine political turning points in order to understand how governments instrumentalize the media, especially in this post-truth era where the concept of truth and the pursuit of truth is becoming increasingly impossible. In this context, in the following chapters, I will discuss the narrative dynamics of *Magnificent Century* and how these dynamics interact with material life.

3. SULEYMAN THE RULER

TIMS production⁹ has proved to be a very successful reader of Turkey's emotional politics, as they have been able to decipher the level of melodrama that Turkish audiences want to see on television with their highly successful and rating record-breaking works such as *Kavak Yelleri* [Daydreaming], *Suskunlar* [Game of Silence] and *Melekler Korusun*, which they produced in the period close to *Magnificent Century*. Knowing the Turkish audience well, the production company represents the emotional dilemmas that the characters find themselves in as the story progresses and the effects of these emotional dilemmas they experienced on their decisions and bodies in a very subtle way. Sultan Süleyman, renowned as Süleyman the Magnificent for the wars he won, his just rule and the size of the lands he conquered, was the 10th sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

Magnificent Century opens with the news of the death of his father Yavuz Sultan Selim reaching *Şehzade* Süleyman, who was then the governor of Manisa, and Süleyman, the only prince, is summoned to Istanbul to ascend to the throne. Then, his closest friend in the series and future vizier Ibrahim of Parga (*Pargalı*), who was to become his grand vizier in the future, said, "His Holiness Sultan Süleyman Khan, the Dynasty of Ali Osman and the entire Ottoman estate awaits you." After his words, the story of his 46-year reign begins as he kneels in front of the soldiers with him. *Magnificent Century* narrates Süleyman as fearless, just, brave, intellectual, and most importantly invincible Emperor Suleiman the Magnificent, as represented in the official historical narrative in the broadest framework, along with his human side, contradictions, sorrows, anger, love that will be told for centuries, and the journey of his transformation into a ruler he aims to actualize.

Especially in long-running series such as *Magnificent Century*, the scenes in which the characters are introduced to the audience are very critical to follow the charac-

⁹TIMS Production was founded in 2006 by Timur Savcı. TIMS is an influential production company in the Turkish TV series industry and continues to produce TV series both on digital platforms and on television. The company, which also works as a movie producer, creates its market largely through TV series.

ter development and storyline and to recognize the construction of the characters. Just like the narrator-actor in Brecht's plays¹⁰, the voice-over technique is used in which the characters, without stepping out of their roles, narrate their material and emotional conditions to the audience from an outside perspective. Thus, for the audience listening to the story told through the eyes of the character, it can be considered as a tool that invites the audience to watch carefully to follow the consistency of the character's discourses and actions. On the other hand, the monologues in which the characters break out of the realm of the series and have a direct dialog with the audience are the points where the affective bond with the spectators is strengthened. In this context, in this chapter and the following chapters of the thesis, I will take into consideration the tirades and monologues of the three main characters (Süleyman, Ibrahim, and Hürrem), in which they introduce and narrate their stories and their own perspectives with the voice-over technique, and in which they reveal themselves to the audience.

As I summarized in previous parts, *Magnificent Century* embodies the Ottoman dynasty through an interpretation of history, which has become increasingly mythologized, especially with the neo-Ottomanist policies of the AKP government, and which has become difficult to criticize or question in the public sphere with its glorious ancestor narrative. It represents the "human" aspects of Süleyman by telling his emotional sides, his relationship with his sons (especially with Mustafa), his conscience, his love for Hürrem Sultan and what he did for that love, his friendship with *Pargalı* Ibrahim which ended with his drowning. In this way, it puts at its foundation the fatherhood vs. rulership debate, in which the contradiction between humanity and rulership deepens and creates a very strong emotional connection with the audience. As the emotional burden of the decisions taken, such as the execution of *Pargalı* Ibrahim, the drowning of Mustafa, the cutting of Mahidevran Sultan's allotment after Mustafa's death, and the decree for the murder of *Şehzade* Bayezid, becomes increasingly heavy, it becomes increasingly challenging to empathize with the person Süleyman has become. The painful illnesses caused by the turning points of these decisions on Süleyman, his stopping eating and drinking, his sleepless nights, his inability to get up from pain, his heart being squeezed repeatedly are represented with a quite detailed work and dialectical fiction. Thus, the magnitude and destructiveness of the decisions are embodied and revealed.

¹⁰Brecht introduces demonstrative acting as a crucial element for achieving the desired alienation effect in theater. Both the actor and the audience should not fully identify with the characters portrayed. Through this method, the actor not only explores their own stance but also the character's perspective on events. This approach emphasizes that the characters' paths in the play are not predetermined destinies but rather choices influenced by encountered conditions. The voice-over technique, especially in the tirades of characters Süleyman, Ibrahim, and Hürrem, becomes pivotal as it allows them to elucidate their circumstances, revealing their interpretations and choices in response to those circumstances.

The representation of diseases is critical in this context. Jason Read defines affect as the transformation of the body from one sensation to the next, rather than being determinate and stabilized conditions of feeling (Read 2016, 145). Thus, the representations of the characters, especially Süleyman, are represented by bodily changes in line with the affective processes of the characters and a connection is established with the spectators. Therefore, pre-personal and pre-conscious intensities of affect are embodied to reveal the contradictory and compelling struggle for existence in the palace. In this context, I will elaborate on Süleyman's bodily ailments and their presence in the narrative axis in the following sections of this chapter.

Magnificent Century, which alienates the audience from the history it learns by revealing that history is a flow shaped by the decisions taken, not the fate written, does not only present an alternative historical narrative in this context. As neoliberal subjects living in a different state structure in the same geography, it will not be possible to understand Sultan Süleyman Khan, who crowned kings in his time, who won a battle in three hours, who believed that he derived his power and might directly from Allah, who was the caliph of all Muslims, the "shadow of Allah on earth", the sole owner of almost limitless lands, and to whom everyone except the members of the dynasty were his servants, through his power. Considering that the series is based on the issue of fatherhood in a way that is appropriate for a melodrama. Which is why, Massumi argues that the ever-present and fluctuating nature of affect carries the potential of freeing the subject from the constraints of hegemonic discourses, allowing a flight from dominant structures of thought (Massumi 2002, 32-34).

Thus, beyond the mythic narrative in the official history ideology established in Turkey, the series may lead to operate the politics of emotion by aiming to establish an emotional attachment to explain the state of fatherhood to the audience who cannot understand being one of the most influential and powerful emperors of history with their present subjectivity. In this regard, on the one hand, the destructive nature of the Ottoman Dynasty is exposed, while on the other hand, the fading memory of the common Ottoman Empire is represented through very intense emotions. In this way, spectators living in Turkey and trying to keep their Ottoman nostalgia alive are called to the ideology of neo-Ottomanism promoted in the political realm through the emotional representation of their subjectivity. In this direction, through the fracture opened by the series and the emotional disclosure of the process, the audience encounters with how traumatic a war the allegedly glorious power is. As we can often see in the historicization technique of narrating the macro-order through micro lives, I consider the telling of the alternative side of the story of Sultan Suleiman, which is known by everyone, as an alienation effect in

itself for each consideration.

Magnificent Century compounds the conflict arising from the paternity dispute with a disciplined preparation process, including qualitative historical research before shooting, long meetings involving the entire production team, and collaborative work by the actors and screenwriters. This results in a completed process and dramaturgy that constantly develops its perspective and focus. With the advantage of telling a historical story, the series focuses on the main breaking points and conflicts of Sultan Suleiman's 46-year reign in order to tell the story behind the story, creating a flow in which the conditions are represented in depth and detail. Just like the naive attitude at the starting point of dialectical theater, *Magnificent Century* takes character Sultan Süleyman's reign out of its naturality and reveals that it is the result of circumstances and choices, thus treating Süleyman's narrative as a dialectical process rather than a written fate.¹¹ For this reason, by incorporating the tools of dialectical theater and affect theory into its dramaturgy and representation, it makes visible what is behind the visible and evokes a sense of astonishment and ultimately a process of questioning in the audience. However, on the other hand, in line with the affective flow the series establishes within the story and the affective impact it has on the audience, it also paves the way for a reconciliation with Ottoman nostalgia beyond questioning.

Accordingly, in the following parts of this chapter, I will first discuss how the representation of power, one of the series' main concerns, establishes a relationship both within the series and with the audience. After the chapter in which I examine what it means to be in power in terms of the human aspects that Süleyman must give up to maintain his social position, that is, to complete the process of self-actualization, I will look at the affective impact that the character may evoke on the audience. Therefore, I will examine how the character's predicament and sociality are constructed in the section in which I examine the relationship Süleyman establishes with compassion and the sociality and affect of the feeling of compassion. In the final part of this chapter, I will discuss the dimensions of greed that Süleyman tries to distance himself from the beginning of the series through *Pargalı* Ibrahim.

¹¹In his later works, Brecht, who focuses on "dialectics in theater," states that naïveté is the key to his works and encompasses the entire understanding of theater within a naive framework. (Nutku 1979, 4) The mentioned naïveté can be expressed as the questioning of what is commonly accepted in its simplest form. It opens up the questioning of the reality behind the reality, that is, the truth behind the visible, through the "why" and "how" questions. It would not be wrong to refer to Brecht's approach as scientific naïveté, as he is interested in the representation of social events that arise through dialectical processes. (Parkan 2004, 51)

3.1 The Price of Authority

In the first episode of the series, just before ascending to the throne, Süleyman's voice is heard describing the kind of ruler he will be. Süleyman, who reminds us of his known aspects such as his interest in the art of jewelry to learn patience and his curiosity in science, also emphasizes two crucial features of his character that should not be forgotten throughout the 139 episodes: he understands the precious and the worthless at first glance and never forgets what he understands. Süleyman, who believes that his right to the throne as the caliph of Islam and a devout Muslim is his destiny written by Allah, strives throughout the series to actualize the great reign that he believes is his destiny and the identity that his social position has given him. However, he rejects the cruel rules of the dynasty he was born into, such as fratricide, and a ruler who tries to kill his own son with arrogance and greed for power, as his own father did to him. Free from his social position, he tries to maintain the fatherly identity he had before he became sultan through the relationship he establishes with his sons, to whom he is bound by a strong bond of love. In this context, the series exposes Süleyman's struggle with his identity as a father and the difficulty of actualizing his identity as a ruler caught between two identities and represents him as a person who makes decisions, has contradictions and pains.

Süleyman is the primary witness to the extent to which the greed for power can blind a person's conscience and bring him to the point of killing his own son when his father Selim Khan sends him a poisoned caftan when he is a prince. Defining greed and arrogance as the emotions of the devil, Süleyman buries the caftan sent by his father and swears that he will never be like his father after he takes over the throne. However, *Şehzade* Süleyman's conscience and mind, which are unaware of the burning power of ruling, battle with Sultan Süleyman over his fatherhood from the first day he ascends to the throne. At this point, fatherhood should not be considered only in terms of his relationship with his children. Süleyman's fatherhood also represents the human emotions such as conscience, compassion and humility that he must give up to remain the ruler and realize his destiny, and the consequences of losing these emotions are quite severe. In Süleyman's inner world, the effects of the battle of these two identities that cling to him are mainly embodied through Süleyman's physicality. The textual and actional changes of Süleyman, who kills his fatherhood, conscience and innocence as he strengthens in power and thus becomes increasingly cruel, are supported by other technical elements. In addition to technical changes such as the use of make-up to make his eyes more prominent

as he becomes more cruel, the actor's voice becoming thicker and thicker, and the adoption of an acting style in which anger is intense, the suffering of Süleyman's human side is represented through diseases on the body. Thus, the audience is shown that the events in question are real and quite traumatic events beyond a narrative. On the other hand, the decisions taken by Süleyman are socialized through dramaturgical fiction by extracting them from Süleyman's individuality. Exposing Süleyman to criticism as the sole ruler of the entire Ottoman Estate, in other words, as the state itself, means subjecting the Ottoman state structure to criticism. *Magnificent Century*, which presents a very strong character construction by reconciling the conditions of the characters with their past, constructs a narrative that reveals that the transformation of Süleyman in line with the decisions he makes is the result of choices, not fate. With this narrative, Sultan Süleyman is humanized from being a myth and becomes a subject to questioning and criticism.

By placing arrogance and fear against conscience and love, Süleyman's human side and his ruler side are dragged into an emotional battle. Throughout 139 episodes, the battle of emotions implies Süleyman's need to accept every emotion to fulfill the reign he believes he is destined to rule, in other words, to actualize himself. The affective actions in the big decisions that Süleyman is dragged into by the war of four core emotions are legitimized through the survival of the state. In this way, Suleiman the Magnificent, who is one of the strongest social memory figures of the neo-Ottomanist understanding that is tried to be revived, and the way of governance of the Ottoman Empire are invited to find a resonance in the emotional world of the audience who accept this understanding.

The series strongly constructs the price that Süleyman, who is very afraid of becoming a cruel ruler like his father, losing his conscience, and harming his own blood, pays to realize the great reign he aims for. The series also portrays Süleyman's fear of the realization of the future he is running away from the very first episodes of the series. In a conversation with Ibrahim on the terrace of the Main Room on the evening of the day he ascended to the throne, Süleyman says that he does not want to die until he "advances to Rome, the heart of the infidel, and conquers more territory than Alexander the Great", to which Ibrahim, whom he always wanted to see by his side, replies "You are the Alexander the Great of our time". This desire of Süleyman, who wants to be a greater sultan than his ancestors and Alexander the Great, the greatest emperor of his time, and the fate he believes in, is the first expression of one side of one of the most fundamental contradictions of the series. The same night he looks in the mirror and says, "I'm afraid, father, I'm afraid of being covered in blood, of being a tyrant. What if the power and the noise of the reign of power deafen the voice of my conscience? Keep your breath on me, my

God, do not make me ashamed to look at my face. Your conscience is your qibla, Süleyman, don't lose it." His words reveal the other side of Süleyman's battle. On the other hand, the emotions of Süleyman's journey are also built by strengthening interpersonal dynamics from the very first episode of the series. In the very first episodes of the series, Süleyman, through his relationship with the child *Şehzade* Mustafa, says that he is afraid of experiencing the same events in the future that he experienced with his own father in the past and that he would rather die than face this fate. Especially in the first episodes, while his fear is exposed, his love for Mustafa is conveyed in a very emphasized way. The possibility of Mustafa's decreeing the murder of his son, which is still a very distant future in the first years of the throne, is represented as a possibility that makes its presence felt because Mustafa is a child and does not pose a threat yet. For example, in his first days in the palace, when he is talking to Mustafa and he jokingly says "Guards, take this prince away, let him be beheaded quickly." in response to Mustafa's "I will be the sultan too!". He remembers the reality of this possibility and that he himself has experienced it, and hugs Mustafa and looks at Ibrahim, fearing the future that comes to his mind. For Süleyman, who does not yet see this possible future as a threat, it is still a frightening possibility. On the other hand, by being reminded of this future that the spectator knows will come into reality, the audience is invited to a position of wondering how the loving father-son relationship they have been watching will be disrupted.

