



MEDIA@LSE
Department of Media and Communications

MEDIA@LSE MSc Dissertation Series

Compiled by Dr. Bart Cammaerts, Dr. Nick Anstead and Ruth Garland

A Revisionist Turkish Identity: Power, Religion and Ethnicity as Ottoman Identity in the Turkish series Muhteşem Yüzyıl

Esra Doğramacı,
MSc in Politics and Communication

Other dissertations of the series are available online here:

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/mediaWorkingPapers/ElectronicMScDissertationSeries.aspx>

Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, August 2013, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Media, Communication and Development. Supervised by Alison Powell

The Author can be contacted at: esra.dogramaci@gmail.com

Published by Media@LSE, London School of Economics and Political Science ("LSE"), Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The LSE is a School of the University of London. It is a Charity and is incorporated in England as a company limited by guarantee under the Companies Act (Reg number 70527).

Copyright in editorial matter, LSE © 2014

Copyright, Esra Dođramacı © 2014.
The authors have asserted their moral rights.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher nor be issued to the public or circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published. In the interests of providing a free flow of debate, views expressed in this dissertation are not necessarily those of the compilers or the LSE.

A Revisionist Turkish Identity: Power, Religion and Ethnicity as Ottoman Identity in the Turkish series Muhteşem Yüzyıl.

Esra Doğramacı

ABSTRACT

Scholarly investigation and discussion of Turkish television programs as cultural products are largely deficient despite their popularity in Turkey and beyond. One of these, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Magnificent Century) is a Turkish historical fiction, premiering in 2011. The series, set in the 16th Century and reflecting the apex of Ottoman rule, centres on the relationship between Sultan Süleyman and his concubine turned wife Hürrem. In three seasons, the show has become the most popular Turkish series ever, drawing a weekly viewing audience in excess of 214 million across 45 countries (TIMS, 2013).

A visual analysis of six scenes representing power, Islam and ethnicity/diversity were undertaken to demonstrate the Turkish specific representation of Ottoman identity. Representation of such elements contributes towards a revisionist conception of Turkish identity, in parallel to contemporary foreign policy realities premising ‘neo-Ottomanism.’ A revisionist Turkish identity credits and includes its imperial Ottoman past but risks being used as politically antagonistic to the contemporary notion of a Turkish secular, unitary identity developed over the Republican period. This research is expected to contribute to further investigation of Turkish cultural texts, where resonance of such cultural products warrants attention and on a basic level define what it is to be Turkish¹.

¹ See Appendix 1 for Turkish terms and pronunciation

INTRODUCTION

Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Magnificent Century) is a Turkish soap opera, premiering in 2011 and set in the 16th Century - at the apex of Ottoman rule. The historical fiction centres on the relationship between Sultan Süleyman and his wife Hürrem. In three seasons, the show has become the most popular Turkish series ever, drawing a weekly viewing audience in excess of 214 million across 45 countries (TIMS, 2013). The series has arrived at the crest of the wave of popular Turkish soap operas commencing with *Asmalı Konak*² (*The Mansion with Vines*), in 2002.

Empirical research regarding Turkish television series relates to their popularity amongst Arab female audiences, drawn to attractive male protagonists, balancing religion in a secular society, (Dagge, 2008; Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi, 2013; Salamandra, 2012) or as cursory notes to other research areas referencing Turkey's emerging role in the Middle East (Kalin, 2009). There is virtually no research critically investigating the text, audience reception both domestically and beyond, or of implications beyond the screen. The only exception is *Kurtlar Vadisi (Valley of the Wolves)*,³ which figured into its storyline the real event of American forces detaining Turkish soldiers in Iraq in 2003.

Despite the success of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, the show has drawn criticism, including calls from the Turkish Prime Minister for the show to be cancelled citing historical misrepresentation (Ozgenc, 2012). After these criticisms, the Turkish state broadcasting authority received over 23,000 complaints in one month regarding the show, compared to approximately 2,700 in the ten months prior⁴ (Ozgenc, 2012). Legal proceedings against the show were opened accusing it of insulting Turkishness, though dismissed due to non-perusal. The national carrier Turkish Airlines also removed the show from its viewing offerings, only to be taken on board by Emirates ("Emirates pick up Ottoman show after Turkish Airlines blocks it on flights," 2012). Outside Turkey, the line between fact and fiction was enough to prompt the Macedonian information minister to issue calls to ban all Turkish series' despite their popularity in the country with the justification that '500 years of Turkish captivity is enough' ("Macedonia bans Turkish Soap," 2012). A senior Greek religious figure also advised Greeks not to watch Turkish soaps (Kotseli, 2012).

² Incidentally the producer of *Asmalı Konak* was Meral Okay, also responsible for *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* until her passing in 2012.

³ Scenes in *Kurtlar Vadisi* paralleled reality, namely the detention of Turkish soldiers by US forces in Northern Iraq in 2003.

What explains the particularity of the show, drawing such ire while consistently capturing top ratings during its prime time evening spot, exceeding even Turkish premier league football match ratings, which for decades have been the country's primary pastime obsession? The answer can be found in uses and gratifications theory where a fictional series is being read as entertainment *and* information, even though it does not purport to be historically accurate.⁵ Beyond gratifying entertainment or information needs, the series can be interpreted as a seminal weathervane of Turkish revisionism, challenging the identity of a unitary and secular Turkishness sustained and promoted since the creation of the Turkish Republic, to one that is acknowledging the country's Ottoman heritage and legacy.

Using social semiotic visual analysis, this study explores the Turkish conception of Ottoman identity in *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* via power, religion and ethnicity as diversity. Turkey today is a regional actor whereas in the Ottoman world, as portrayed in the series, it was a formidable world power exhibited by military prowess on the battlefield and seas, and an equal reflection of that power in characters, accoutrements, conduct and physical space. Turkey has often been demonstrated as a model state for balancing and managing its religious base within Western oriented secular rule. During Ottoman times however, religion (Islam) pervaded all aspects of life, from battle and rule to individual and community ritual without compromise or imposition on the beliefs of non-Muslims in the Empire. The series reflects the ethnic diversity of the Ottomans, noted by harmony yet ultimately a non-issue. By contrast, the Turkish Republic was founded with a unitary notion of Turkishness, and even discrimination as ethnic origins were assimilated into a larger identity.

The popularity of the show suggests potential for influence. The soap opera genre facilitates an open text that is consumed by active audiences. Such audiences draw pleasure from the text and create meaning, though the openness of the text also allows criticism. Reception of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* not only has implications on what it means to be Turkish, but runs parallel to political realities, including Turkey's 'neo-Ottoman' political orientation.

⁴ Exact figures 23,116 and 2,726 respectively.