With the reminder of historical reality, the audience becomes alienated by distancing themselves from the story they are watching. The emotion that creates this affective connection in the representation for the audience, who is distanced by the fearfulness of the future to come, is love. While examining the cultural significance of love and hate, Sara Ahmed explains the narrative's way of transformation based on the fact that right-wing-racist hate groups call themselves love groups (Ahmed 2015, 155). Addressing the declaration of love as a means of protection, Ahmed argues that love reproduces the collective as an ideal by producing a particular subject that is idealized through its commitment to the ideal (Ahmed 2015, 156). In this context, this father-son love, established from the very beginning of the series, is also communalized by revealing the social alignment between the representative of power and his future rival. Throughout the series, as the love of the ruler, who is the powerful potentate, for his son and those closest to him is tested by Süleyman's fears, it is represented that any love that does not protect the survival of the state is dispensable and even harmful. Therefore, the reason why Süleyman is so afraid of turning into his father is both love and his social position. The rules of the game are clear, to achieve the destiny God has written for him and to protect the future

of the state, he has no choice, he must kill everyone, including his son, if the day comes. However, as a human being who is being attempted to be killed by his father, he has also sworn not to lose his conscience and to love his son. For this reason, Süleyman's battle of conscience with his own son is also a battle with his own father and himself, that is, with power.

Süleyman is afraid of turning into his father intertwined with that he is also afraid that his authority will deafen his ears to his conscience and that he will lose his qibla. For this reason, to get away from his sense of arrogance, he constantly tries to remind himself of death, that he came from the earth and will go to the earth. In order to understand Süleyman's efforts to escape from the future he fears and his arrogance, chapter 26, which represents the Battle of Mohaç, one of the most significant battles of Sultan Suleiman's reign, is critical. In 1526, at the Battle of Mohaç, Suleiman the Magnificent won an unprecedented battle in about three hours, bringing an end to the Hungarian Kingdom. In order to understand the significance of the representation of the Battle of Mohaç, which has an influential place not only in the Ottoman Empire but also in world history, its representation in the official historical narrative should also be evaluated. In the textbook distributed by the Ministry of National Education, which is common to all high schools in Turkey, the battle is described as "The Hungarian King, who was defeated in Mohaç, a decisive battle of annihilation, lost his life by getting stuck in a swamp while retreating. With the Ottoman Army's defeat of the Hungarian army on August 29, 1526, the Hungarian Kingdom disappeared from the stage of history" (MEB 2019, 143). When the emphases in the narrative are taken into account, it is seen that the book published by the ministry emphasizes the magnificence of the war and reveals an ideology beyond the historical significance of the war. In this way, the ideology of the state is transmitted to the subjects of society as the official history narrative through the curriculum of schools, one of the most important institutions of the state's construction of society. In this context, the narrative represented in the series is also constructed by considering the historical significance of the war. In the third episode of the documentary, which aired immediately after the end of the series Prof. Dr. Deniz Esemeli, the history advisor of the series, describes the Battle of Mohaç as a turning point in the history of world warfare due to the tactics and duration of the battle and states that European states could not confront the Ottoman Empire for approximately seventy years after this battle. Aware of the historical significance of the battle, the production and shooting team allocated time and budget to the shooting of the battle scene, strengthening the very pivotal narrative they would construct. Timur Savcı, the owner of the production company, states that two weeks and the budget of approximately one episode were allocated for the shooting

of the ten-minute scene and that the entire second season shooting schedule was adjusted according to this scene. In addition to the economic consideration, the dramaturgy of the battle scene and its aftermath is also constructed in a very subtle way. In the narrative constructed by *Magnificent Century*, the focus of the war scene is dramaturgically directed to the aftermath of the war rather than during the war, creating an alternative narrative to the official historical ideology established by state organs. After the battle scene, which is represented quite enthusiastically with the allocated budget, Süleyman's tirade with the voice-over technique while looking at a martyred little boy among hundreds of soldiers lying dead on the ground reveals the influences brought along with this magnificent victory.

Süleyman: How did these voices fall silent? I hear the noise of my heart. This smell... I want to smell roses. The smell of blood and gunpowder burns my nostrils. Earth, trees, birds, don't be silent, say you have won, you have won absolute victory. Our blood flowed, we burned to the ground, for the sake of God, our ashes were scattered, the wind blew. Is it still blowing? Angel on my right side, devil on my left side, where have you gone, hear my voice. Help me, God! I cannot stop death... We won the Battle of Mohaç from noon to the afternoon. The chroniclers will write it as the greatest victory of the universe won in the shortest time. This is your victory, Süleyman. An arrogance has taken over me. Which victory is the universe pointing me to next? Follow the signs, Süleyman.

Trying to escape from permitting himself to be overcome by the arrogance that has taken hold of him, Süleyman reminds himself of the distance between him and death by looking at the mark left by the bullet that hit his armor in the ambush he fell into on his way to battle. He tells Ibrahim that he must and will overcome the arrogance he feels and spends the night barefoot in the grave he has dug next to his marquee. The monologue in the scene, which is also performed with voice-over technique, is a continuation of the tirade in which he explains the arrogance he feels.

Süleyman: Realize, Süleyman. Do not forget. Be humble. All honor and will are not yours. Be grateful to your God and do not give superiority to your ego. Never fall into arrogance. You should be ambitious towards God and loyal towards the people. Your body, your mind, your dhikr belong to him. Do not think you own it. Do not think that the blessings of the Haqq are yours and that your own are the only ones. Kill your ego, or it will kill you. Conquer your arrogance, Süleyman. Every pharaoh has a Moses, every evil has a light. Have faith. Remember. Remember

the state you came into existence and the final state you will reach. Then the gates of paradise will open for you. Your conscience is your qibla, Süleyman. Do not lose it.

In the scene, which is one of the most essential scenes of Süleyman's struggle not to give superiority to his own ego, the camera focuses only on the image of Süleyman in the grave while Süleyman says the above words. Meral Okay, the screenwriter of the scene, expresses the dramaturgical meaning and significance of the scene in her 2011 interview as follows.

Meral Okay: When they win Mohaç, which they thought would take three months, in two and a half hours, it really fills him with arrogance. He says "I'm in the middle of Europe" and thousands of dead. The whole plain is dead. He feels a sense of godlike power and accomplishment and he is uncomfortable with it. He says, "I have to overcome this or it will destroy me." And to remind himself that he is mortal again, that he must seek refuge in Allah, that he cannot be stronger than Allah, he digs a grave and lies in it. This is already a very shocking and impressive thing in terms of self-discipline. But on the other hand, every word he says there will make him experience the opposite in the following chapters, that is, Süleyman has a Moses too. "Don't lose your conscience, Süleyman," he says, and we will see that he will. After all, every power forces the conscience in some way. Your purity and innocence are gone, you can no longer be at the point where you started.

In this respect, the main point of conflict in Süleyman's struggle for sovereignty and fatherhood is established in the series through the struggle against the divine arrogance brought about by power. The ambition for authority brought about by divine arrogance, which becomes increasingly difficult to overcome, is fundamentally revealed in the relationship he establishes with his son Mustafa. As the temporality of the story progresses, Mustafa reaches the age of 11 or 12, and significant battles such as the Battle of Mohaç are won, conflicts begin to emerge in Süleyman's loving relationship with Mustafa. For example, Süleyman responds very harshly to Mustafa's withdrawal from his presence without greeting him, reminding Mustafa that he is not only his father but also his sultan, and expels him from his presence. After this incident, his conversation with his mother Hafza Ayşe Sultan reveals and concretizes the possible future by the primary witness of the past.

Hafza Sultan: Who are you? Whose arrogant voice, whose eyes are

these? He looked just like that when he was angry with Mustafa in the morning. My lion, this is not the Süleyman I raised. My son had a conscience, he had love.

Süleyman: I am no longer Mustafa's age, I am Sultan Süleyman Khan, who ruled a world state on three continents. The state does not have feelings, the state has justice. Power cannot be established in any other way.

Hafza Sultan: When I look at your face, it is bright and shining on one side and deep, dark and cold on the other. When your anger rises, I don't recognize you, the son I raised. I shudder when I watch you, I am afraid Süleyman. Do you know why? When I look into your eyes in that deep dark face, I see your father, Sultan Selim. That's when I fear what you might do next, my son.

The episode ends with these words of Hafza Sultan. Thus, with the fiction of interruption applied, what Süleyman has to do to actualize himself as a ruler, which will continue until the series' final episode, becomes a stopping point for the audience who already knows other historical events. Süleyman reminds us of the necessity and principles of his position with the answer he gives to his mother, and even though he is sincere in what he says, the words he hears are heavy for him. Süleyman tries to remember the existence of death and the mortality of this life by recalling the moments when he came back from death until that day, and he wants to escape from the arrogance and the future that this arrogance may create. However, he cannot escape the arrogance of power and begins to experience this fear in his own actions. Mustafa, who is very disturbed by the fights between his mother Mahidevran Sultan and Hürrem Sultan during his childhood, does not want his mother to cry anymore, so he asks his father why his mother is crying. He refuses his father's order and says that he wants to go to Edirne Palace with his mother. Süleyman, who thinks that his son is no longer a child and that it makes him proud to see him grow up, cannot bear to refuse Mustafa's request and allows him to go, even though it is forbidden for a prince to live outside the palace before going to his sanjak. Mustafa, who returns to the palace as a young man when he is old enough to go to the standard, thinks that his father's patient and tolerant attitude in the years when he first ascends the throne continues due to the effect of growing up away from palace conventions, and he goes to ask his father to account again after the quarrel between his mother and Hürrem Sultan. He says to his father, "Who decides our future, father, you or Hürrem Sultan? ... You rule the whole world on three continents, but you cannot rule a woman." These words are extremely harsh and question Süleyman's power. Süleyman, who loses his temper in the face of these words, reminds Mustafa that he is not only his father but also his sovereign and walks up to him. Süleyman,

who comes to the point of losing himself with the great anger he experiences, sees the traces of his greatest fear in his actions. Unable to get out of the effect of the incident, Süleyman talks to Ibrahim and confesses the fear he will be a prisoner of and the past that is the source of the fear.

Süleyman: As a man, I have no objection to him standing in front of me and saying what he thinks without fear. As long as he does not cross the limits of respect. I do not consider that as an objection. On the contrary, I would like it. It is better for him to say one thing to my face and another behind my back.

Ibrahim: Then what is it that upsets you so?

Süleyman: I lost myself for a moment, *Pargalı*. I came close to harming my own son Mustafa. That is when I was afraid of myself. I was afraid of what I might do. I do not want to one day send a poisoned robe to my own son like my father did.

Ibrahim: Never. This is not possible. Your Majesty, our prince has taken his anger and conscience from you, he looks like you, be sure. He cannot harm anyone. Especially not one of his own blood. Just like you.

As the fear that clings to him grows, Süleyman begins to feel suspicion of those around him. Although he tries to control his ego by constantly directing himself to faith to avoid arrogance and pride, he begins to cling more firmly to the belief that the Ottoman Empire is a trust from Allah. As Süleyman tries to protect his power with the belief that he derives his will from Allah, he also fears losing authority and frequently repeats that the penalty for any act or word against his will is death. Thus, the cruel decisions he takes to realize his destiny and protect the state are legitimized for Sultan Süleyman and the audience.

On the other hand, the series physicalizes the pain and grief caused by the decisions that contradict Süleyman's conscience and compassion through illnesses. Süleyman is unable to bear the grief he experiences when he orders the deaths of Ibrahim and Mustafa, whom he swore that he would not give an edict for their murder, when *Şehzade* Cihangir, who could not bear Mustafa's murder, dies in pain from grief, when his sister Hatice Sultan, who could not get out of the grief she experienced after Ibrahim's death, commits suicide in front of his eyes, and when *Şehzade* Bayezid rebels. His illnesses are represented by heart problems, festering boils, febrile fainting for days, and painful and festering sores on his feet. Süleyman's suffering gradually increases to such an extent that he is sometimes unable to get up from his bed. Through the intense representation of the effects of his decisions, it is revealed to

the audience that Süleyman's inner battle is between power and conscience, and that Süleyman can neither be a father nor a ruler without killing one of them.

While Süleyman's illnesses are used to expose the effects of his decisions on him, they are also constructed as episodes in which Süleyman's doubts are justified and he approaches the future he fears. The dreams that Süleyman, who comes closer to death with each illness due to his conscience, compassion and grief, sees during his illness are instrumentalized as the expression of the relationship he establishes with his father in his mind. To understand the depth of the war for the throne, the dramaturgy of Süleyman's dreams in episodes 55 and 121 is critical.

Süleyman, who has difficulty accepting *Şehzade* Cihangir, who was born with a hump on his back, and wants to have him treated, cannot bear the pain of his son's suffering and lies unconscious for days after a heart ailment, is, on the one hand, an indication of his deep love for his sons. On the other hand, the grief caused by the possibility of his son's death reminds him of his own death and struggle. After fainting, *Şehzade* Süleyman searches for his father in his dream and finds his father Sultan Selim sitting on his throne by the sea. Süleyman goes to his father and kisses his caftan and Sultan Selim says "What do you say Süleyman, are you ready to face me? Are we going to start the battle?" Then they draw swords and during the battle Selim Khan disarms Süleyman. Placing his sword on Süleyman's neck, Selim looked into his eyes and said, "As long as our sword shines, the enemy cannot take his eyes off it and cannot see us. But, God forbid, if it rusts and becomes ragged, the enemy will not see us but will look down on us. My Süleyman, it makes me proud to see you grow up and become a strong sultan. But sometimes I look at you and a sadness comes over me. As you grow up, our innocence is fading, Süleyman. Our age of innocence is coming to an end. Such a pity, isn't it?" he says. With this scene, the name of the war is clearly defined and the spectacle of the war is revealed to the audience. While the previous representative of the power defines the way to stay in power through not shedding a shadow on his sword, he also declares that the days of power will kill innocence. Süleyman, who wakes up feeling the good or bad intentions of everyone who comes to him during his illness, feels Mahidevran Sultan's desire to put their son Mustafa on the throne as well as Hürrem's absolute loyalty. Thus, it is represented that the power struggle that will follow him will take place not only between him and his sons but also between the mothers. At the end of the episode, after Süleyman wakes up, the sides of the war are clearly shown to the audience with the tableau set up next to his bed. On one side, Hürrem Sultan, her children Mihrimah Sultan and the four princes Mehmet, Selim, Bayezid and Cihangir, and on the other side, *Pargalı* Ibrahim, Mahidevran Sultan and *Şehzade* Mustafa.

Sultan Süleyman, whose trust in 34-year-old Prince Mustafa is shaken after many events, is tricked by Hürrem Sultan and Rüstem Pasha and accesses letters from the gentry of Amasya, where Mustafa was the Sanjak Governor. When he sees that *Şehzade* Mustafa is referred to as "the future sultan" in the letters, he remembers the poisoned robe his father sent him. In episode 115, he sends a robe to Mustafa as a last warning to remind him and himself of the impending doom, but Rüstem Pasha poisons the robe. Mahidevran Sultan, a witness of the past, arrives at the last moment and *Şehzade* Mustafa is saved. After this event, Mustafa, who succumbs to the suspicion within him, cannot stand still and goes to the capital with his soldiers. Süleyman, who mistakes this for an attempt at rebellion, thus encounters his greatest fear. He informs the janissaries that Mustafa's rebellion must be stopped, or he will be assassinated, but the janissaries stand by *Şehzade* Mustafa and escort him to the palace. Mustafa enters the palace by laying down his weapons and says, "If you want to take my life, do it by looking me in the eye" and appears before Süleyman. After Mustafa's explanation of the incident, Süleyman becomes very angry at this execution and says, "You believed that you could kill my son, and in this way. ... How could you think of such a possibility Mustafa, would I allow such a treacherous and despicable execution?" and then Süleyman swears before God that he will not kill Mustafa and Mustafa swears before God that he will not rebel. However, in Süleyman's eyes, the audience is shown Mustafa being strangled, clearly representing the impending end.

In the time that passes after this event, Süleyman's grief becomes heavier and heavier, and the sentence "power accepts no shadow" and the pain of having his friend strangled in the captivity of this sentence almost captures him. Although he conquered Tabriz in the campaign to the Persian kingdom, he could not achieve a lasting victory and his illness worsened during the prolonged campaign. As he fears that he will not fulfill his destiny as "Süleyman, the shadow of God on earth", his fear of death and killing increases. After the conquest of Tabriz, the words of a dervish who meets Süleyman while traveling in Tabriz and recognizes him despite his disguise, tells Süleyman about his mortality and his grief, paving the way for both his hell and the destiny he aims to realize.

Dervish: The soul is immaterial. It is free from time and space and eternal, it has received this virtue from Allah Almighty. Allah Almighty has imposed a soul on human beings from His own soul. Süleyman. The body is a veil. Therefore, the disappearance of the body at death is the removal of the veil between Allah Almighty and man. So much so that Hazret Mawlana Jalalettin Al-Rumi said, "If I die, do not say that I am

dead. Because I was dead, I was resurrected, and my friend took me away."

Süleyman: Who are you? How did you know who you are?

Dervish: I saw you. I smelled the blood on your hands.

Süleyman: Which blood are you talking about?

Dervish: This smell. It burns your nostrils too. That's why your pain, your anger. You think it is over, you say you have forgotten. Just when everything is going well, your pain suddenly comes back. Your wound reminds you of itself.

Süleyman: What does that mean, effendi? What wound is this?

Dervish: The wound in your soul. It is a seed that fell inside you years ago. When you say you buried it, defeated it, destroyed it, it is actually a poison ivy that you replant every day. It grows and grows and takes over your soul. Until it takes your loved ones from you.

Süleyman, whose grief and restlessness increase after the dervish's words, realizes that he must bury the wound in his conscience, but this grief only exacerbates his illness. Returning to the headquarters, Süleyman puts on the armor that he had given to Ibrahim as a gift years ago, reminding him of the distance between him and death, and goes out to make a speech to bring the soldiers who are causing unrest to their senses. Süleyman, who becomes increasingly angry in his speech but cannot forget his physical pain, declares with all his anger that he will not leave until he achieves an absolute victory, and faints in front of all the soldiers in the camp after saying the words "I am Sultan Süleyman Han!", unable to bear the physical pain and the burden inside him. The fainting of Süleyman, whose entire war is based on actualizing his reign, after these words is one of the critical gestus¹² points in the series. The fact that he falls into a months-long illness and sleep, unable to shout out in front of the soldiers the fate of the reign he has yet to realize, is a revelation to the audience that Süleyman has not yet become "Sultan Süleyman" and is fictionalized as a turning point that will change the fate of Süleyman and thus the entire Ottoman Empire. The dream that Süleyman, who returns to the palace after the incident and remains unconscious for months, has before he wakes up is an omen of the return of Süleyman from the promise he made to himself and the oath he swore to his son before he ascended the throne, and the burial of his conscience and heart by revealing the fate that his bleeding conscience stands

¹²The main point to be drawn from Brecht's definition is that gestus has a social meaning. Gestus, which is seen as the acting equivalent of the naive attitude that must be maintained in the entire production process (Parkan 2004, 57), reveals that the starting point of the social meaning of the issue to be conveyed is not words, but behavior that expresses a social meaning. (Nutku 1976, 128)

in front of. Seeing someone in a deserted place in his dream, Süleyman gradually approaches him and encounters his father. As Süleyman gets closer and closer to his father, the following words are heard in his own voice with voice-over technique:

Süleyman: Everyone has a Grim Reaper. Who is your Grim Reaper, Süleyman, who is your angel of death, who will come to take your life? Who will tear you away from the might and power you possess? What are you most afraid of, Süleyman, who are you most afraid of? (He realizes that the man is his father.) A man who, with the greed and arrogance that fills his soul, destroys everything in front of him, and eventually even attempts the life of his own son? What and who a man fears the most is his Grim Reaper, Süleyman. (Voice-over ends.) Father? (Yavuz draws his sword and turns towards Süleyman, at that moment Süleyman wakes up from his dream and illness.)

With the dream represented, the story is told that not every death is just entering the ground in their identities that are caught between power, conscience, fatherhood, sovereignty and death. In episode 55, Sultan Selim, who only warns his son with the shadow of his sword, makes a move on Süleyman by drawing his sword without speaking in episode 121, representing that Süleyman's battle with death is the death of one of his two identities and that the war will now be over. The moment Süleyman, who is old and unarmed in front of his father, dies in his dream with his father's sword stroke, Sultan Süleyman wakes up from the dream. For Süleyman, who is free from his pain after waking up from the dream, both the dervish's words and the dream remind him of the path he must follow, the past he must bury and his conscience. After what he remembers, Süleyman watches from his terrace as *Şehzade* Mustafa leaves, and when he goes to his room and stands in front of the mirror, he sees his father, Sultan Selim, in the mirror. During the course of the scene, an excerpt from Ibrahim's diary is vocalized and Sultan Süleyman has the diary of *Pargalı* Ibrahim buried in the construction of the Süleymaniye Mosque.

Ibrahim: Sons are reflections of their fathers. They carry traces of him in their soul, traces of good or bad, beautiful or ugly, right or wrong. Whatever he loves and hates and fears and resents in his father will come to the surface one day. It is such water that it becomes a flood and destroys everything. It burns away everything that is beautiful. Neither the peace of loyalty remains in your eyes. Not a speck of love and compassion in the heart. In the end, everyone turns into the person

they fear to be. (Süleyman looks in the mirror and sees Sultan Selim) Every son carries his father inside him, and every father carries his son. No matter how much you fear and even if you bury your head in the ground, there is no remedy. Truth burns like a candle in your chest. Your conscience aches. It continues to burn as long as you walk, think and breathe. This blind light will never leave you alone, never. (*Pargalı* Ibrahim's diary is buried in the ground.)

3.2 The Burden of Compassion

Ibrahim Pasha of Parga was one of the closest witnesses and founders of the power of the Ottoman Empire, which gradually gained strength under the rule of Sultan Suleiman. Ibrahim Pasha represented as a character who was gifted to Süleyman when he was only 16 years old, becomes the chief falconer, the partner of his dreams, his comrade, his confidant, his only friend, his brother during Süleyman's principedom; during Süleyman's reign, he quickly becomes the head of the main chamber, the chief vizier, the love of his only sister Hatice, and the commander-in-chief of all his armies. As Süleyman's closest friend, *Pargalı* Ibrahim, who is the closest partner in every victory of Süleyman, is a subtly fictionalized representation of how power and power can contaminate a soul. *Pargalı* Ibrahim, who becomes the biggest partner in power with the authorizations granted by Süleyman and with Süleyman's guarantee of his own life with a decree and who has access to every power except sitting on the throne, succumbs to his ego in the battle he fights and begins to cast a shadow on Süleyman's power. Süleyman decrees the murder of Ibrahim, who pushes Süleyman's limits more and more due to Hürrem Sultan's games, *Pargalı* Ibrahim's own conditions and mistakes, and begins to feel the burden of a never-ending grief and pain in the war he wages.

Süleyman, who gives the death warrant for Ibrahim, for whom he had secured his life with the Edict of Sharif, whom he called his life companion, for whom he wrote poems, for whom he considered his brother, both makes a great effort to escape from this decision and this decision causes deep wounds in his soul, in his conscience. Süleyman is plunged into deep grief after *Pargalı* Ibrahim's death, and this damage to his conscience also takes a toll on his relationship with Mustafa. The relationship between father and son is challenged by many situations such as the intervening years, Hürrem Sultan's conspiracies, Mahidevran Sultan's grudge, *Şehzade* Mustafa's proud nature, his own decisions in his standard as he gains experience, and his defiance of Süleyman's orders. As his trust in Mustafa is shaken, his fear of his

rebellion deepens. This fear also means betraying the oath he swore on the first day of his departure, decreeing the murder of his son, and killing part of his conscience and losing his compassion.

With this flow, *Magnificent Century* represents in the allegory of the dream what it means to be in authority, the costs of power, and how power, greed, and arrogance can destroy a person. Seeing his father in the mirror, Süleyman realizes that his greatest fear is the price of the destiny he believes God has written for him. For the fate that Süleyman believed in to be realized, Sultan Selim had to kill Süleyman's conscience, Süleyman's fatherhood, which caused Süleyman's wounds, illnesses and grief, and Süleyman had to turn into his father. Although this battle is represented in Süleyman's mind as one between Sultan Selim and Süleyman, it is between Sultan Süleyman and *Şehzade* Mustafa. With the intergenerational father-son relationship established, it is revealed that Sultan Selim, whom he fights in his dreams, is actually Süleyman himself. Sultan Süleyman, who rises from his illness by taking the risk of killing his conscience and fatherhood, obeys the dervish's words and buries the wound that torments his conscience, *Pargalı* Ibrahim and the diary that haunts him in the ground, just like the robe sent by his father.

Due to this trajectory, the audience is involved in Süleyman's internal battle from the very first episodes of the series. Süleyman's feelings of love and compassion, which are tested in his battle between arrogance and conscience, are constantly in conflict with fear and anger. Siegfried Kracauer's phenomenological approach explains cinema as the connections established between the flow of images and the complex mood of the viewer and treats it as a dual encounter between the audience and the film (Kracauer 1960, 166). According to this encounter, the audience moves towards the dramaturgy of the representation while the representation pushes the audience towards its own ideology. In this context, the audience, which cannot relate to Sultan Suleiman's position as a social ruler due to its contemporary subjectivity, is called to a position of compassion for Süleyman through the representation of his actions, which contradict the character's feelings of compassion and conscience, through bodily pain. The feeling of compassion should not be confused with pity.

Lauren Berlant, who investigates the spectator's experience of feeling compassion and its relation to material practice, considers compassion as an emotion in operation. "In operation, compassion is a term denoting privilege: the sufferer is over there. You, the compassionate one, have a resource that would alleviate someone else's suffering. But if the obligation to recognize and alleviate suffering is more than a demand on consciousness more than a demand to feel right, as Harriet Beecher Stowe exhorted of her white readers then it is crucial to appreciate the multitude of

conventions around the relation of feeling to practice where compassion is concerned.

In any given scene of suffering, how do we know what does and what should constitute sympathetic agency?" (Berlant 2004, 4) Accordingly, Süleyman, who suffers great physical pain as he makes decisions that contradict his conscience, is removed from the position of the oppressor and placed in the position of the sufferer. Süleyman's changed position triggers the audience's affective bond with the compassionate Süleyman represented in the first episodes. Through simple emotions such as father-son relationship, friendship, romantic love, the audience relates to the story through their own practices and moves towards the possible pain that Süleyman's losses may have caused. The compassionate audience begins to feel compassion for Süleyman to alleviate his suffering and thus becomes open to accepting the conditions that justify Süleyman's actions.

What makes compassion so powerful and crucial is the conscientious right urge it generates, in other words, its affective force. The viewer's views on the Ottoman State represented during and after watching the series may vary depending on the social position and ideological stance of the receiver. By evaluating social positions such as rulership, slavery, and devshirism within the framework of historical conditions through historically familiar figures, subjects experience a conscious leap by distancing themselves from the governance and state structure of the Ottoman Empire. However, on the other hand, subjects close to the neo-Ottomanist understanding are drawn to the state, the former "owner" of this geography, which is governed with the understanding that "the finger cut by Sharia does not hurt", and the functioning structure of the state. The subjects, who approach Süleyman's suffering with compassion, are unconsciously called to accept the governing structure of the state through the connection they establish with the suffering of the ruler who even killed his own son to keep the Ottoman Empire safe, which entered a period of collapse after Sultan Suleiman. In this context, the narrative of the reality of the Ottoman Empire that the series exposes becomes instrumentalized in the perception of the Ottoman Empire that the neo-Ottomanist AKP government tries to impose on its subjects, and a connection is established through the compassion of Ottoman nostalgia.

However, the series does not consciously realize this interaction. Throughout the series, the source of the great suffering experienced by the characters is represented as Süleyman, who is the absolute power in charge, and at critical points we see the characters rebelling against Süleyman, even though the penalty is death. Hatice Sultan after Ibrahim's death and Mahidevran Sultan after Mustafa's death blame Süleyman for their suffering. However, the rebellion of these two women, who are

not portrayed as reliable characters and who pose a threat to Süleyman's throne from time to time, after the loss of their loved ones creates an effect that is far from rationality in the emotional intensity of the scenes due to the pain they experience. However, the words of Fatma Sultan, Süleyman's sister, who admits that she carried out the assassination of Hürrem Sultan in Episode 130, differ at this point.

Fatma Sultan: Hürrem is a demon, she deserved everything that happened to her. Only the pits of hell can save her.

Süleyman: I know Hürrem is not an angel, no one is. But she has something that none of you have, loyalty. Absolute loyalty. Hürrem has never betrayed me even once. She has never stabbed me in the back. She never dreamed of someone else in my place while I was sitting on this throne.

Fatma Sultan: So this is the reason for all these massacres. Ibrahim, Hatice, Mustafa, Cihangir. I remember how my late father Sultan Selim Khan died. He could not breathe his last breath. God did not take his life without making him writhe in pain. It seems that this is your fate. This is your fate too.

Süleyman: Fatma, shut up. That's enough. Shut up.

Fatma Sultan: What happens if I don't shut up? What will you do? Execution? Go ahead. You spared Mustafa, will you pity me?

Süleyman: Get out. Get out before I do something bad to you. I don't want to see you in this palace, I don't even want to hear your voice. Get out of my sight.

Fatma Sultan: I have already spent too long under this dome that smells of sorrow and death.

With this scene, on the one hand, the throne that caused all this suffering is delegitimized by a free sultan who is a member of the dynasty, that is, a woman who is the bearer of order. Even if the person who rebels against his sovereign with an evil judgment is a member of the dynasty, the penalty is death, and this is known to the audience. Even the dynasty itself, as the bearer of sacred blood, defies the will of Süleyman. Although in the eyes of Süleyman this is seen as ignoring the authority and power given to him by God, it alienates the audience, who will not be able to fully comprehend the power of Süleyman, from the power and might of Süleyman and thus distances the throne and thus the Ottoman Empire. Fatma Sultan's speech is one of the critical gestus points of the series. The fact that a woman from the dynasty, not an ordinary person, opposes the power and ridicules the throne in this

way establishes an intergenerational sociality and enables the audience to distance itself from the Ottoman state structure.