THEORETICAL PREMISES

The textual conventions

In Turkish, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* is called a ‘dizi’ - a term used to describe all fictional Turkish prime time series encompassing soap operas and drama. The series is constructed from a fragmented spectatorial viewpoint (Butler, 1986: 53) and meets soap opera conventions by its structure and narrative. It is an open narrative text, where openness relates to how the historical storyline will depict and dictate the narrative (Pearson, 2005: 403) as well as audience reception of it. At writing, the third season has concluded at the year 1543. Closure is avoided with each episode and will likely arrive with Hürrem, or Süleyman’s deaths (Hürrem passed away in 1558 and Süleyman in 1566) (Finkel, 2005).

As an open text, the series is subject to different or multiple interpretations by the reader (Kim, 2006: 33) and with this, audiences are considered active (Blumler and Katz 1974; Eco, 1984; Miller, 2000). The openness is characterized by the way a reader ‘decodes’ the text (Hall, 1980) according to symbolic devices (Kim, 2006: 33) which are embedded, or ‘encoded’ by the producer within the text (Hall, 2003). Readings fall into three primary categories: preferred, negotiated or oppositional (Morley, 1980) and each individuals reading may be influenced or tempered by what Fiske terms cultural capital (1987: 3). Cultural capital includes those elements, which construct cultural identity, namely language, history, familiarity with landscape and landmarks, and what Kim also extends to culture, socialization, geo-politics, economics and even physical or psychological ability (2006: 35).

Closed texts on the other hand are characterized by the resolution of each episode before advancing to the next (Pearson, 2005: 401). In terms of decoding a text, Hirsch contends that a text can only be read according to interpretation of the authors intent (1967) but this is a limiting definition as cultural products do not lend themselves easily to singular, or closed assessment. There can be no universal or foundational interpretation of a text (Titon in Kim, 2006: 34) when texts do not subscribe to one meaning but are open to complex and alternative meanings (Eco, 1979 and Eco, 1990). Cultural capital serves to premise the selection, reading and decoding of a text, where the producers of text and the audience are mutually informing (Turner, 2005; Morley, 1980). The diversity of the audience need not be

⁵ The disclaimer reads ‘Bu dizi tarihten ilham alınarak kurgulanmıştır’ which translates to ‘This series has been inspired by history.’

singular or in accordance with the producers in the reading of a text and may be in opposition to it (Fiske, 1987: 2).

As a genre, soap operas lends themselves easily to meanings and interpretations, described as ‘a breeding ground for an active production of cultural meanings’ (Giomi, 2005: 465) and by extension, transnational and transcultural (phenomenon) (Allen, 1989: 45). Representations of a social experience, particularly where that representation is positive or in line with a dominant reading, make that experience meaningful and pleasurable (Fiske, 1987: 4). Those meanings and pleasures are instrumental in constructing cultural identity (Fiske, 1987: 4) and by extension the active productions of meanings, pleasures and even criticisms by the audience create a ‘culture economy’ (Fiske, 1989: 59).

Muhteşem Yüzyıl parallels what Iedema, referencing Bordwell, terms ‘classical Hollywood fiction film’ where a goal must be achieved in a narrative tempered with conflict, concluding in decisive victory, or defeat (2001: 190). In *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, one of the primary characters, Hürrem, has the ambition is to rule the world.⁶ She has competitors on every front - those who challenge her love to Süleyman, her very being in the palace, her personal safety and her ambitions. Here, it is useful to situate the series within its historical premise.

Historical background

Muhteşem Yüzyıl is set in 16th century Istanbul, commencing at the moment Süleyman learns he has become the next Sultan upon his fathers (Selim I), death. Süleyman, as 10th Sultan ruled the Empire for 46 years (1520-1566). Süleyman commenced his rule with ‘a campaign to secure justice and virtue in order to gain...the loyalty of those subjects alienated by his fathers forceful policies’ (Shaw and Shaw, 1976: 87). His reign was noted for justice to the extent that his epithet was and remains ‘Kanuni,’ (the lawgiver). While Süleyman had already inherited a base of wealth and territory from his father, he expanded Ottoman territories to include Hungary, Transylvania, Belgrade, Tripoli, Algiers, Iraq, Rhodes, eastern Anatolia from Van to Ardahan, parts of Georgia, the Aegean Islands (Shaw and Shaw, 1976: 111), as well as laying two sieges to Vienna in attempts to capture it. The Ottoman Sultan was inheritor to the *ghazi* tradition (religious war), providing justification

⁶ In Episode 63, Hürrem is appointed as head of the Harem. In her narrative accompanying the scene, she declares ‘Harem ne ki dünyayı yöneteceğim’ (what of the Harem, I am going to rule the world.) Hürrem için Beklenen Gün Geldi! "Haseki Hürrem Sultan") (The day Hürrem has waited for has arrived! “Haseki Hürrem Sultan”) Fragment URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OcUhgWUryP4> [Last consulted 15 August 2013].

for ‘constantly expanding the frontiers of Islam against the infidel’ (Makdisi, 2005: 773). The series reflects the pinnacle of, and hence dominant narrative of a proud and powerful Ottoman Empire.

Representation: religion and ethnicity

The Ottoman Empire has been characterized as cosmopolitan by its ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity and interchange (Robins, 2005: 69). The role of religion in pre-secular Ottoman society, was not a private matter but of communal concern. People were grouped into communities, or *millets*, according to the religious organization into which they were born, regardless of the language spoken or the ethnic group they belonged to (Ahmad, 2005: 9). Non-Muslims were protected by specific laws to prevent exploitation. The religious and social life of each community was organized according to their respective traditions and individuals were bound by its laws.

The Ottoman Empire ‘reproduced and justified itself as an Orthodox (Sunni) Islamic dynasty superior to all other empires’ (Makdisi, 2005: 771). Islam pervaded a patriarchal life in all respects and signified the religious commonality between the majority of the Empire’s subjects and secondarily justified (and legitimised) Ottoman Turkish rule (Makdisi, 2005: 769-770). Loyalty and obedience of subjects was to the Sultan, who as Caliph was also the religious custodian for the Muslims both inside and outside of the Empire accountable to Islamic religious and moral principles under Sharia law. Muslims included Arabs, Kurds, Turks, and converts, regardless of their ethnicity and language. The same organizing principle was applied across the other millets - Armenians, Greeks and Jews (hence the concept of city quarters).

The socially inclusive and religiously tolerant character of the Empire meant that Non-Muslims, predominantly Orthodox Christians and Jews, while in the minority were integral but subordinate (Makdisi, 2005: 773) parts of the community. There was no attempt at assimilation, ‘only a pragmatic integration that allowed the empire to function smoothly’ (Ahmad, 2005: 10). Ethnically, the Empire incorporated Albanians, Arabs, Armenians, Bedouins, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Croats, Kurds, Rumelians (Greeks), Hungarians and North Africans. The millet system persisted to the nineteenth century, when nationalism led to first to Serbs, Bulgarians, Catholics, and Protestants acquiring their own communal organizations (Ahmad, 2005: 9-10).