In this context, I argue that another convention of compassion comes into play. The compassion felt is motivated by the mutual feelings that the spectator discovers in the sufferer, as well as by the impulse to right the conscience. It activates the affective bond established with the spectator, who holds Süleyman's greed responsible for the deaths of the names listed by Fatma Sultan, as well as the catharsis that comes with emotional identification in relation with the viewer's ideological position. For the audience, who blames Süleyman, who is represented as the absolute will throughout the series, at any point of his conscience, experiences an emotional catharsis before the series finale with the revelation of how Gülfem Hatun, a character close to their own position, died in the final episode of the series. The words of Gülfem Hatun, who visits Süleyman, who falls ill after the death of *Şehzade* Bayezid, expose both the horrors of power and the bloody side of Ottoman history.

Gülfem Hatun: His Highness? (Süleyman tries to open his eyes but cannot.) You cannot sleep, can you? So much so that even the medicines do not help. What is possible anyway? How can a father who murdered his son sleep? First you killed Mustafa, then you caused the death of poor Cihangir, and now Bayezid. No matter what anyone says you killed him. Because not even a leaf can move if you don't want it to, right? You threw Bayezid into the arms of the enemy. You left him at the mercy of his brother. So do not you dare say you are innocent. Never. Whatever disasters befell us were all because of you. (He laughs hysterically.) For the throne. For the sake of that which you cannot even sit on now. Look. Look, blood is dripping from our domes. Not even rivers and streams can wash away the blood on your hands. (She takes out his dagger, just as she is about to kill Süleyman, Ferhat Agha catches up and kills Gülfem.)

Even though Gülfem Hatun's attempt is unsuccessful, hearing these words from the mouth of a palace official, a woman who has almost never left the palace since the first day of the story and who is one of the closest witnesses of the happenings, sprinkles a little water on the audience's conscience to fight against the oppressor. The words of Gülfem Hatun, who gains the audience's trust with her just stance throughout the story and who is especially relatable to the middle class due to her position in the palace, find an ideological resonance for the secularist audience and provide an emotional catharsis. The audience, who also witnesses Süleyman's physical suffering intensely, accepts his suffering and becomes open to alleviating suffering, that

is, to feel compassion, through the emotional cleansing they experience.

The other side of the medallion becomes much different with the series finale. Throughout 139 episodes, the series represents the difficulties and cruelty of power and state structure through the representation of Sultan Suleiman and the relationships he establishes, but through the figures of the bearer of order, and ends with the establishment of the new order and the fulfillment of Süleyman's sovereign destiny in the finale. Süleyman, who pays a heavy price in the battle between fatherhood and rulership, prepares for the Zigetvar Campaign even though he is too ill to walk. For Süleyman, who swore to be a greater ruler than Alexander the Great and his ancestors even before he came to power, the Zigetvar campaign is critical. In the series, the rhetoric of the Western world and those in authority within the Ottoman Empire that Süleyman is getting old and no longer has the power to rule the state finds a response. In this context, the Zigetvar Expedition is represented as the last step Süleyman must take for self-actualization. Although he is younger and less ill during the Tabriz Expedition, Süleyman, who fainted before he could complete the words "I am Sultan Süleyman Khan" in his speech to his soldiers, stands upright in front of his soldiers this time.

Süleyman: What is the situation Sokullu?

Sokullu Mehmet Pasha: Your Majesty, Zigetvar is resisting. Their sardars are showing great resistance not to surrender the castle. Under these circumstances...

Süleyman: Pertev Pasha, you speak.

Pertev Pasha: Grand Vizier Mehmet Pasha has a right, Your Majesty.

Süleyman: Hasan Aga?

Hasan Agha (Janissary Corps Agha): Unfortunately it is winter, Your Majesty, perhaps it would be best to retreat to Belgrade. We will complete our preparations until next spring. We can complete the campaign with greater preparation.

Süleyman: There is no other spring ahead of us. I have won dozens of victories with the help of Allah, the strength of my wrist, the blood of my soldiers, my heart and soul. I have also known how to stop when the wind was not blowing in my favor, but this time is different. Zigetvar has great value for me. Zigetvar is not just any castle in the hands of the infidel. Zigetvar is my faith, my hope. (Despite his pain, he takes a deep breath and moves towards the soldiers. He continues with a very powerful oratory.)

My lions! My braves who raised their swords in the name of Allah Almighty and breathed the breath of the Prophet. Say the *bismela* one last time and march on the infidel. The day is our day, God willing. Our Almighty Lord, the prayers and the wind are behind us. Victory and paradise are written for us. I believe that Zigetvar will fall before dawn, don't let me down, my lions.

After this scene, Süleyman enters his tent and collapses before he can sit on his throne. After the image of Süleyman, who suffers from the wounds on his body, news is sent to his son *Şehzade* Selim, and thus, while the new order is established, the ruler of the old order approaches his last breath. There are two critical points in this representation. The first is that Süleyman's turn towards religion becomes increasingly evident in the war he has been waging since the first episode. Particularly after Mustafa's death, Süleyman finds himself drawn closer to reading the Qur'an and the Sharia rule of Islam, and in his speech to his soldiers he repeats that he takes refuge in Allah, the author of his fate. His internal battle is now over and Süleyman, the ruler, has actualized himself. Before he breathes his last breath, he calls out the name of Ibrahim, the man he walked shoulder to shoulder with on the battlefield, the wound in his womb that he cannot say goodbye to. In the images before he leaves the palace, Süleyman waves farewell to the images of everyone he has lost so far, except Ibrahim, and he can only say goodbye to his fellow soldier on the battlefield. In the scene where Süleyman walks on the battlefield with an imaginary representation after his death and watches the images of his last victory from a high hill, the tirade he voices with the voice-over technique is an indication that Süleyman is atoning with his own conscience through God.

Süleyman: I am Süleyman. Born to Sultan Selim Khan, born to Valide Ayşe Hafza Sultan. The tenth sultan of the Dynasty of Ali Osman. Ruler of the world, bringing east and west to their knees. I, Süleyman, who came from the soil and will return to it. The voice of a friend is calling me. When a son of man dies, what happens to his heart? What is left when blood and life are withdrawn? The mind is incapable of solving this. Only the heart knows the truth. This is a great feast and fulfillment. The prayer of a marvelous life that few servants will be blessed with. A whirling dervish over my vaccine, a feah wind among my branches, my roots in the deepest depths. I am Süleyman. No throne, no crown, I take only love and friendship with me. I am going to wake up now. Let mankind know this. Let him know and remember. The reign is over. The sadness of roses is over. This dream is over. No reign left, no crown. I come empty-handed and leave this earthly home empty-handed. Only a handful of earth remains. Let everyone know that a Suleiman has

passed from this world. Solomon, the humble servant of Allah Almighty.

Concluding with this tirade, *Magnificent Century* represents Sultan Süleyman in the series finale as a person who has made peace with his conscience and has done what he had to do to fulfill his destiny. Thus, although the condition-based narrative established throughout the 139 episodes represents Süleyman's actions as choices rather than fate, it creates the representation that the structure of fate that Süleyman believes in leaves him no other choice and that he must stand behind his actions to fulfill this fate. In this context, the spectator who is close to the neo-Ottomanist Islamic line is invited to a conscientious conflict with the actions that he disapproves of civically throughout the series, but on the other hand, the suffering and the survival of the state that is tried to be protected cause the viewer to approach Süleyman with compassion. Who can be loved or who can be mourned is subjected to a constant interrogation between Süleyman's ruler side and his human side. The audience, who follows Süleyman's journey as affective subjects, is included in this process. Thus, the legitimate and illegitimate emotions and objects that Süleyman arrives at in line with his compassion in the relationship that emotions establish with the provision of justice stick to the viewers (Ahmed 2015, 240). In this direction, in the eyes of the audience watching the series within the framework of the conditions, Süleyman ceases to be a tyrant and is brought back to the position of a sovereign who seeks to maintain order. The reputation restored to Süleyman, the representation of power, takes Süleyman out of his own subjectivity. Thus, the subject of criticism becomes not Süleyman but the state structure itself. However, the critical point here is that while the Ottoman state structure is opened to criticism, the political policies of the Ottoman State are not opened to criticism by the state ruler. It is represented that Süleyman is a victim of the cruel dynastic system, but that even a father of a child murderer can go to his death peacefully by staying on the path of Allah and not rebelling against him, and by remaining in tawakkul despite the difficulties.

In conclusion, *Magnificent Century* creates a dialectical construction of representation by analyzing the forty-six-year rule of Süleyman the Magnificent through the dynastic system's intergenerational partnership between monarchs and princes, that is, between fathers and sons. Sultan Süleyman's struggle to stay in power is subtly narrated through his relationship with his father, Yavuz Sultan Selim, who is known for his cruelty as well as his power, and his oppressed son *Şehzade* Mustafa, who was murdered by Hürrem Sultan's conspiracies. From the very first episode, the series conveys the foreseeable future to the audience with a dramaturgy that gradually deepens. Through the detailed construction of Süleyman's relationships with all the

characters in the palace, the conditions and relationships that bring Süleyman to the point of making this decision are constructed. Thus, with the moments of Sultan Süleyman's decision-making, his prohibition of discussion by declaring his decisions as his will, and the detailed representation of the costs of his decisions, history is treated as a dialectical process rather than a fateful past. By exposing the mutability of history and making visible what is behind the visible, the mythologized narrative of the Ottoman Empire, the dynastic system and power are opened to questioning and criticism. The series invites the audience to understand Süleyman's paternity with the emotional bond aimed to be established through the discussion of paternity, and by showing the process in cause-and-effect relationships, it opens the space to understand the reign of Sultan Süleyman in the process of his self-actualization.

Although the narrative of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent maintains an emotional distance from the neo-Ottomanist understanding for the audience watching with a critical eye, it functions as a restoration of conscience and political understanding for the audience close to the Islamic line. The AKP government's neo-Ottomanist approach to politics, which it seeks to perpetuate in the Republican state structure, opens a huge rift in Turkish television in terms of a reckoning between the audience it seeks to impose its policy on and the revival of the ummahist understanding. In this context, Süleyman's journey of self-actualization becomes a justified journey in the eyes of the spectator. Süleyman's losses and pain become visible. Süleyman, whose losses and pain become visible, thus leaves his unmournable subjectivity and becomes mournable. In this respect, the fact that the Ottoman Empire itself is the position represented by Süleyman makes the Ottoman Empire mournable and missable rather than otherizing it. *Magnificent Century* achieves this intimacy in the visual world quite strongly with its aesthetic details, use of scenery and décor, and in this direction, it gives a gift to the memory of the Ottoman Empire with compassion for the suffering of the story subjects. And this gift becomes the hope of neo-Ottomanist politics.

3.3 Epiphany of Greed

The fact that power in the Ottoman Empire is based on sons and the state cadres are formed entirely through men makes Süleyman's relationship with his best friend *Pargalı* Ibrahim and his eldest son Mustafa quite significant. Süleyman's relationship with his friend *Pargalı* Ibrahim, who has been with him from the very beginning of his journey of self-actualization, not only draws a critical line in terms of Süleyman's

character development and background, but also constitutes a very significant trace of the state structure and power. In the series, from the age of 16, Ibrahim has been the closest friend and confidant of *Şehzade* Süleyman, the person to whom he entrusted his life and whom he trusted the most, and he has been by his side since the first day of Süleyman's rule. In addition to their shared vision and dreams, Süleyman's unconditional faith and trust in Ibrahim's loyalty led to his rapid rise in the state and his appointment as Grand Vizier. Thus, he became the strongest partner of Süleyman's great achievements and power in the series.

I argue that the connection between Süleyman and Ibrahim from the first episode to 82, in which he is executed, is based on a dynamic of epiphany. *Pargalı* Ibrahim, who rapidly rises to the position of Grand Vizier, Governor of Rumelia and Anatolia, and Serasker during the period when Süleyman's power is at its most vigorous and strong, is represented as a depiction of how power and authority can poison a soul. The arrogance and greed of being so close to power, of which he, as a slave and apostate, can never be the absolute owner, and the destruction that these emotions can cause, are quite subtly and skillfully narrated through Ibrahim Pasha. The epiphany relationship established with the story of Süleyman is derived precisely from this point. As mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, Süleyman's greatest struggle is to overcome his arrogance by remembering that he is the servant of Allah in the midst of the infinite power he possesses. He lives to realize the destiny he believes Allah has written for him, while constantly reminding himself that all authority and power comes from Allah and does not belong to him. He is no one's servant, he has no authority over any law other than the commands of the Qur'an, and he has the life he believes is destined for him. Therefore, Süleyman, who already has what is rightfully his, who is content with the destiny that Allah has written for him, takes refuge in his faith in his battle with his ego and controls his arrogance if there is no threat to his power. But for *Pargalı* Ibrahim, Sultan Süleyman's servant and slave, the battle with his ego brings his death as the Ottoman Empire grows stronger.

At the age of 10, Teo, the son of a simple fisherman who was forcibly brought to the Ottoman Empire from Parga, the family he left behind, the religion he converted to, and the name Ibrahim, which he adopted later, become a curse, constantly reminding him of his slavery. Ibrahim, to whom Süleyman gives unconditional trust and unprecedented privileges in his positions of authority, becomes increasingly powerful in the state with the powers Süleyman grants him and his marriage to Hatice Sultan. So much so that Süleyman declares that he guarantees Ibrahim's life as long as he lives and declares him the sole authority to take all kinds of measures and make all kinds of decisions other than his own. Thus, Ibrahim, who becomes

the sole partner of absolute and sacred power, becomes ambitious and arrogant as he gains power, cannot accept his servitude and slavery, and always wants more by not submitting to the fate written for him. At this point, the series reveals how the Ottoman state structure and beliefs are constructed through Sultan Süleyman's relationship with *Pargalı* Ibrahim.

In the Ottoman Empire, there were no intermediaries between the ruler and the state and between the ruler and the subjects. The ruler's decision was absolute and final, non-negotiable, seen as the word of Allah, and thus the ideology of the state was accepted unconditionally (Atay 2022) . However, in Turkey's neoliberal state structure, there are intermediaries both between the rulers and the state and between the subjects of power and the citizens. To transfer its ideology to the subjects of power and to turn them into subjects who do not threaten power, the ruler uses its coercive and ideological apparatus to interpellate them into the position of good subjects. In the series, there is no intermediary between Sultan Süleyman, the ruler and the state itself, and Ibrahim. Süleyman warns Ibrahim, who succumbs to his arrogance and lust for power, as his friend, while at the same time interpellating him into the ideology of the state. *Pargalı* Ibrahim Pasha, who grows stronger as the state, meaning Süleyman, grows stronger, begins to equate himself with Süleyman over time due to the constant reminder of his servitude and slavery and the ambition and rage of never really having power. In response to these actions of Ibrahim in the captivity of his ambition and fear of death, the scenes in which Süleyman reminds Ibrahim of his position and his own position are constructed with quite powerful gestures and the ruling understanding of the Ottoman Empire is revealed through the relationship between Süleyman and Ibrahim. In this context, the representation of Süleyman's reaction to Ibrahim's building his own statue is one of the strongest and clearest *gestus* moments of the series.

(Süleyman summons Ibrahim to the main room and asks him to account by showing him the statue.)

Süleyman: What is this fear in your eyes? Why *Pargalı*? What makes you so uneasy? Is it your ambition, your arrogance, your anger? What is it that makes you build this statue? What did you say that day? "My servants will kneel on my statues on the seven hills of the capital embracing the sea and on three continents." Now, on which hill will you erect this statue? Who will bow before it? Ibrahim of Parga. Teo, son of the fisherman Manolis. What drives you to such arrogance? Is it me? Is it the strength and wealth I have bestowed upon you? Or is it my share of my victories? How dare you? How can you consider yourself equal to me? As long as I live, I will not allow the statue of anyone other than

myself. Whoever dares to do so, I will punish him with my own hands. (While saying the last sentence, he cuts the head of Ibrahim's statue with his sword, and the head of the statue falls in front of Ibrahim's feet).

Süleyman reminds Ibrahim of his position and servitude and interpellates him to the position of the right subject and the ideology of the state. The future that will happen if he continues to act with his greed and arrogance is represented through the statue. This moment, which is seen as foreshadowing for the audience, who is already familiar with this information in historical reality, is also a moment of *gestus* in which Süleyman reproduces his authority. On the one hand, it reveals that Ibrahim's fate as the son of a fisherman has changed due to the powers granted by Süleyman, and that he is the one who writes his destiny. Thus, it is represented that the sultan is the only person with absolute power in the Ottoman Empire, and that even making a statue of an image other than his own is punishable by execution. Through this scene, the Ottoman state structure is revealed to neoliberal subjects living in different state structures in the same land.

Süleyman, who unconditionally trusts Ibrahim's loyalty due to his friendship with him and his love for him, has great patience with *Pargalı* Ibrahim. So much so that he does not take Ibrahim's life and does not break his oath, even though he responds very harshly to Ibrahim's calling him Sultan in the conquest decree he wrote after conquering Tabriz following the statue incident. However, the gradual growth of *Şehzade* Mustafa, Süleyman's fear of Mustafa's rebellion and Ibrahim's closeness with Mustafa become another process that brings Ibrahim to his end. Süleyman, afraid of dying before fulfilling what he believes to be his destiny, sees the danger posed by Ibrahim's ambition. Ibrahim himself may share his power, but he is not a tangible danger as he will never ascend to the throne. However, due to his position, he is very influential on the next ruler to ascend the throne. Because of his closeness with *Şehzade* Mustafa and his enmity with Hürrem Sultan, Ibrahim begins to pose a threat to Süleyman and his family. Although Süleyman tries very diligently not to give up his only friend for whom he writes poems and to prevent his power from being shaken, when he learns Ibrahim's words "I rule this great empire" in his meeting with foreign ambassadors, he realizes that Ibrahim is no longer loyal to his absolute will and gives his death warrant.

Pargalı Ibrahim, one of the most painful casualties of Süleyman's battle between power and conscience, becomes the first turning point in this battle, killing a large part of Süleyman's conscience. The series, which frequently reminds the audience of the gravity of this decision with the pain he suffered after this decision, establishes

a narrative through the relationship it establishes with *Pargalı* Ibrahim, while at the same time questioning the narrative of destiny. Through the death of Ibrahim, the end of the humble servants who are caught up in ambition and arrogance is represented in a very dramatic way. Ibrahim, who does not accept his fate and always wants more, physicalizes the sorrow that power can inflict on a soul that forgets its servitude, and is set up as a channel to tell the audience about Süleyman's struggle with his ego. Neoliberal subjects, who cannot imagine the will of God and blood that Sultan Süleyman possesses, are called upon to understand the power and destructiveness of the power represented through *Pargalı* Ibrahim through Ibrahim's fear of death and the way he acts in line with this fear.

Secondly, *Pargalı* Ibrahim does not experience the fate that God has in store for him, but the life that Sultan Süleyman grants him in accordance with his decisions and the life that he terminates in accordance with Süleyman's decisions. *Pargalı* rebels against fate, rebels against his servitude and slavery, and rebels against Süleyman, because Süleyman is the shadow of Allah on earth, the only one who decides life and death. The death of *Pargalı* Ibrahim, which is the result of his own mistakes, and the decision of Sultan Süleyman are represented not as a fate but as a dialectical process that progresses as a result of choices and decisions in the circumstances created by the recruitment system and the state system of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, Süleyman's journey to reign, which he believed was directly bestowed upon him by Allah and for which he took many lives and gave up his own life, is narrated, not as his destiny, but as a story of agency and self-determination.

4. RUTHENIAN SLAVE

The character of Hürrem Sultan is a very difficult character to analyze both because of the basic emotion she carries throughout the axis of the series and because she re-discovers the social position of womanhood. Hürrem, whose central emotion moves along the axis of love and hate, is also perhaps the character who establishes the strongest affective bond with the audience in the series. For this reason, the theoretical part of my discussion in this chapter of the thesis is based on Sara Ahmed's formulation of love. Personally, being exposed to such an affective love narrative while trying to sociologically analyze what the emotion of love does to the subject was one of the most difficult parts of my thesis process.

Love is at the core of one's subjectivity, even though it is quite difficult to understand. One of the methods taken in the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of pain is to make love the center of everything (Freud 1961, 29). The vital importance of love for the child, and the relationship that the subject establishes with the object of love, affects what love will do to the subject for the rest of their life, the loves that the subject will be attracted to and the ways of loving. The practice of the complex networks that love establishes is highly variable and equally difficult to unravel. Only in the absence of the object of love can the subject understand what the love for that object does to him (Ahmed 2015). The destruction of the loss of the object of love and the singularity of the object of love is one of the most obvious elements of the series. The representation of Hürrem and Süleyman's love functions to make visible all kinds of love in the series. In Turkish, there is a dichotomy between the love for a romantic partner and the love for anything else, which is difficult to fulfill in English, and since all kinds of emotions in the series hover between life and death, the love in question is much more layered than the love for a romantic partner. Süleyman's love for his children (especially Mustafa), Süleyman's love for *Pargalı*, Hürrem's love for her children, the love of the *Şehzades* and sultans for Süleyman, and *Pargalı*'s love for Süleyman all reveal the difficulty and impossibility of life in the palace, which is torn between life and death.

To determine the visibility of each of these love narratives, it is critical to understand the social position of the main character who carries the love of the series. Hürrem, whose real name is represented as Alessandra La Rossa, is the daughter of a Ruthenian Orthodox priest. Sold as a slave to the Ottoman palace after Tatar soldiers raid her village and kill her entire family in front of her eyes, Alessandra is brought to the palace on the first evening of Süleyman's accession to the throne in the first episode of the series. Thus, the fateful union of Hürrem and Süleyman is cinematically constructed. We first see Hürrem as a captive with her hands tied on the ship bound for the Ottoman Empire. In her last moments before being kidnapped, while dreaming of marriage to her beloved Leo and imagining her last moments in the church with her father, mother and brother, Alessandra wakes up when the captain of the ship shouts at her and opens her eyes to her new life. She calls the Ottoman soldiers "murderers" and says that nothing worse can happen to her because all her loved ones are dead. Crying, Alessandra says that she has been sold as a slave and has no one left and tells the ship's captain to kill her. Thus, the audience witnesses the rebellion and pain of a young girl who has been subjected to violence, whose loved ones have been slaughtered in front of her, in the first moment of the representation of Hürrem Sultan, who is referred to as "fetch and evil" in the series.

When she looks towards the palace from the ship and sees the fireworks for Süleyman, her first and only sentence is "Are we here, to the Ottoman hell?". Thus, the audience establishes a familiarity with the circumstances that form the story and choices of this powerful character whose pain and hatred will mark the series. Alessandra, who responds to the mistreatment she is subjected to from the first moments she arrives at the palace, is brought before Hafza Sultan, and when she realizes that Hafza Sultan speaks Russian, she asks for help in her own language and says that she will kill herself if she is not released. In response, Hafza Sultan says "You are the property of Sultan Süleyman. He decides whether you live or die. (Continuing in Russian) Or me." After these words, Hafza Sultan ordered Alessandra to be taken away, and Alessandra was taken out of the room shouting, "I am nobody's property, I will die!" with all her might. In response, Hafza Sultan tells her right-hand woman Daye Hatun, "If she resists, if she refuses to bow her head, do not spare her punishment." As can be understood from this scene, Alessandra (Hürrem) is just a young girl who loses her whole life, her loved ones and her freedom in one day. In this context, the representation of Hürrem Sultan in the series is presented to the audience as an exposure and representation of the Ottoman Empire's slavery system and the treatment of prisoners of war, rather than the individuality of Hürrem. Unlike the representation of Sultan Süleyman, in the representation of Hürrem Sultan, the

contradictory aspects of the character are reflected in a much rigid language. The violence Hürrem is subjected to in the palace and her methods of coping with this violence progress by presenting both Hürrem's oppression and cruelty together. In this context, just as Süleyman exposes the difficulties and destructive aspects of the government's state administration to the audience and at the same time brings the audience closer to this administration, Hürrem exposes the cruelty and difficulty of life in the harem, one of the most important institutions of the palace, while reproducing the social construction of the ideal woman.

The class structure of the Ottoman period is quite different from the class structure of today; following the might and greatness of the ruler, first the princes, then the dynastic lineage and then the state officials, while everyone who did not have noble blood was a slave. Although men are able to hold state positions while being slaves due to their services in the public sphere, the same situation works quite differently for women (Inalcık 1990).

The importance of the harem and the difficulties within it are also constructed through the contradiction of the approach to the social position of women. As the place where the future of the dynasty is produced, the harem is one of the most important institutions of the Ottoman Empire in terms of ensuring the birth of future generations (Schick 2010). However, as a representation of the reality of the slave harem, the women in the series are constantly being taught that they are nothing and that they are transitory. Women, whose only duty is to bear sons for the sultan and to obey the rules of the palace, are the most unworthy people in the palace environment not only because they are slaves but also because of their gender.

Magnificent Century achieves this by representing the fights and power struggles within the harem in a very detailed and varied way. Especially after Meral Okay's death, the harem narrative is constantly represented by the assassination of a concubine or a person in authority through assassination and deceit. The harem is represented as the focus where the Ottoman court life is most visible. Death is the nature of the harem and the rules, and the lives of the deceased are irrelevant if it favors the power. In this context, the narrative of Hürrem and the harem creates an a-effect that allows the events that can pass between the audience and be exhibited on the stage to be equipped with a strange feature, not to be understood on their own, but to be stated that they bring an explanation and to be prevented from being taken for granted by the audience. (Brecht 2011, 8) The fiery paths along which the coveted lives pass is represented in a very detailed and subtle way, causing a critical look at the Ottoman harem structure with a connection between classes and

genders. With this alienating effect, the social narrative of the axis of Hürrem's story becomes more visible and the underlying story/narrative behind the facade can be better understood. The journey of Alessandra, who transforms from a slave into a sultan who becomes Sultan Süleyman's common-law wife, the mother of his five children, a sultan who repeatedly returns from death, brings every enemy to his knees, and builds the truth of Süleyman with her love, transcends both the system of slavery and the victimization and agency of the bloody game of thrones with each layer and the relationship she establishes. On the other hand, it constructs the social position of womanhood through love, a very potent emotion, in a very compelling story.

In this context, in order to examine the character journey of Hürrem Sultan and the socio-cultural implications revealed through this journey, I will first analyze the function of the emotion of love in the series. The affective relationships that are established through love play a central role, similar to that of other emotions, both within the narrative and at points of interaction with the audience in the series. After analyzing the affective relationship established through love, I will then examine the trajectory established through Hürrem's social position and explore the meanings constructed through the process of transformation from slave to sultan.

4.1 Deep Love

Hürrem's love for Süleyman is a love narrative in which the vitality of love, which I mentioned at the beginning, is made quite obvious. The love mentioned here is a continuation of the bond established with the love giver or givers at the very beginning of life, based on a Freudian understanding that is at the basis of the bond established with life. I think we can comprehend this understanding, which does not only deal with love from a romantic relationship, but through the feeling of home. The concept of emotional homelessness is one of the most emphasized concepts in academia and literature. From a psychological perspective, in the broadest terms, emotional homelessness is a psychological reaction to trauma. Psychological trauma refers to a set of responses to extraordinary, emotionally overwhelming, and personally uncontrollable life events. A wide range of symptoms or psychological conditions have been included under the rubric of psychological trauma, many of which involve the rupture of interpersonal trust and the loss of a sense of personal control (Figley 1985b; Van der Kolk 1987a). When we think along these lines, Hürrem, as the primary witness to the violence and death inflicted by the Ottomans,

is a character who has lost both her physical home and the people she emotionally considers home, has given up on living. What is critical at this point is that Hürrem's position throughout the series and historically transforms her story from a unique one to a socialized one and makes it a truth of the Ottoman Empire. Hürrem, who is in the palace as a traumatized subject, regains a home through her love for Süleyman and keeps Hürrem alive by killing Alessandra. In this context, before examining what Hürrem's love for Süleyman does to her, it is important to understand the psychological and social conditions in which this love is established.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed's perspective, which questions what emotions do rather than what they are, offers a comprehensive and layered phenomenological analysis of the love. Suggesting that love plays an integral role in individuals' adaptation to collectives through identification with an ideal, Ahmed examines how the attraction based on love for another, the object of love, is transferred to a community expressed as an ideal or object (Ahmed 2015, 157). Addressing how love directs us towards other things and how this "true to it" aspect is preserved through the failure of love to be reciprocated, Ahmed (2015) first explains what love does to the subject through the identification and idealization impulse of love, which Freud placed in a very significant place in his psychoanalytic approach.

The threat of eliminating the possibility of love because the subject "is not himself" causes him to become dependent on the other (the object of love) (Freud 1961, 48). Therefore, the fear of loss inherent in each dependency constitutes an inevitable reaction to the possibility of the disappearance of the object of love. Thus, love, on the one hand, is vital in the pursuit of happiness, but on the other hand, it makes the person fragile and vulnerable. The love of Hürrem, who subverts the rules of the harem with her love for Süleyman, the common object of love in the series, is constantly tested by the possibility of the disappearance of the object of love, Süleyman, or the possibility of the disappearance of the subject, herself. Alessandra, who comes to the palace having given up her life and rejects slavery, is told by Nigar Hatun, the harem mistress, "We all came here as slaves, if you come to your senses, you will not remain a slave. Get your education, keep your mouth shut, be good. All the girls here are preparing for the sultan. If you are chosen and make the sultan happy, if you have a son, you will be the haseki sultan. You will rule the world." After her words, she falls asleep clutching her cross necklace, the only thing she has left from her old life, and has a dream. Seeing her family in her dream, Alessandra says that she wants to die like her family, but her mother tells her to take revenge and that only then will their souls find peace. Alessandra wakes up from the dream with her hand bleeding from squeezing the necklace and vows revenge.