These historical realities are to a great extent depicted in the series which offers some insight to the Ottoman world beyond palace life - from dancing girls in the meyhanes (taverns) to merchants and travelling dervishes. This representation is facilitated by the genre, narrative and dramatic themes, to which this paper now turns.

Genre and narrative

Turkish soaps began to draw millions of viewers domestically and internationally with the series *Gümüş (Silver)* in 2008 (Aly Shawky, 2012). Unlike other Turkish series set contemporarily, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* takes place in the 16th Century. Production budgets are double the norm (Rhode, 2012), evident in detail to costumes, sets and affects, capped with a prominent Turkish cast. The initial set construction was estimated \$2 million.⁷ Each episode is worked on by 300 people and is reported to cost between \$60,000-120,000.⁸ The most expensive episode portraying the 1526 Battle of Mohács cost \$500,000, with 2000 cast, shot over 3 weeks⁹ for a 17 minute scene. The series regularly features in the Turkish press and draws double the amount of viewers than competing series, which are broadcast at the same time and on the same night (“Muhtesem Savas,” 2012).

Consistent with ‘Western’ (Anglo-American) soap operas which feature prominently in audience, discourse, television and other literature (see Morley, 1980; Hobson, 1989; Katz et al, 1990; Livingstone, 1990), *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* retains familiar features; love triumphing over adversity, moral ambiguities, intrigue, scandals, plots and power struggles (Livingstone, 1990). Issues, taboos and prejudices are visited, and conflicts are constructed and resolved (Giomi, 2005: 477). Appeal elements such as frequent peaks of suspense, melodrama, realism and light entertainment also feature (Giomi, 2005: 469).

The main element in soap operas however, is love, especially love fraught with struggle and complication, in ‘melodramatic tensions of infidelity, betrayal, and lies’ (Pearson, 2005: 400, 402). Here, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* does not disappoint. The main love story and primary narrative, is between Süleyman and Hürrem. Alexandra Lisowska was brought to the

⁷ Ece Er. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, an irreplaceable series 22 May 2013. TelevizyonGazetesi.com URL: http://televizyongazetesi.com/muhtesem-yuzyil-yeri-doldurulamaz-bir-dizi_6_70234#.Ug4Pa2Q6V76 [Last consulted 16 August, 2013].

⁸ Ece Er. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, an irreplaceable series 22 May 2013. TelevizyonGazetesi.com URL: http://televizyongazetesi.com/muhtesem-yuzyil-yeri-doldurulamaz-bir-dizi_6_70234#.Ug4Pa2Q6V76 [Last consulted 16 August, 2013].

⁹ (Muhteşem Yüzyıl's most expensive scene) URL: http://tvrehberi.milliyet.com.tr/iste-muhtesem-yuzyil-in-en-pahali-sahnesi-/Tv_Rehberi/1441709/tvh/index.htm and How did Muhteşem Yüzyıl shoot the Mohács campaign? [Last consulted 16 August, 2013]. <http://www.dizifix.com/haber/muhtesem-yuzyil/muhtesem-yuzyil-Mohacs-seferi-nasil-cekildi.html>

Ottoman court as war booty, captured in Crimea (now Ukraine) during a Tatar raid. She became a concubine, bore the Sultan a male heir, gaining the title *Haseki*, ranked favourite of the Sultan, converted to Islam (hence her name change to Hürrem), and eventually married him. Their marriage presented a (scandalous) break from historical convention where no Sultan had married his concubine in centuries. In the series, Hürrem is constantly defending her legitimacy and position in the palace, and her love and influence on Süleyman, still contested nearly 500 years since her death, is cited as the inflection point for the decline of the Empire (Shaw and Shaw, 1976; Finkel, 2005).

The innovation of political and social tensions in soaps (Pearson, 2005: 402) appear as sub-narratives, which are always resolved, yet remain as resolutions only within the greater narrative (Butler, 1986: 66). Although the soap opera genre is described as feminine within the literature, (Allen, 1989: 49-53; Liebes et al, 1990: 75), the diversity of themes beyond the greater love story narrative have the concomitant result of drawing an audience beyond traditional female targets (de la Luz Casas Perez, 2005: 412; Giomi, 2005: 468). A further audience study would substantiate this yet is beyond the scope of this paper.

The time setting, suggesting nostalgia, and the polysemic nature of the text (Hall, 2003) can be contextualised with a brief discussion of Turkey's identity and political realities, as well as its Ottoman past.

The Turkish Identity

Identity secures a sense of self by the ways we are positioned by the past (Hall, 2000: 76). Ottoman-Turkish identity stretches from a nostalgic basis of greatness from Fatih Sultan Mehmed's conquest of Istanbul in 1453, to the breadth and military prowess of the Empire at its largest under Sultan Süleyman to the extent European powers attached to him the sobriquet 'magnificent.' On the other hand, there is the 'imagined Turk' where the difference of and fear of the Turk meant that he/they have never fit into 'Europe' (Aksoy and Robins, 2000: 344; Robins, 2005). Martin Luther (1483-1546) and British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) both considered the Turks barbarians (Ahmad, 2005: 14, 40). Later, in what Makdisi calls 'Ottoman Orientalism,' identity was represented by different groups in the Empire but being 'Ottoman' after the 18th century became synonymous with being Turkish (2005: 795). Up until the 19th Century, the Ottomans were not considered a European state, and therefore were not seen as politically equal (Ahmad, 2005: 35).

As the Turkish Republic was declared in 1923, it brought to an end almost 600 years of Ottoman rule. Along with the end of the Empire, so too came the abolishing of the Caliphate - the institution headed by the Sultan as custodian and protector of the Islamic faith, and guardian of Islam's holy cities Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem since 1517. Republican Turkey's identity was premised on ideology, namely 'Kemalism', named after the founder of the republic Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk (the father of Turks). This ideology, a new concept of Turkishness, was a reaction to nationalist movements by Arabs, Armenians and people of the Balkans which fragmented the Empire in the late 19th century and after World War I, with the beginnings of a linguistic, cultural, romantic and historic separateness of what it meant to be a 'Turk' (Makdisi, 2005: 792; Fisher Onar, 2009: 2). The new secular republic was 'fundamentally opposed to such pluralism of identity' (Robins, 2005: 69) and even 'engaged in de-facto discrimination...banning Armenians, Greeks, and Jews from holding government jobs' (Taspinar, 2008: 5). 'Turkification' also marked a delineation of centuries of religious and historical alignment with the Arabs, who were accorded subordinate status (Makdisi, 2005).