However, having lost her home, Alessandra is reborn with Süleyman's love on her road to revenge. Just as Teo, the son of the fisherman Manolis, is torn away from his home and thrown into a new life as the devshirme Ibrahim, Alessandra is reborn as Hürrem, Süleyman's love, with a name Süleyman gives her. While the renaming of these two characters means the rejection and amnesia of their old subjectivities, it also constructs their new subjectivities and positionality. Unlike Ibrahim, Hürrem's naming by Süleyman is critical for Hürrem's identity construction as well as the differences it creates in the sociality of the two characters. In Islam, the right to choose and give a name belongs to the father, and the name is given to the child on the first day of birth after the call to prayer is recited in the child's ear. Accordingly, by naming Alessandra Hürrem, which means "the one who makes us smile and cheer us up", Süleyman gives Alessandra, who is emotionally homeless and ready to give up her life, a new life with his love. Hürrem, who does not accept her servitude to anyone, is aware that her new life is only and only in Süleyman's will, and unlike Ibrahim, she kills her past and becomes, in her own words, a slave to Süleyman's love. Thus, the love of the subject (Hürrem) for the object of her love (Süleyman) is identified with life and the disappearance of this object, and even the possibility of its disappearance, with death.

Exploring the vitality of Hürrem's love for Süleyman is critical at this point because the love between Hürrem and Süleyman and Hürrem's love for him reveal the networks of love established in the series. As one of the primary witnesses of how close palace life is to death, Hürrem does not give up her love and loyalty to him no matter what happens, and this is where her power comes from. Hürrem, who says that whatever happens to her is because of her love, can accept the pain that this love brings with resignation, even if she responds harshly to her enemies, because she does not lose the object of her love. Hürrem, who never forgets her servitude to Süleyman and never dreams of anyone else on the throne, including her own sons, as long as Süleyman breathes, produces the love that is deemed acceptable by the authority. Hürrem, who accepts that everything, including love, exists and disappears in Süleyman's will, thus becomes not only the concrete construction of Süleyman's truth of love, but also a function that renders visible the love that the ruler expects from his subjects and his family. The fact that Süleyman is the "natural" object of love of all Ottoman subjects due to his social position as the will of God and the rightful leader of a religious cause is represented throughout the series through dynamics within the palace and various loves.

In *Magnificent Century*, which constructs the narrative of a very strong patriarchal and heteronormative order, the acceptable love constructed through Hürrem and the unacceptable love constructed through Mahidevran are removed from the narrative

of romantic love and shape the relations with the object of love not only in terms of social function but also through the practices of display. Hürrem, who comes to the palace at the end of her previous life and is repeatedly tried to be killed, survives (except in scenes based on fate and chance) thanks to her love for Süleyman and his love for her. Thus, Hürrem, who defies Valide Sultan, *Pargalı* Ibrahim, Mahidevran, Mustafa and dozens of sultans, pashas and state officials who fight her even when she has nothing, reveals the conditions of survival in the palace and reveals the power of the object of love to the subjects and the audience in the series. Hürrem's defeat of all her enemies one by one is realized not only through her sharp intelligence and the games she plays, but also through the will of Sultan Süleyman, whose reality she constructs. Thus, both the audience and the characters in the series are reminded that any loss of the object of love is equivalent to death, regardless of their social position. Accordingly, the subjects, who realize that the loss of the object is equivalent to death, act with anxiety to prevent the possible pain caused by the loss of the love they poured into the object and to regain the love of the object. Because the object of fear as the ruler also becomes the object of love as lover, father, and friend.

Thus, at the level of psychoanalysis, the anxiety about the loss of the object of love, about the impact of this loss on the subject's relationship with life, is made explicit by the reality that the fate of their lives is indeed between the lips of the object of love. In other words, any loss of the object of love is a matter of life and death in a concrete sense, not only for Hürrem but for everyone in the palace. For this reason, the representation of the relationship between some characters and Süleyman as a romantic love is based on the mutual love of the subjects with the object of love and their dependence on love because the consequence of the loss of this love is death. However, the dependence established here is the result of reciprocity. Love, which flows towards its object and is shaped together with its object, constructs a mutual demand. If this demand of the beloved, who is expected to be loved, is not met, the loss of the object of love brings with it negation and pain, and for this reason, it continues to exist even when it is not reciprocated. The absence of the dependent object leads to an intensification of emotions, the intensification of emotions leads to an increase in the subject's dependence on the object, and thus the object is drawn into a paradox (the impossibility of love) from which it cannot escape. From this point of view, the absence of the object of love pushes the subject to love even more, because the pain of not being loved is embodied by becoming an indicator of what it means not to have this love. While loving the object desperately and with a nostalgia for how it could have been, he continues to love it instead of accepting that the love he has given it that has not returned to him will never return (Ahmed 2015,

164). What the love for Süleyman, the common object of love, and the withdrawal of Süleyman's love from the subjects do to the subjects, and the social meaning of the construction of this narrative of love can be made comprehensible in line with this trajectory.

The easiest love to follow in the series is undoubtedly the love between Hürrem and Süleyman. This romantic love story, which we are familiar with from heteronormative codes, is the foundational point of all other relationship networks in the series. Everything starts with the arrival of Hürrem and Süleyman at the palace, and everything within the palace is shaped around the echoes of this love. Lives are destroyed and lives are saved because of this love. So much so that the progress of this love that creates Hürrem Sultan from the slave Alessandra and the power it gives to Hürrem spreads and branches up to the manipulation of Süleyman's campaign policies in the process that leads to the death of *Şehzade* Mustafa. To start more specifically, the question of what love does to the subjects in the series can be understood through the duality of Hürrem and Mahidevran. In the narrative of romantic love that we are familiar with, we are invited to observing a relationship that ends with the arrival of a woman which is tantamount to the suffering of the abandoned woman. However, when we enter the palace, the relationships that these women, who give birth to the next generation, establish with the object of their love, the ruler, cease to be a classical love narrative and become a tool in shaping and recognizing the love for the state and the subjects considered acceptable. In *The Contingency of Pain*, Sara Ahmad argues that pain only exists when it violates the body and that this is how the body forms its boundaries (Ahmed 2015), the tracking of each emotion created by love in the subject becomes more visible in the disappearance or possibility of the disappearance of that love.

In this respect, the steps Mahidevran takes with fear and anxiety after realizing Süleyman's interest in Hürrem and thinking that the love she had died, the steps she takes with fear and anxiety and the pain she suffers, and the steps her son Mustafa follows on his way to the throne after she has truly lost her love are critical. Mahidevran, who realizes Süleyman's interest in Hürrem, is Hürrem's first and oldest enemy. Mahidevran, who clearly represents her fear of losing Süleyman, the object of her affection, from the very first episodes of the series, also reveals the social consequences of losing the object from the very first episodes of the series. Mahidevran is represented as an uncanny character from the very beginning of the series. Mahidevran, who represents the portrait of a dangerous woman who is blinded by jealousy and does not know what she is doing, is irrationalized even though she actually harbors rational emotions according to her circumstances. In the very first episodes of the series, Mahidevran tells *Pargalı*, "We must get rid of

Hürrem or she will get rid of us." Mahidevran, who demands support by saying that reveals that no woman or prince is safe in the harem. Mahidevran's irrationalized fears and reactions, on the one hand, show that the harem, and thus the palace life, moves on a line between life and death, and on the other hand, they represent the destruction caused by losing the object of love. In the first episodes of the series, Mahidevran, ignoring the risk of Süleyman's death, poisoned the food sent to Hürrem in the Main Chamber and lost her loyalty in Süleyman's eyes. From that point on, Mahidevran and the other sultans. And almost every step taken by Mahidevran, and the other sultans and pashas is overshadowed by this disloyalty, and Hürrem keeps Süleyman on her side, sometimes by being truly innocent and sometimes by making herself appear innocent.

Thus, the war between the two women moves out of the realm of a romantic relationship and turns into a matter of loyalty and a war that will determine the future of the state. Just as Hürrem prepares the death of *Şehzade* Mustafa, Mahidevran has Hürrem's first prince Mehmet killed years before this event. In this game played with blood, as Mahidevran gives up on the object of her love, she puts her only hope in her son Mustafa and takes all her steps to put him on the throne. The object of love of the ruler in power and the loss of this love, namely the choice of Hürrem over Mahidevran, is an indication of the impending end for *Şehzade* Mustafa and Mahidevran. Süleyman's choice of love also makes visible the connection between acceptable and unacceptable love. Süleyman's love is what the state accepts, and love for Süleyman is love for the state. The reward for the love that Süleyman does not accept and whose loyalty he does not see is death. Knowing this fact from the very beginning, Mahidevran, after all the pain she has suffered, all the steps she has taken with fear and all the mistakes she has made, gives up the object of her love and becomes disloyal to the state in Süleyman's eyes.

From this point of view, both Mahidevran and Hürrem do the same thing, but since Hürrem does not violate her loyalty to Süleyman in Süleyman's eyes, Hürrem's love and actions are rendered reasonable and acceptable in the eyes of Süleyman, the state, and the audience. This war, represented through various emotions transformed from love, becomes a re-representation not only of acceptable love but also of acceptable womanhood for today's audience. Regarding Hürrem, the opposite of the unacceptable Mahidevran, most of the spectators remember Hürrem for the tricks he played in the harem and the traps he set. When Hürrem's character journey is considered in its entirety, on the one hand, the story of the acceptable woman that Turkish melodramas and audiences are used to is operated and reproduced, and on the other hand, as I will explain in the next section, a manifestation of state administration is seen. Hürrem, who is known as a rebel when she comes to the

palace and as a witch when she becomes a sultan, tries to find peace by turning to religion, just like Süleyman, while getting stronger from every pain she experiences. Although it is unclear how much the death of the first screenwriter Meral Okay and the subsequent writing of the script by a man and the debates in Turkish public opinion at the time affected this situation, the series creates a parallel narrative of Hürrem with Süleyman, who increasingly carries the power and seriousness of his caliphate and turns to religion.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, it is not only the women with whom Süleyman has a relationship whose positions and boundaries are determined by the love relationship he establishes with Süleyman. In addition to Hürrem and Mahidevran, his relationship with *Pargalı* Ibrahim, who is not a blood relative, is also at a critical point. To better comprehend what love does to the subjects in the series, I will finally analyze the psychoanalytic connections established with the object of love in this chapter. Going back to the analysis of love at the very beginning of the chapter, in a dynastic system where power is passed down from father to son through blood, Süleyman's relationship with his sons is quite critical. If we go back to the Freudian approach I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, love for the "non-me" makes the subject dependent on the object with a threat of the disappearance of the object of love since I can never be it. This circumstance also renders the subject vulnerable by giving the object of love a power of control. The subject may resent this power that the object possesses and may even hate the power it gives to the object (Klein 1998). If I go back to the most basic Freudian understanding along these lines, the anaclitic theory of love and attachment put forward by Freud is made concrete by the narrative created through the representation of the impossibility of the love relationship between Süleyman and his sons. Although I would like to turn to post-Freudian studies in psychoanalytic analysis that are free from heteronormative dichotomies and include a sociological perspective, the period of early capitalism and the representational dynamics of the period that is narrated makes it more convenient to go back to basics in this regard. With the love that the father establishes with the son at an early age, the little boy wants to be like his father and takes him as an inspiration.

This identification creates an ideal, an ego ideal, and the subject wants to be that ideal (Freud 1934). However, this form of love, identification, is an active love, the subject desires to approach the object of love. Identification involves creating similarity rather than being similar, pushing the subject to take the place of the object (Ahmed 2015). This is precisely where the impossibility of love comes into play. The subject tries to replace the object of love, this desire for the future conditions one's transformation into the object of love. However, one can never

become it, one must kill it in order to replace it. Even if there is no tangible death, there is a prediction in psychoanalysis that the child will have visions or dreams that he will kill his father. This again creates another dimension and dilemma of the impossibility of love. While the thought of losing the object of love to which one is analytically attached strengthens one's anxiety and dependency, the fact that it is he who kills pushes the subject to guilt. For this reason, the subject tries to make the object (the father), whom he fears to lose, forgive him and make up for his mistake.

As can be seen even from this brief summary, *Magnificent Century* is a valuable source for examining these networks of relationships and understanding the function of love. In the Ottoman Empire, where fratricide was obligatory, brothers killing each other, sons killing fathers, and fathers killing sons was seen even before the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. In the series, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, this situation is placed at the basis of the axis of the series. In this direction, the rebellion of the princes to become sultans is represented with different axes throughout the series as a very familiar and feared situation. Süleyman is a very generous father in his love for his children. This bond of love, which is especially seen in his relationship with Mustafa and Mehmet, is later built with Selim, Cihangir and Bayezid, albeit in different dimensions. In the youth of the princes, the aspects of their resemblance to their father become quite apparent.

Ibrahim: Mustafa, Selim, Bayezid and Cihangir. The four lions of Sultan Süleyman. They say that sons are the reflection of their fathers. Mustafa with his unshakable justice and conscience. Selim with his art and refined tastes. Bayezid with his elusive bravery. Cihangir with his intelligence, knowledge and wisdom. Every son bears a trace of his father, good or bad. A trace. Although they grew up together, they are all alone on this road to the throne. Unfortunately, only one of them will ascend to the throne. And the first order of action will be the slaughter of his brothers. That is, if they are still alive. Am I Ibrahim, the only one who watches his own funeral every day in the deep eyes of his sultan, the only one who rushes to his death as he looks into his sultan's deep eyes, the only one who will be denied cool sleep? Or will this game of thrones claim many more victims?

In the scene before Süleyman announces the crown prince, Ibrahim's words, spoken with voice-over technique, remind the audience of this bond, while at the same time alienating the audience by exposing the order of the system and distancing them from the story axis. However, this exposed order draws the audience to establish an

emotional connection with quite long internal stories and dramatic representations. Returning to the fluidity of love, how this identificationist relationship is shaped by the bond established with the object of love can be comprehended. At this point, the character constructions and processes of Mustafa and Bayezid are more understandable compared to the other two princes. In addition to Cihangir, who knows from the moment he was born that he will never be a sultan because of the hunchback on his back, and Selim, who has been trying to win the favor of everyone by cheating since his childhood, Mustafa and Bayezid are represented as princes whose only desire is to win the love and consent of Süleyman.

Mustafa, who is a close witness of Süleyman's princely years and the first years of his rule, gains the admiration and love of everyone with his pride, upright stance and confident demeanor during Süleyman's youth, while at the same time becoming Süleyman's rival. Süleyman's nightmare begins at this point, disturbed not only by Hürrem's manipulations and Mahidevran's infidelity, but also by the love of the pashas, janissaries and sultans for Mustafa. For Mustafa, who leaves the palace with his mother before ascending to the banner, his father remains as he remembers him as a child, and he sees his sovereign and his father as separate people. On the one hand, this situation leads Mustafa to make mistakes with his self-confidence and prideful nature, but on the other hand, he thinks that his father would never spare him. Despite all the tricks played on him and despite losing Süleyman's love many times, he never rebels even if he knows he will die. In this series, where everyone is in fear for their lives, Mustafa's infinite trust, the only hope of those who do not support Hürrem, is represented in an over-idealized way, while at the same time becoming the representation of innocence and conscience. Thus, the love of the subject and the subject who is established through both idealization and identification and who goes to death like a soldier for his loyalty to his state is legitimized and sanctified for the audience. So much so that the death of Mustafa is still one of the most talked about scenes when talking about *Magnificent Century* series. The scene had such a huge impact on the trial that people flocked to the tomb of *Şehzade* Mustafa in Bursa.

On the other hand, the prince Bayezid is represented as ambitious, reckless and rebellious, fearful of being overshadowed by his brothers since childhood. His only desire is to win the favor and love of Süleyman, but his ambition is so strong that he constantly makes mistakes. Even though Süleyman also loves Bayezid very much, Bayezid does not believe it, and for this reason, he is a prince who both grieves deeply and knows from the very beginning that he is alone at some point. Unlike Mustafa, Bayezid, who grows up in the palace with his close rival and brother Selim, grows up at a time when Süleyman is more powerful. Therefore, for Bayezid, who is

always aware of the fact that his father is also his ruler, the object of his affection is never safe and there is a constant effort to gain this affection and a constant anxiety about losing it completely. Especially after Mustafa's death, Bayezid realizes that his father might take his life too, and this distant relationship with the object of his affection encourages him to make his own destiny, while at the same time causing him to break his bond with the object of his affection. Bayezid, whose war for the throne with his brother Selim becomes quite bloody especially after the death of Hürrem, takes the risk of rebelling against his father when he loses his father's love because of Selim's deceptions, that is, when his murder is ordered. Thus, although his murder by his brother together with his children is represented in a very dramatic way, Bayezid, as a prince who once accepted to rebel, is not fully accepted by Süleyman even after his death.

In sum, the foundation of the relationship structures in *Magnificent Century* series is drawn in depth and comprehensively through the relationship processes that flow from and are shaped by love and the loss of love. What love does to the subjects, the loss of the object of love and the diversity of the relationships established with the object of love are much broader and worthy of scrutiny than I can address here. However, when we think in terms of the aforementioned networks of relationships, the affective bond that the series establishes with the audience through love makes visible to the audience acceptable forms of attachment and love. While discussing the importance of love in nation building, Ahmed defines the nation as the abstract result of the movement of some bodies towards or away from each other (Ahmed 2015, 167). There is an idealized love in the series, a subjectivity that has boundaries and puts the state before everything else is the subjectivity that is accepted. Accordingly, the fluidity of love and the interaction with the audience conveys to the audience the limits of this acceptable subject and the audience processes this information, albeit unconsciously. According to Dina Willox, human knowledge is never purely abstract but emerges as a result of our bodily experiences, and all our stores of information and thoughts are always always already embodied and experiential (Willox 2016, 101). On that regard, the flow of images that permeate our lives minimizes the boundary between the real and virtual worlds, as Jenny Chamarette (2012) argues, and increases our reliance on moving images to make sense of the world and guide our lives. Thus, even if the spectator is not aware of it, the Ottoman operates with the knowledge of the subjectivity of life.

4.2 Making a Sultan out of a Slave

In the previous section, I examined the importance of Hürrem's class conditions and how this class position shapes the character's narrative trajectory through love. Before analyzing the story of the sultan created by Hürrem from a slave and the narrative constructed in the series, it is critical to comprehend the position and significance of the harem institution in the Ottoman Empire. However, what is even more critical is how the function of the harem institution changed and to what extent it was strengthened during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent. In his published 1990 article "The Harem Was a School, Not a Nest of Prostitution" in the preface of M. Çağatay Uluçay's book titled *Love Letters to Ottoman Sultans*, Halil İnalçık expressed the importance of the harem in the late 16th and 17th centuries as follows:

"The reign of the Valide Sultans lasted for a century, starting with Hürrem Sultan, the wife of Kanuni, during the reigns of Nurbanu, Safiye, Kösem and Turhan Sultans. The history of the harem, which dominated the state during this period, is important for understanding the hidden aspects of the history of the Ottoman state and has inspired novelists and playwrights in France and Turkey since the 17th century with its highly dramatic scenes. Since the 17th century, historians have argued that the "reign of women" was one of the factors that led to the downfall of the state. Against this, it has been claimed that during the period of the child sultans, the valide sultan served the well-being of the state by prioritizing the continuation of the dynasty above all else." (Inalçık 1990; 2001)

Also, Leslie Pierce states that:

"From the middle of the fifteenth century, and possibly earlier, when a prince left the capital for his provincial governorate, he was accompanied by his mother, whose role was to preside over the prince's domestic household and perform her duty of "training and supervision" alongside the prince's tutor. But when the queen mother emerged as an institutionally powerful individual toward the end of the sixteenth century, there were two generations of "political mothers" related to the single politically active male of the dynasty, the sultan. . . . With the lapse of the princely governorate, the entire royal family was united in the capital under one roof, rather than, as previously, dispersed throughout

the royal domain. There was now only one royal household, over which the senior woman, the sultan's mother, naturally took charge." (Pierce 1993)

Accordingly, at the beginning of his article, he writes: "As in Western society, she is a prisoner bought in the market or captured in war; in other words, she is a commodity and is treated as such. She is expected to respond to all the wishes of her master" (Inalcık 1990; 2001). The power of concubines, defined as such, is made visible as long as they can survive in the game of power. The jihad ideology of the Ottoman State regarding the impact of female sultans who gave birth to princes on state administration is also important at this point. According to some historians, the empire's quest for continuous expansion for religious reasons began in Gaza. Paul Wittek and Kafadar observed that the first Ottoman invaders in Gaza were motivated by an "ideology of Holy War" that they believed would advance Islam (Kafadar 1996, 11). This dedication was the basis of Ottoman power. If this perspective accurately characterizes the Ottomans' imperialist tendencies and geopolitical goals, it provides a useful yardstick against which we can measure and assess the impact of other relevant factors driving the conflict and war. In this regard, the traumatic experiences of women who were brought to the harem as spoils of war from occupied territories and enslaved, and the multi-cultural and multi-religious nature of the harem as the territory expanded, played an important role in changing the dynamics of the institution. In his article, *Lessons on Culture, Religion and War from the Ottoman Harem*, Murat Iyigün examines the political strategies of the state as a result of this increasingly multicultural structure and the ethnic and cultural origins of the women who became Valide Sultans. Iyigün argues that the ethno-religious backgrounds of the sultans' close advisors played an important and distinctive role in undermining the Ottoman Empire's ambitions in the Middle East and North Africa. (Iyigün 2013)

This phenomenon explains the unique geographical patterns and variations in the empire's history of conquest. It is also why the following conclusions are relevant to the field of development economics: division along ethnic and religious lines significantly affects both internal and external conflicts, with the latter negatively impacting long-term economic growth. The findings below suggest that the transmission of underlying ethno-religious identities across generations may be strong enough to persist and endure even when individuals choose or are forced to convert to official or state religions. According to Bisin and Verdier, parents tend to evaluate their children's behavior relative to their own children, depending on the social and cultural environment (Bisin 2001). In this context, the role of women in

Muslim societies, including the Ottoman Empire, has been the subject of extensive and ongoing debate, and scholars have focused on the influence of imperial women in the Ottoman harem. The empirical analyses presented provide some support for the idea that women, especially queen mothers, had a voice in decision-making in a predominantly Islamic and powerful empire (Inalcık 1973) (Pierce 1993).

The significance of being a mother sultan in the harem, where the line between life and death is very delicate, is so immense, and the *Magnificent Century* series is structured in such a way as to do credit to this reality. The odyssey of Hürrem, who has set her mind on ruling not only the harem but also the world since the first day she arrived at the palace as a slave, creates a highly enjoyable narrative with knife-edge lives, tragic deaths and treacherous traps. Hürrem, who is antagonized by everyone who was in Süleyman's life before her, first of all, in order to secure her place in Süleyman's eyes and win his love. In order to secure her place in Süleyman's eyes and win his love, she first becomes a Muslim with the advice she receives from the eunuch Sümbül. In this way, Hürrem becomes a person who gives up her religion for the sake of her love and accepts her servitude to Süleyman wholeheartedly.

Hürrem: I want to believe in whatever you believe in. I want to look at the sun the way you look at it, I want to see what you see. I want to believe in your God.

Süleyman: Do you want to become a Muslim?

Hürrem: Yes.

Süleyman: Do you want this from your heart?

Hürrem: My heart wants it. Won't it be okay?

Süleyman: I will be the slave of your heart and soul, Hürrem.

Afterwards, Hürrem, who somehow always justified herself in the eyes of Süleyman and survived the battles she fought with Valide Hafza Sultan, Mahidevran and Ibrahim, also made great efforts to consolidate her power within the harem. In this respect, I argue that Hürrem's greatest wound is also what makes her the strongest in her struggle for survival. Hürrem, who comes to the palace having seen death once, having killed herself once, always prefers to die rather than lose the love of Süleyman, the object of her unconditional love. Knowing that both she and her children will die in Süleyman's absence, Hürrem is willing to give up her life in the absence of Süleyman's love. In the 55th episode of the series, when Süleyman falls ill, she prepares poison for herself and her children in case he dies. In Episode

57, she drinks the medicine Süleyman gives her as poison to test Hürrem's loyalty, and when she learns that the fictional character Firuze spends the sacred Thursday night with Süleyman, she tries to drink poison. In addition to the moments when she gives up her own life when she is in danger of losing the object of her love and the concrete guarantee of her life, Hürrem, who survives the traps set for her many times and returns from death, does not succumb to her fears as a woman on the brink of death in the bloody game of throne and fights all her enemies with courage. In her own words, she "takes life and gives life." In this respect, based on the historical significance of the harem institution and the battle for life in the series, it can be inferred that Hürrem's battle for the rule of the harem and the throne of one of her sons is a revelation of Süleyman's power. To put it more clearly, just as Ibrahim is a manifestation of Süleyman's inner world as an unrealized subject who cannot bear the destructive arrogance of power, Hürrem is a self-actualized subject who reveals the strategies and conditions of Süleyman's power through the war she wages to seize and then maintain the power of the harem.

At some point in the series, Hürrem's self-actualization is realized by removing herself from the position of an affective subject. As her trust in the love of the object of her affection grows and she becomes more and more powerful in the harem, Hürrem gains a position of opposition not only to the sultans but also to Süleyman from time to time. One of the greatest weapons of Hürrem, who even tells Süleyman not to forget who she is in front of him when she opposes him, is the fact that she is free and married, but also that Süleyman falls in love with Hürrem's rebellious behavior, because Hürrem has established her own truth in a way that is never unfaithful to the ruler. In the series universe dominated by the belief that women are emotional creatures, Hürrem, who does not hesitate to experience her emotions by taking this love and the power of her position behind her, controls the affective attraction that other subjects will create in her by placing the object of love above everything else. Hürrem, who manages to maintain her "composure" except in situations where the lives of her children and Süleyman are in danger, manages to defeat all her enemies. Hürrem, who understands from the first days of her arrival that survival in the harem is a war and better comprehends the extent of this war with the birth of her children, learns how to fight from the power itself. In the first episodes of the series, she and Süleyman, who is eager to talk about his dreams in the early days of his rule, have many conversations about war, death and life. At first, Hürrem, a traumatized subject who has experienced the destructiveness of war herself, learns the rules of war through Süleyman's words about the campaigns she will go on, such as "you will not pity your enemy, if he wants to take your life, you will take his life".

Hürrem, who is Süleyman's closest friend and talks to him about everything, first

learns the truth of the existing order and prefers to stay behind as long as no one attacks her and tries to play the game according to the rules. On the other hand, she also tries to guarantee the days to come and starts to keep loyal servants within the harem. Just like Süleyman, she puts loyalty above everything else and starts to assert her own dominance in the harem. Süleyman, as the representative of the all-knowing and all-seeing God on earth, wants to be aware of everything that happens in the palace, and this is how he maintains his power over the subjects. Hürrem, too, first establishes the same strategy in the harem, creating both servants and friends who will stand by her in her schemes and do her bidding, and soldiers who will risk death for her. As the princes grow up and the power struggle intensifies, Hürrem extends her sphere of influence beyond the harem and into politics. She collaborates with the pashas and does her best to turn the pashas who do not take her side away from the court and succeeds.

However, what is critical at this point is that while Hürrem exposes the cruelty and strategies of the state, she also occupies the position of establishing the truth of Süleyman, that is, the state. The only refuge of Süleyman, who becomes lonelier as he advances in his rule, the only person who does not betray him is Hürrem, who is always by his side with her love. After the death of Valide Hafza Sultan, the death of Ibrahim and the mistakes Mustafa made and was dragged into, Hürrem, who gradually strengthens her position in Süleyman's eyes and thus becomes stronger, becomes so powerful that she surrounds Süleyman with people loyal to her through various tricks, from the gate-maids to the vizier-mayor.

From this point of view, even though post-truth theory is an approach to neoliberal knowledge production practices that came to the fore after Donald Trump became president in the United States, the truth constructed by Hürrem can be understood in this direction. According to Foucault, truth should be understood as a system of orderly procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and functioning of expressions, so truth is in a circular relationship with the power systems that produce and maintain it (Foucault 1980). Based on the conformity of thought with being, object with subject, knowledge with reality, truth is understood as much as it is transmitted to the subject and as the subject accepts it. Karagöz, who argues that biased and emotional content attracts more attention in his studies on social media, emphasizes that what people believe causes them to create their own truths, lose interest in the truth, and turn to opinions that support them (Karagöz 2018). Considering that affectivity is experienced much more intensely in times of precarity, the truth constructed in *Magnificent Century* can be understood from this framework. Especially after the wedding ceremony, he considers every wrong done against Hürrem as a violation of his will and identifies it with disloyalty. Süleyman,

who identifies every wrong done to Hürrem with infidelity, fears losing her with his love for her and takes refuge in her more. Based on the understanding that the woman is the object of both her own love and the man's love in sexual intercourse, we can see that the reciprocity in romantic love relationships also makes the woman the object of the man's love. We can see that she becomes the object of his love. Losing this love, which is already mutually established and causes all the rules of the harem to be turned upside down, becomes increasingly frightening for Süleyman over time. At this point, Hürrem, who makes good use of the fragility that the object of love can create in the subject, declares herself Süleyman's truth by using the past based on a common painful memory such as the death of their son Mehmed and the repeated attempts to kill her and Süleyman. The audience constantly witnesses innocents being killed by Hürrem's tricks and decisions being made based on false information. In this way, Süleyman's power is undermined in the eyes of the audience, while at the same time it is exposed that the truth can change according to the narration. However, Süleyman, who always says that the decisions he makes are always only in his will and every decision he takes is legitimized as he realizes himself. On the one hand, this situation undermines Süleyman's power in the eyes of the spectator, but on the other hand, Hürrem becomes a forgivable subject by being repeatedly reminded that the will, that is, the final decision, lies with Süleyman.

Just like Süleyman, Hürrem's conversion into a forgivable subject takes place both in the gaze of the audience and in the storyline of the series. Hürrem, who can use her emotions and victimizations much more freely than other subjects due to her social position and survival strategies, does not forget any cruelty that befalls her, and, in this direction, she constantly justifies her actions within herself. She frequently states that whatever has happened to her has happened because of her love and to protect her family and establishes her emotional bond with both the audience and the other characters in the series in this direction. Especially Hürrem, who triggers a conscientious bond through justice, gains a justified position by standing behind not only her sale as a slave but also her struggle.