There were three founding dimensions to this new 'Turkish' identity. Firstly, a unitary, secular character, committed to the West, second the rejection of 'the theocratic basis of Ottoman authority' (Fisher Onar, 2009: 2), and thirdly, despite the Western orientation, a wariness of outside/Western involvement in Turkish affairs (Fisher Onar, 2009; Robbins, 2005: 67).

Although Republican Turkey began with inclusion and acknowledgement of the Islamic character of the people, it then distanced from it such that¹⁰ religion (Islam) was controlled to create the desired unitary character of Turkish society (Jung, 2001: 121). Religion was seen as a subversive force, posing a threat to the Turkish modernization and nationalization process (Robins, 2005: 69). Loyalty was no longer to the Sultan or the Ottoman dynasty and the culture that had developed with it (Ahmad, 2005: 81) but for *vatan* - the mother/father land which incorporated only those who lived within Turkey's boundaries (Ahmad, 2005: 80). The traditional, religious, patriarchal society was subsumed by one oriented to the West to 'allow Turkey to progress rapidly to the twentieth century' (Ahmad, 2005: 84).

¹⁰ During a speech in 1919, delineating Turkey's borders, Atatürk noted 'Within this border there is only one nation which is representative of Islam. Within this border, there are Turks, Circassians, and other Islamic elements' (in Ahmad, 2005: 80).

Turkish media and identity

When it comes to media, the state broadcaster, Turkish Radio and Television (TRT), has been seen as the extension of the official, statist version of ‘Turkishness’ (Aksoy and Robins, 2000: 347) at home and abroad, broadcasting since the 1930’s the ‘official’ cultural and political ideal of Turkey (Aksoy and Robins, 2000: 348; Aksoy and Avci, 1992: 39). With the introduction of commercial broadcasters in the early 1990’s, the unitary and coherent Turkish identity was challenged (Aksoy and Robins, 2000: 354). Media can be a tool of social integration and can be used to exclude and oppress. Whereas the state broadcast ‘was a reflection of those in political power, private broadcasting became a reflection of the people’ (Altinsay in Aksoy and Robins, 2000: 353). This allowed wider notions of identity, issues outside the statist rhetoric to enter, including religion, alternative identity and minority representation. Any identity is essentially constructed (Hall, 2005) and represented, and televisual representation extends that construction. Television then becomes a medium, and just as national culture or identity, it becomes ‘one of the main links between people and their social environment...and is perhaps the most powerful tool of “national” images,’ (Castello, 2009: 306). It also defines what is to be represented and equally, what is excluded (Castello, 2009: 306).

Turkey is perceived today as a model, or ‘bridge’ between East and West, able to reconcile Islamic practice and values yet remain a ‘modern member of the civilised community of nations’ (Deringil, 1998: 154). However, it has been largely since the mid 1990’s, coupled with media deregulation, over a decade of political and economic stability, and the emergence of Islamically based political parties, that wider interpretations of the Turkish identity have been given room for expression. Fisher Onar explains that since 2002, the Islamist based ruling Adalet ve Kalkınma (AK)(Justice and Development) party has employed revisionist policies to the notion of Republican Turkish identity, including ‘neo-Ottomanism’ in political mention and as a tenet in Turkey’s foreign policy (2009). It is in these cultural and political waters that *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* navigates.

Neo-Ottomanism

Neo-Ottomanism essentially ‘favours a more moderate version of secularism at home, and a more activist policy in foreign affairs’ (Taspınar, 2008: 15) and in doing so reflects and redefines Turkey’s strategic and national identity. The concept first emerged during the early 1990’s by liberal secular intellectuals as a challenge and even alternative to the concept

of unitary, secular Turkishness (Fisher Onar, 2009: 10; Taspinar, 2008). The victories of the Islamically based Rafah (Welfare) party at the same time were seen ‘a protest vote to worsening economic and political conditions and a reaction to the corruption of other more secular parties’ (Taspinar, 2008: 11) and have continued with the AK party, who describe their ideology not as ‘Islamic’ but ‘conservative democracy’ (Taspinar, 2008: 12). While these religious based parties are interested in the technology of the West, they are perhaps not interested nor ‘espouse the westernization of moral and social values’ (White in Keyder, 1999: 88).

‘Neo-Ottomanism’ gained traction with the appointment of Ahmed Davutođlu as Foreign Minister in 2009. He emphasized drawing upon Turkey’s historical and strategic depth, (Fisher Onar, 2009: 12) where proactive regional thinking could combine pan-Islamist, post-colonial and pragmatic geostrategic rationales, reaching out to the East by complementing, yet without putting to expense Turkey’s Western relationships (Taspinar, 2008: 14). Keyder and Robins goes so far to suggest that Turks have never really been nor fit into the West and in doing so were denying and repressing the culture and society of what was actually Turkish or Muslim about them (Keyder, 1999: 62; Robins, 2005: 68).¹¹ This line of thought is not new. During the mid 19th century Osman Hamdi Bey, a prominent figure of many talents, espoused Ottoman self preservation, retaining an indigenous culture and tradition rather than forsaking the sense of self and emulating the West (Makdisi, 2005: 785). Davutođlu’s conceptualization would allow Turkey to play a more constructive role in multiple regions. Turkey is present both in Europe and Asia, in the Balkans and in the Central Asian Republics; in the Mediterranean and in the Middle East and North Africa (Aksoy and Avci, 1992: 40; Fisher Onar, 2009: 11), areas which also happen to be former Ottoman territories *and* areas where *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* is viewed (see Appendix 2).

This shift in policy emphasizes ‘diplomatic, economic, and cultural channels to enhance the prestige, prosperity and stability’ (Fisher Onar, 2009: 12) of Turkey, its neighbours and region, and allows ‘Islam to play a greater role in terms of building a sense of shared identity’ (Taspinar, 2008: 15). Therefore, the approach comes to terms with Turkey’s Ottoman legacy and the Islamic heritage which underpins it, seeking ‘a new national consensus where the multiple identities of Turkey can coexist’ (Taspinar, 2008: 14). Kemalists/Western secularists however consider neo-Ottomanism harmful to Turkey’s national interests (Taspinar, 2008: 15) and ‘suspect a hidden agenda to Islamize state and

¹¹ Contemporarily the sentiment remains. Even though at is peak, polls suggested that 60-70 percent of the Turkish population favoured joining the EU, the attitude of whether the EU, as a ‘Christian Club’ ever letting a Muslim country join, still remains (Ahmad 176).

society' (Fisher Onar, 2009: 13) where everything 'Ottoman becomes a symbol of Islamic ideology' (Barfu, 1999: 38).

In dealing with Turkey's neglected Ottoman legacy, Kemalist political instruments have been found insufficient (Jung, 2001: 106). These areas include 'Kurdish nationalism, Islamic internationalism, pan-Turkist revivalism, and the Armenian question' (Jung, 2001: 106) which were addressed with 'authoritarian decision making, a narrow territorial and unitary notion of the state; neglect of social, ethnic and religious divisions; viewing national security in strictly military terms' (Jung, 2001: 106). In response, subscribers to neo-Ottomanism may not be countering Turkey's national history but are challenging the Kemalist/Turkish secular enterprise (Keyder, 1999: 39 and Jung, 2001: 129). Everything Ottoman becomes a symbol of Islamic ideology and so the 'glorious Ottoman' (Keyder, 1999: 39) past is revitalized and resurrected. Istanbul, the centuries old capital of the empire, is a key symbol for this revival, and features prominently in the series.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTION

If as Aksoy and Robins contend that commercial broadcasters responded to their audience by creating content to meet their demands (2000: 353) then the emergence of a series that embodies what is inherent, as culturally indigenous, or 'reformulated as "local" after years of westernization' (Keyder, 1999: 63), warrants investigation. Considering the emergence of Islamist premises in Turkish politics, the reintegration of its Turkey's Ottoman past from a more recent history premised on secularism and Western orientation,

How does the television series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* represent the Turkish conception of Ottoman identity?

This study seeks enquiry to the popularity of *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, particularly the relationship between Ottoman historical realities in the creation and portrayal of the series. This link was expected to account for audience resonance and popularity of the show. This presumption rests on the text as open, the audience active and thus symbols inserted in the text to allow for intersubjective, interpretative discourse (Kim, 2006: 30).

The results of this research are expected to contribute to a wider corpus on Turkish soap operas and television series, moving beyond cursory references or niche considerations.

Evaluating *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* as a dynamic cultural product indicates that soap operas (and other cultural products) have the ability to do more than entertain and provide pleasure. They provide meaning which can relate beyond the screen. Representation reflects social construction, a culture economy and hence identity. In doing so, the text has implications both to its domestic and foreign audience with the representation of a past and all the elements that constitute it, which have been nascent in official discourse. Although the series has been written about and discussed in the Turkish press and in some international media, a scholarly investigation is lacking. The introduction of a historical fiction is unique in the Turkish soap opera landscape and assessing the elements which have made it a phenomenon are contemporarily relevant considering Turkey's political juncture where the role of Islam and secularism, minorities and Turkey's role as a regional power are all topics of the day.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Interviews were initially scheduled with the series' production company (TİMS), public relations company (İD İletişim) and the shows distributor (Global Agency). Within the production company, interviews were sought with the producers and historical advisors to determine the extent of history in the creation of the series. Areas of investigation envisaged included to what degree did the fiction reflect reality, what thoughts and considerations drove the production process, did the series employ editorial or production changes in response to criticism and complaints by the state broadcasting authority (RTÜK), the Turkish Prime Minister and others, and finally what the producers could point to in explaining the popularity of the series.

The head of public relations at the Topkapı Palace museum¹² (where the series is largely set), Ramazan Aktemur was also contacted for an interview,¹³ yet indicated that the museum had not seen any difference in attendance figures nor heightened interest in Ottoman history which could be attributed to the show, despite the palace being one of Turkey's most visited destinations.¹⁴ Aktemur did indicate however that VIP delegations were interested

¹² The Topkapı Palace was the seat of Ottoman rule for 500 years and was converted to a museum in 1924. In 2012, it was the second most visited museum site in Turkey with over 3.3 million visits. URL: <http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR,43336/muze-istatistikleri.html> [Last consulted 5 August, 2013].

¹³ May, 2013.

¹⁴ According to the Turkish Ministry of Culture, the Topkapı palace was the second most visited destination in 2012. Cultural Assests:Muesum Statistics. URL: <http://www.kulturvarliklari.gov.tr/TR,43336/muze-istatistikleri.html> Last consulted 12 August 2013.

in locations in the palace corresponding to certain scenes in the series. Based on this, this interview was given secondary priority to the other parties sought. After numerous attempts to schedule interviews however, including a field trip for this purpose, efforts proved unfruitful.

The only interview which took place was with Chief Finance Officer Mert Uzcan in lieu of the Chief Executive Officer Izzet Pinto from Global Agency. The interview provided insight to the development and distribution of Turkish movies and series including *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, but was not best positioned to answer the question of historical considerations and resonance of the series within and outside Turkey. During May/June 2013, when the interviews were scheduled, mass anti police and government protests commenced in Istanbul, suspending transport and business in key parts of the city. Cast member Meryem Uzerli who plays Hürrem also left the series. The difficulty in scheduling interviews was apparent therefore an alternative methodology, relying on the rich visual content of the series was employed.

Representation and visual analysis

Stuart Hall identifies people, landmarks, objects and events as layers in representation (1997: 17; 2005). These elements were used as identification criteria in a social semiotic visual analysis which provides social, even historical context to supplement the visual. Content was assessed using Barthes functional, indexical, and paradigmatic level of the narrative which took into consideration form and content of the retelling, main and subsidiary plots, identification, development and transformation of characters (Barthes, 1977). 103 episodes have aired over three seasons commencing in 2011 with each episode spanning between 90 to 150 minutes. The fluctuation in run time can be accounted for by season premieres, finales or other significant events in the storyline.

With the resources invested into the series (as noted in the section *Genre and Narrative*) and the rich visual content available, how does the show create meaning? What symbols or representations create meaning? Details, the micro-aspects of how arguments are put together and reinforced visually can reasonably be expected to contribute to the understanding of how narratives unfold (Iedema 2001: 201). A social semiotic visual analysis was expected to not simply focus on 'signs' in the text but on the social meaningfulness of the text and as Iedema explains, the entire process (2001: 187).

According to Iedema, social semiotics includes three metafunctions: representation, orientation and organization (2001: 191). This study will focus on representation which 'considers meaning insofar as it tells us about the world in some way' (Iedema, 2001: 191).

Thus context, location/set construction, character appearance, language/dialogue, accompanying music or sound effects, and camera angles (framing) were all assessed under the metafunction heading. Each episode was viewed by the researcher and historical markers such as location, characters, battles and sub narratives were checked against historical records for accuracy or divergence. Viewing of previous episodes supplemented the viewing and contextual experience for scenes selected but were not prerequisites. The researchers own knowledge of the series and historical contexts guided interpretations and as such were a strength and complementary to the analysis rather than a failing (Iedema, 2001: 186). This knowledge complemented what is connoted, as well as denoted in the text (Hall, 2003).