Afife Hatun: Forgive me my Sultan, I am only doing my duty, I am obliged to be fair to everyone.

Hürrem: You are fair, are you? What justice is this Afife Hatun? When I came to this palace I was alone. No one protected me, and everyone was against me. Ibrahim pasha, Hatice Sultan, our late mother, Mahidevran, everyone. Do you know how many times I came back from the dead? What insults I heard, what exiles, what punishments I suffered. Everyone said something about me, everyone said I was cruel,

ruthless, a witch, a sorceress, a tyrant... But no one talked about what was done to me, no one told anything. But since Firuze came, everyone has been on her side. You have sheltered and protected her with your hands. You snuck her into my bosom like a sly snake. You mocked me. Is this justice, Afife Hatun? Leave them. I understand, they all have a grudge against me, but you? Why are you against me? How can you, as my chief treasurer, turn against me? I am Sultan Süleyman's wife by marriage. I gave five children to the dynasty. Don't you think I am worth as much as a simple concubine?

Afife Hatun: Hasha sultan, forgive me if I have offended you, but I...

Hürrem: I didn't ask you to favor me, to condone everything I do. I'm not going to embarrass you. I just want you to be fair. If there is that justice you speak of, I want it to work for me too.

Hürrem, who is quite sincere and emotional in this conversation with Afife Hatun, the harem attendant, invites both the audience and the palace to conscientious justice. The fate Hürrem constructs for herself and the cruelties she commits within Süleyman's permission and limits are justified from this framework. Going back to the beginning of this section, the only duty of the concubines in the harem is to produce and protect the next generation and prepare them for the throne. Accordingly, Valide Sultan's primary duty is to protect her family as well as the will of the harem. Hürrem, who equates Süleyman's fate with her own, constructs an enemy narrative in this direction and puts herself in the position of the defender. She repeatedly reiterates that she did not create the rules of the harem and calls on the audience to understand her as long as she is at peace with her conscience. However, Hürrem's function in the series is much more layered and powerful. On the one hand, Hürrem always puts Süleyman's will above everything else and thus is accepted by the authority as a good subject loyal to the will of the state, but on the other hand, she establishes a positionality that relieves his conscience and thus legitimizes it through an identificationist narrative in the love relationship established. Süleyman, who had avoided her for years after Mustafa's death due to his suspicions, finally asks Hürrem whether she had a hand in his son's death. Hürrem's answer both reveals the divine power of him, the owner of all will, and reminds us of the bloody order, and calls for the acknowledgment of any sins committed.

Hürrem: This property, this world is yours Süleyman. The food we eat, the water we drink, the soil we walk on, the air we breathe, they are all yours. Even the trees and birds belong to you. If you don't want it, not even a leaf will fall, the rain will not fall, the wind will not blow. The heart stops beating. And what about me? Who am I, Süleyman? I am

your shadow. I am your shadow on earth. Whatever you do, I do. I am not sinless, no one is. But I did what I had to do and so did you. Don't look for innocence under this dome, Süleyman, because the power and those who covet it are by no means innocent.

Hürrem first acquires a good grasp of the rules of the harem, and then she deconstructs these structures and builds a new order, thus creating a sultan from a slave. Hürrem, who takes over the harem as a reflection of Suleiman's, and therefore the state's, form of politics, never forgets where she came from and under what circumstances and what she suffered, even though she kills her past. Hürrem, whose suffering, joy, love, anger, fear, hatred, grief, compassion and many other emotions are represented in a very simple and sharp way, dies peacefully after defeating all her enemies, farewelling her entire family. Hürrem's foreknowledge and foresight of her death comes after she has accomplished everything she wanted to accomplish in life. Having realized her purpose in mortal life, protecting her children, Hürrem says by asking for forgiveness from everyone, including Mahidevran and Ibrahim. Hürrem, who does not hold grudges and approaches Islamic teachings as a forgiver, thus fulfills the responsibility given to her by the harem institution by escaping from the battle for power. Despite all her rebellion, she actualizes the subjectivity accepted by the state. She leaves the palace she entered as a revolutionary character as a woman who fulfills the social responsibilities that the state expects from women even today. With this accepted subjectivity comes tremendous power and a tremendous story. She leaves the palace she came to as a slave as a sultan. Realizing that she is going to die, before spending one last day with her loved ones, Hürrem tells Süleyman that she is not afraid of dying, that she is ready to face her sins, and that she is ready to be reunited with her loved ones in heaven and meet her God if it is her right. Everyone at the table set in the garden, all the sultans, all the palace officials bow before her. When she feels ill, she asks Süleyman to take her to the room and before she leaves, she bows to everyone herself, showing her last respect and reverence to the dynasty. From this scene onwards, the tirade, which is performed with voice-over technique until she dies in Süleyman's arms in the chamber, narrates the journey of becoming a sultan in a very direct and clear way by the subject.

Hürrem: Everyone's death has its own color. Mine is the depths of a blue, emerald, green sea enveloped by a red flame. Everyone's paradise is their own, mine is a garden dedicated from head to toe to love and its fruits, in the eternal dawn of flowering and greening. I am Alessandra La Rossa, a Ruthenian slave sold to the Ottoman court. A slave tossed

from the Dnieper River to the Black Sea. A slave whose mother, father, brothers, sisters, loved ones perished. Praying every moment to die on those giant waves so that I could join my family in heaven. At the age of 17, Asseandra learned the sorrow and cruelty of the world, aged a thousand years in a day, and gave up on living. I am Alessandra La Rossa, I have never told anyone about my grief, I have never shared it, I have thrown it into deep wells, I have poured it into the sea, the waves have washed it away. I responded with laughter to everything that hurt me. I shed my tears only for my family. I created a sultan from this slave girl and defied fate. And now I am at the place where my life's destiny changed, in the palace of Sultan Süleyman. This palace that I wanted to bring down on their heads is now my home, my nest. How could I have known that my heart, which had stopped beating for revenge, would beat again for love. I am Hürrem, Sultan Süleyman's slave, concubine, sultan, the mother of his five children, his common-law wife. I was loved and even earned the hatred of my enemies. I gave and took life. I rose from slavery to the top of the world. I passed through fire and haze, I burned and I extinguished the world. I am the soul of all women, and my whole being is hidden in the love of the ruler of my heart.

As evidenced by the character's concluding monologue, Hürrem, akin to Süleyman, culminates her narrative arc by assuming responsibility for her actions. Despite her initially depicted rebellious demeanor upon entering the palace and throughout a significant portion of the storyline, Hürrem ultimately assumes the construction of a subjectivity sanctioned by the reigning power. Her life unfolds as that of a dutiful wife, a nurturing mother, and, most significantly, a devoted servant. She consistently acknowledges that the authority vested in her is granted by Süleyman, the wielder of power, and subordinates her existence to this authoritative force. Consequently, while articulating her actions as motivated by the preservation of future generations of the state, she simultaneously unveils that she is not the originator of this power dynamic. In her concluding statement, characterizing herself as the embodiment of all women worldwide, she lays bare the conventional femininity endorsed by the authority, thereby justifying all perceived "misdeeds" and prioritizing loyalty to the state and family above all else.

5. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I explored how the narrative of *Magnificent Century* communicates with the audience through the affective interactions of the characters in the story, and analyzed the embodied and possible correspondences of this communication. I argued that the success of the series, which remains strongly in the memories even ten years after its broadcast, is due to this strong affective bond with the audience as well as the affects brought by the series. In this thesis, in which I approach emotions as cultural and circulating "things" rather than individual and psychological, I discuss how the encounters between bodies shape politics and everyday life. Although many productions about similar historical periods were broadcast after *Magnificent Century*, none of them had the impact that the series had. I argued that the reason for this was that the series dealt with simple emotions and affective connections that most people encountered in a very in-depth and highly enjoyable way. At present, by not putting the audience in a passive position and not trying to impose a direct ideology, still managed to keep the audience's interest alive by building more subtle relationship grids and communication routes.

In this context, affect theory has proven to be a highly efficient literature source for me in understanding the dynamics embedded within the narrative axis of the series. *Magnificent Century*, with its soap opera dynamics, unfolds by delving into the mutual emotional states that underpin character relationships. As the idea of crafting my thesis on *Magnificent Century* began to take shape, my inclination towards affect theory stemmed from the recognition that the power dynamics in the series are intricately woven through emotions and affect. The absence of prior studies addressing the affective bonds established within the content and narrative axis of the series further motivated my exploration in this direction. In alignment with Masumi's theorization, I distinguished between emotions and affect, treating emotions as socially and culturally molded expressions of affect. Consequently, I considered affect as a potential or capacity transcending individual responses. This formulation enabled me to delve into the political implications of affect, recognizing its potential

in steering social change through political movements. Sara Ahmed's formulation, which investigates the socially shaped and directed power dynamics of emotions and feelings, serves as the primary theoretical background for my thesis. Viewing affect as dynamic "things" adhering to subjects and continually in motion with them has been pivotal in my examination of transforming affects throughout the series narrative and their potential impact on the audience. I posit that Ahmed's approach, intertwined with Freud's psychoanalytic perspective and embedded in sociology, is crucial in understanding the series' impact. Consequently, my theoretical work not only explores the impacts of affect but also incorporates a phenomenological approach. This approach aims to comprehend how characters and spectators experience events and phenomena, particularly considering that contemporary Turkish audiences may struggle to grasp outdated social power structures such as monarchy, sultanate, and pashlik. In this regard, I argue that the series' content cannot be externalized, and the emergent meanings should be primarily addressed through affect theory. This dual approach not only allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the series' impact but also sheds light on its relevance to contemporary politics.

In Chapter 2, I first analyzed the social impact of the series and the political atmosphere during the years that it was broadcast and in the ensuing period. *Magnificent Century* cannot be solely judged based on the conditions at the time of its airing. In my opinion, to comprehend the position of neo-Ottoman ideology both during the series' broadcast and in the present, one must revisit the founding ideology of the Turkish Republic. The series, which rekindled nostalgia for the Ottoman Empire given its widespread audience, also paved the way for subsequent Ottoman Empire-themed series. However, I perceive this space as an economic tool utilized to amplify the representation of neo-Ottomanism in the media and provide a representation for the masses adhering to this ideology. It is not a market shaped according to the wishes or expectations of the audience. I argue that the representation offered to the masses, who evoked Ottoman nostalgia through the affective bond created by *Magnificent Century* were drawn to the ideology it generated as part of the AKP's political agenda. Therefore, the impact of the series should be explained not only through the narrative it establishes with its representation but also through how that narrative communicates with the spectator. In Chapter 3 of the thesis, while analyzing how Suleiman the Magnificent is represented, I examined both the affective associations of the character of Süleyman and the possible implications that these associations construct about the Ottoman Empire. As the character is portrayed through simple human emotions, the audience is invited to evaluate and reckon with these conditions alongside Süleyman. While the conflict between fatherhood and sovereignty is depicted in the relationships established in

line with emotions such as love, compassion, anger, and fear, the destructiveness of power is also portrayed quite effectively. In this sense, on the one hand, the audience is angered by Süleyman's suffering and feels anger towards him for decisions such as killing his son and his close friend. On the other hand, towards the end of the series, the audience is called to realize that suffering for the survival of the state is "the way it should be". However, as one of the most important elements of the series, it is strongly emphasized that every action taken is the result of choices made by the characters, not fate. Therefore, the audience, observing that what happens is the outcome of choices rather than a fateful flow, can legitimize the characters' decisions to protect the state. Accordingly, the audience living in the Republic of Turkey is called to reconcile with the Ottomanist understanding of the state, and steps toward this reconciliation are taken in the media.

In my analysis of the narrative surrounding the character of Hürrem Sultan, my primary focus was on examining the role of the emotion of love within the series. By delving into the robust love narratives present in the series, I sought to illuminate the influential and dynamic nature of the emotion of love within the storyline. In exploring the connection between affective bonds forged through love and the love for the nation, I scrutinized the binding potency of love as exemplified by Hürrem. Consequently, the series directs the audience's attention to the emancipation of Hürrem, a slave by societal status, through the agency of love – the manner in which her liberation, orchestrated by Süleyman, contributes to the construction of her identity. Despite entering the palace as an outsider, Hürrem's survival hinges on her recognition by the ruling authority as a loyal subject. While her experiences are shaped by her love for Süleyman, she steadfastly remains loyal, thereby demonstrating the transformative power of love and reconstructing the socially accepted norms of womanhood. In her endeavor to elevate a slave to the status of a sultan, Hürrem not only assimilates her own position within the societal structure by introducing the dynamics of power into the harem but also elucidates that the game being played is fundamentally one of power, and the rules governing it are not crafted by her.

While my initial intention was to dedicate a separate chapter to the character of *Pargalı* Ibrahim, as I firmly suggest in the significance of such an exploration, I have strategically refrained from doing so in order to maintain the thesis's focus and avoid unnecessary expansion of its scope. Instead, I have relegated the character of Ibrahim to the spectral realm, mirroring his portrayal in the series following his murder. *Pargalı* Ibrahim's character, a compelling representation of the profound impact fear can exert on a subject, perpetuates the pervasive influence of fear within the narrative through the medium of his diary, resonating with characters who continue to grapple with his absence even after his death. By manifesting the repercussions

of transgressing the boundaries imposed by power and embodying the archetype of a traitor in the eyes of authority, Ibrahim delineates the contours of unacceptable subjectivity both within the series itself and for the discerning audience.

In this context, the series stands out not only for its significant social impact but also for its revelation of the intricacies of emotion management politics and the adept narrative employed by the government to shape these politics. From my perspective, the series, by laying bare the diminishing authenticity of the concept of truth within the framework of emotion management politics, establishes a revelatory connection with contemporary politics. I posit that comprehending the political landscape of the AKP, particularly its pronounced neo-Ottomanist policies of the last decade disseminated extensively to the masses through various representations, necessitates an examination of the emotion management strategies devised by the party. I argue that, the key to unraveling both the post-truth environment and its governance of the masses lies in scrutinizing emotion management policies. In the Turkish context, I contend that a fundamental focal point for grasping the influence of neo-Ottomanist policies is *Magnificent Century*. Moreover, I assert that the primary approach to deciphering the societal significance of the series is through a thorough analysis informed by affect theory.

The series not only renders visible the Ottoman practices that demand contemplation but also encourages the audience to reconcile with these practices conscientiously, as depicted by the figures who conscientiously establish harmony with these practices as the founders of the order. In conclusion, while *Magnificent Century*'s succeeds in constructing a cohesive narrative spanning 139 episodes and maintaining a distinct temporality within its storytelling, it strategically aligns with the political agenda of the contemporary administration. This alignment is achieved by not only rendering the political agenda overt within the narrative but also by emotionally engaging the conservative audience and fostering a closer affinity with this ideological framework. Thus, despite *Magnificent Century*'s discernible critical stance toward the Ottoman Empire, the series ultimately reinstates order. The adversities and losses encountered along the narrative trajectory are rationalized in the pursuit of safeguarding the state's survival, thereby legitimizing the hardships endured. This culminates in a reaffirmation of authoritative power.

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