In lieu of obtaining television broadcast viewing records for the series, online sites were used. Episodes in the shows original language, Turkish, are available online, both through the shows site and also through Turkwebtv, an online platform with rights to broadcast the series.¹⁵ Each episode is also published on the video sharing site YouTube, where viewing statistics are maintained. Online viewing averages over 1.1 million per episode with the highest viewed series premiere at almost 4 million views.¹⁶ All episodes were watched online over a one year period. Most viewed episodes according to online statistics were re-watched to narrow scene selection but this was later abandoned considering almost half of all episodes (52) generated over 1 million views each at time of writing (see Appendix 3). Turkwebtv also maintains a list of highest viewed episode fragments, and again these were watched to identify visually representative scenes.

The literature review informed the selection of themes, which represented Turkish specific elements of an Ottoman identity. These themes were deemed not to factor as highly in a Republican conception of that identity, namely power, religion, tradition and diversity/ethnicity. Rituals associated with tradition anchoring on religion - such as a marriage ceremony, circumcision of young boys, profession of faith upon birth or conversion, fasting and funerals remains unchanged to this day and are not unique to the Turkish or Ottoman context but prevalent in other Muslim societies. The kına (henna) night

¹⁵ Turkwebtv: about us. URL: <http://www.turkweb.tv/sayfa/1/hakkimizda> [Last consulted 3 August 2013].

¹⁶ Exact figure 3,964,451 as of 23 August, 2013. YouTube: Muhtesem Yüzyıl Episode 1. URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBxXN3HyBcg> [Last consulted 23 August, 2013].

of Mihrimah Sultan marked by placing henna in her palms is a tradition celebrated in Arab or Indian societies for instance. Therefore 'tradition' was later excluded from the analysis as it could also be included under religion. Remaining scenes were identified as unique to the Ottoman context and relevant as contemporarily absent or contentious today.

Selected scenes were timed and number of frames counted to determine whether there was a preference on a particular aspect, such as a character within a scene. Each piece was analysed first without any audio to assess whether the scene was able to communicate or represent the theme without dialogue or music. This is significant considering the series is available in languages largely outside the Indo-European group. Scenes with dialogue were included for analysis only if relevant to the thematic representation and were transcribed and translated, but discarded if not. These are included in Appendix 1. Two examples were selected for each scene for a total of least 2 minutes of footage per theme. All clips are available in single online file.¹⁷

Shots from each scene are included as screenshots to supplement the analysis (Figures 1.0-3.9). The following scenes were selected as representative of the titled themes:

Theme 1: Power

Scene 1. Sultan Süleymans accession to the throne at the Topkapı palace, Istanbul.

Scene 2. The Battle of Mohács, battlefield scene.

Theme 2: Islam

Scene 3. The Ottoman army in congregational prayer at a field camp.

Scene 4. Hürrem Sultan in solitary prayer at the Topkapı palace, Istanbul.

Theme 3: Diversity/Ethnicity

Scene 5. Rustem: from devşirme in the Balkans to Paşa in Diyarbakir.

Scene 6. Wedding ceremony of Ottoman official Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey to Jewish girl, Armin in an Istanbul home.

¹⁷ Muhtesem Yüzyıl: Power, Islam and Ethnicity/Diversity. URL: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/qs9aputvv28zomw/Esra%20Final%20Project.mov> Last consulted 27 August 2013.

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The detailed visual content in six scenes yields a text favourable to the Turkish conception of the Ottoman world achieved with real and imagined references to character, dress, location, music and dialogue, and technical elements including scene construction (frames, shots, sequence). The attention to detail is given even to sub-narratives, evidenced by five of the six scenes used in the analysis. Besides adversaries, minorities are not discriminated against nor treated differently. The exclusion of some minorities or ethnicities (Arabs, Armenians or Kurds for instance) does *not* seem to have been done with deliberateness, rather their appearance does not supplement the narrative. It must also be kept in mind that the series is *fiction* and latitude must be given when assessing the constructed reality against historical representation.

Scenes selected capture different facets of Ottoman life from varied perspectives and contribute as diverse layers in visual storytelling. Three scenes (1, 3 and 4) take place in the imperial capital, Istanbul with Scenes 1 and 4 in the Topkapı palace. The former shows the official side of palace life where the latter provides a glimpse into the personal. Scene 6 takes place in an Istanbul home, away from imperial or military life. Two of the three remaining scenes (2 and 3) involve the military and are at field/battle locations. The last scene (5) is a flashback from the far Eastern Ottoman outpost Diyarbakır, depicting a time and place past but remembered in the 16th century ‘present’.

Screenshots for each selected scene and specific analysis are included below, with a detailed breakdown of each scene available in Appendix 2.

Power

Scene 1. Sultan Süleymans accession to the throne at the Topkapı palace, Istanbul.

Scene 1 is taken from the first episode of the series. Süleyman enters his private chambers as a Şehzade (Figure 1.0) and emerges as a Sultan. His power, and by extension of the Ottomans, is displayed by wealth, stature and position.

The first indication that Süleyman is superior to others is that he does not dress himself, he has attendants who do this for him (Figure 1.1). As the camera pans from his outstretched right arm, across his torso and to his left arm, the viewer sees an archers ring inlaid with jewels, a large gold belt/buckle adorned with jewels fixed around his waist on an opulent red kaftan with gold thread woven through it. Fur trim is another symbol of wealth, as is his

turban - large, white and adorned with a plume and jewels. The headgear, clothing and jewellery is unmatched by any other character in the scene. Members of his court appear uniformly, as do military figures surrounding the perimeter of the ceremony, absent of the wealth Süleyman displays. The exceptions are the Mufti (Islamic scholar) who wears a plain Kaftan and large round turban and Süleymans mother (Valide) and sister who watch away from the courtyard from the Divan tower (Figure 1.4) appearing in only 2 shots for 6 seconds of the 191 second scene.

Süleyman is literally in the centre of the frames, distinct to all else. He appears in 35 of the 46 total shots including 4 shots where the viewer does not see his face while he is dressed (Figure 1.1). Everyone who appears before Süleyman subordinates themselves by either bowing or kneeling to kiss the hem of his kaftan. Süleyman is never alone. He is either escorted by his personal guard or appears with others, except in prayer, (Figure 1.2) and just before he emerges to be seen before his court for the first time as Sultan (Figure 1.3). Prayer is also the only time Süleyman bows or subordinates himself (Figure 1.2). This suggests inherent humility and that though he leads others, he too submits before a greater power. Süleyman doesn't smile. His gaze as Sultan is serious, eyebrows slightly knitted. The only time he appears at ease, even contemplation, is during prayer.

Locations supplement the notion of power as wealth. Süleymans personal quarters are large, well lit with intricate motifs. The room is adorned with carpets, large candles, lamps, tasselled pillows, a large four-post bed, and marble trim. The walls are crimson with gold embellishments. A fireplace harkens the viewer to a time past and a globe suggests awareness and interest of the world, perhaps even curiosity through exploration. Süleyman takes his throne, which is wide, inlaid with pearl and placed on carpet though the ceremony is outdoors (Figure 1.5) in the second courtyard of the Topkapı palace (Figure 1.6). The ceremony begins with prayer after which his officials are presented. Long shots of the scene closely resemble an 18th century painting of Sultan Selim III's coronation (Figure 1.6.1) while a period miniature (Figure 1.6.2) of Süleymans coronation does not as easily identify the location to the viewer.

Set 1: Power: Sultan Süleymans accession to the throne at the Topkapı palace, Istanbul.



Figure 1.0 Süleyman as Sehzade



Figure 1.1 Süleyman dressed by attendants



Figure 1.2 Süleyman solitary at prayer



Figure 1.3 Süleyman before appearing to his court



Figure 1.4 Valide Sultan and his sister watch



Figure 1.5 Süleyman at the throne



Figure 1.6 Wide shot of accession scene

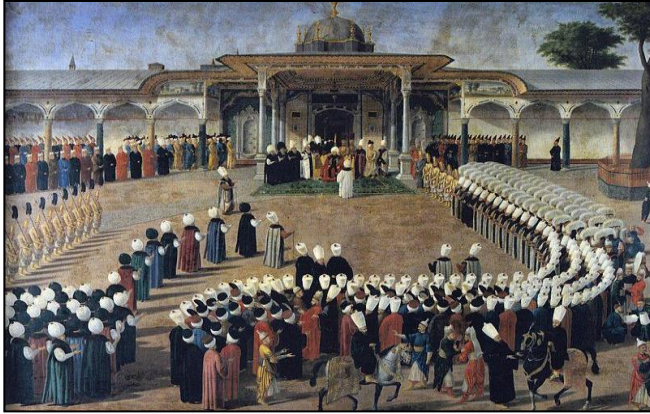


Figure 1.6.1 Sultan Selim III holding an audience in front of the Gate of Felicity Courtiers are assembled in a strict protocol. Oil on canvas by Konstantin Kapıdağlı Source: Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul



Figure 1.6.2 Süleyman's coronation by Matrakci Nasuh in Süleymanname 1520. URL: http://warfare.atwebpages.com/Ottoman/Süleymanname/Suleiman's_Culus_Ceremony-Süleymanname.htm [Last consulted: 28 August 2013].



Figure 1.6.3 The Gate of Felicity as it appears today. Source: Esra Doğramacı, 2013.

Scene 2. The Battle of Mohács, battlefield scene

Scene 2 from Season 1, Episode 26 displays power by the Ottoman military and in the person of Süleyman preceding the Battle of Mohács. Hungarian King Lajos leads the adversaries to Süleyman on the left field of vision and Süleymans to the right. In addition to cultivating Süleyman's personality as leader, framing and shots show the battle from the dominant/preferred reading - that of the Ottomans. 21 of the 39 shots in the scene are on Süleyman, as medium or close up. 32 shots are of the Ottoman side and only 6 shots show Lajos, including 1 shot of his army moving in response to his charge cry (Figure 1.11). Medium shots show Süleyman's army and he leading it. Close up shots feature other notables who surround Süleyman on the Ottoman side. No such shots (or support) appear of Lajos.

Military music accompanies the scene, titled 'Bismişah' which is a mix of Ottoman mehter (military) and contemporary music, as well as religious invocation to Süleymans' rallying call. This is a powerful piece underlined by a repeating heavy 'kös'¹⁸ drum with the melody carried by an ascending repeated string theme.¹⁹ Music crescendos as military action draws near and commences.

Süleyman appears in Ottoman military regalia, the only rider on a white horse (Figure 1.7). A variety of Ottoman flags featuring three crescent moons alternating in red, white and green along with plain green flags and gold trim appear. Crescent moons and green are traditional signs of Islam. Horsetails on stands are also visible. Horsetails signified rank although who they belong to is not distinguishable. Süleyman is surrounded by his men including his elite guard - the Janissaries, recognisable by their crimson uniforms and white headdress. Süleyman yells his speech on horseback (Figure 1.7), invoking religion. The battle is during Ramadan, and he tells his forces that the dead will be martyrs and the military responds by raising their swords (Figure 1.8) and roaring "La ilaha illAllah" (there is no God but Allah). Lajos has no such support, gives no speech and even seems in doubt - he turns his back to check behind him (Figure 1.10). He only yells while raising his sword (Figure 1.11) then his troops ride past him. While Lajos's facial expression suggests grimace (Figure 1.12) Süleyman is determined, serious, perhaps even angry (Figure 1.9). These visual

¹⁸ Large Ottoman drum used by military as they played war songs in battle to motivate forces.

¹⁹ Music from: Muhteşem Yüzyıl Vol.1 (Orijinal Dizi Müzikleri) with previews available: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/muhtesem-yuzy-vol.1-orijinal/id646983262> Last consulted 23 August, 2013.

elements isolate Lajos. Without knowing the outcome of the battle, on screen, he has already lost.

Set 2: Screenshots: Power: The Battle of Mohács, battlefield scene

Figures 1.7-1.12(overleaf) are screenshots from the series.



Figure 1.7 Süleyman address his military.



Figure 1.8 The Ottoman army responds.



Figure 1.9 Süleyman before battle.



Figure 1.10 Lajos looks behind him.



Figure 1.11 Lajos' charge cry.



Figure 1.12 Lajos appears to grimace

Islam

Scene 3. The Ottoman army in congregational prayer at a field camp

The third scene from Season 2, Episode 25 literally places religion at front and centre of daily life. The Ottoman army, camped ahead of the battle of Belgrade, ceases all activity to pray. Prayer takes place in unison behind an Imam (religious leader) and follows Islamic convention with movements and Arabic recitations:

- Standing to begin the prayer (Figure 2.0)
- Bowing (Figure 2.1) the Imam says 'Sami Allahu Liman Hamidah' (God listens to him who praise Him).
- Kneeling to touch the forehead to ground (Figure 2.2).
- Concluding in the seated/kneeling position (Figure 2.3).
- 'Allahu Akbar' (God is great) is said before each transition in the prayer.

Behind the Imam is head of the military, Grand Vizier Ibrahim, then the military who are featured as one body stretching into the horizon, suggesting thousands (Figures 2.1-2.3). Even so, prayer mats are spread on the ground, creating a sacred space for religious worship. The only distinction in the army is by colour of uniform - burgundy or green. Military or other headgear is absent, replaced with a white turban, or absence of head covering. The Imam's turban has a red cap within, distinguishing him again as the leader of the prayer. An almost split screen in hi-long shots shows the army outdoors, footwear removed and unguarded with all activities suspended to participate in prayer (Figures 2.0 and 2.2).

Set 3: Screenshots: Islam: The Ottoman army in congregational prayer at a field camp before the Battle of Belgrade.

Figures 2.0-2.3 (overleaf) are screenshots from the series.



Figure 2.0 The army stands at prayer



Figure 2.1 The army, led by Imam, bows



Figure 2.2 The army at prayer



Figure 2.3 Prayer concludes

Scene 4. Hürrem Sultan in solitary prayer at the Topkapi palace, Istanbul.

The fourth scene from Season 3, Episode 78 shows Hürrem alone, praying for Süleyman who has fallen ill. The scene begins by locating it at the Topkapı palace in Istanbul (Figure 2.4). Hürrem is in a room within the palace - either a mosque or prayer room - evidenced by the lack of furniture, the simplicity of the room bearing only an intricate rug and a prayer mat upon which she is seated (Figure 2.5). Hürrem concludes the Islamic ritual prayer by turning her face to the right (Figure 2.6) and then to the left while mouthing ‘Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullah’ (may the peace, mercy, and blessings of Allah be with you) to close the prayer. Hürrem’s proficiency in this action is notable as prior to becoming Muslim, she had been shown in Christian prayer and holding tight to her Cross (Episode 1). Upon completion, Hürrem raises her hands (Figure 2.7) to offer her personal prayer, and washes her hands over her face, a traditional practice indicating completion and to spread blessings over the body.

Layers of audio supplement the scene. First, silence - the viewer sees but does not hear Hürrem’s words during the ritual prayer, rather her personal prayer in Turkish is narrated over the scene. Her voice is impassioned, sometimes breaking and the prayer even seems poetic. A musical layer in the background titled “Yirmi Altı Saat (Twenty Six hours)” accompanies. The piece is slowed in $\frac{3}{4}$ time with bass drums accenting the first beat. Low strings playing the melody suggest a heavy solemnity and sadness.

At this point, Hürrem is arguably the most powerful woman of the Empire. She is married to Süleyman and they have 5 children together - four male heirs and a daughter. Hürrem has her hair almost fully covered, with only her face and hands exposed, consistent with Islamic

prayer convention (Figure 2.6). She also wears light green attire, green being a representative colour of Islam. Hürrem's appearance in the first season consistently showed dress exposing cleavage, (see for instance Figures 2.8 and 2.9). The change in dress may be attributable to character development but even in Episode 1, Valide Sultan, a senior member of the household appeared with equal exposure (Figure 2.10). The more conservative appearance has been suggested as a response to complaints about the series.²⁰

Set 4: Religion: Hürrem prays for Sultan Süleyman.

Figures 2.4-2.10 are screenshots from the series.



Figure 2.4 Opening shot – Topkapi palace

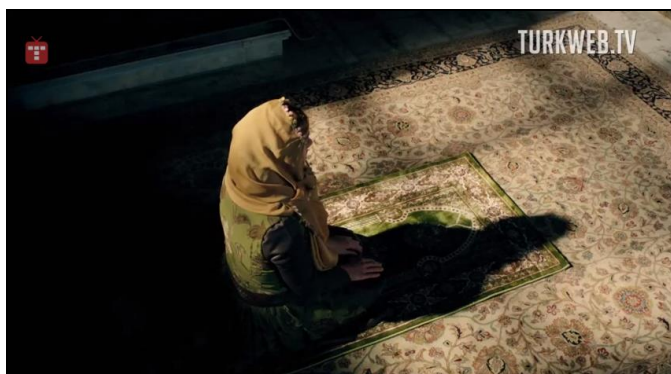


Figure 2.5 Hurrem on a prayer mat

²⁰ Similarly, one Turkish media outlet claimed that the series responded to the Prime Ministers words by having Hürrem cover. "Basbakan Bastirdi: Hurrem Sultan Kapandi" (The Prime Minister pressured: Hurrem Sultan covered.) Retrieved: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCqgeo-h6vQ> Last consulted 23 August 2013.



Figure 2.6 The prayer concludes



Figure 2.7 Hürrem raises her hands to pray



Figure 2.8: Hürrem in Episode 1 Figure 2.9 Hürrem in Episode 100 Figure 2.10 Valide Sultan in Episode 1

Scenes 3 and 4 demonstrate the centrality of Islam in Ottoman life and rule. Beyond these representations, Süleyman attends Friday prayers with his retinue (Episode 47). There are mevluds (prayer honoring the deceased on the 40th day of their passing when various surah (chapters) of the Quran are recited) (Episode 84). The Sultan professes faith when his

children and grandchildren are born and recites the Islamic call to prayer (Episode 25). During Ramadan, the imperial family, officials and palace attendants all participate in fasting as well as the breaking of the fast (Episode 25). Ibrahim Paşa is shown attending evening taraweeh prayers²¹ (Episode 80). When Süleymans sons are circumcised, a public celebration is held as well as circumcision made available to other boys of age (Episode 99). Weddings are legitimized by a religious, not civic service. Imperial council (Divan) meetings are begun with a prayer and opened in the name of God ('Rahman ve rahim olan Allah'ın adıyla divan toplantısını açıyorum') (Episodes 25, 73 and elsewhere). Contemporarily, the association with Islam and Turkish culture has been one of backwardness. Secular Turks have disassociated with religion, indicating a transcendence of culture (Navaro-Yasin, 1999: 67). 'They were modern; they were civilised; they had attained global norms, leaving behind a local aberration' (Navaro-Yasin, 1999: 67). Yet that local was deeply intertwined with religion and the series portrays this from the head of the Empire on down.

Ethnicity/diversity

Scene 5. Rustem: from devsirme in the Balkans to Paşa in Diyarbakir

In season 3, Episode 98, Rustem, self-identified by his narration as a Croat, leaves his home in Butimir (in today's Sarajevo) (Figure 3.0) to journey to Edirne, another imperial city. The scene is a flashback of Rustem as a youth. The reference to a time past is created by muted colours as well as the elongation of the scene by slowing down speed slightly, a dramatic effect, as is panning the scene to see Rustem's surroundings before focusing on him as the resilient character who survives (Figure 3.4). He is then shown as a Paşa, happier, bathed in sunlight (Figure 3.5). The change in time bracketed by 'today,' is accompanied by Rustem narrating the same - that he has risen from the son of a swine herder to an Ottoman official, about to marry the Sultan's daughter. The dialogue in this scene supplements the visual. Rustem speaks of the hardship he has encountered on his way to success which are all visualised: his mother dying while he was still a child, the beatings by his father, leaving his siblings behind, walking for days led by Janissaries, seeing other boys perish (Figure 3.3.) then finally achieving success. 10 of 13 shots feature Rustem; 8 while he is young. While other children show the strain and suffering in their face, Rustem is neutral, strong, and keeps his head raised both as a child and again at close of scene (Figure 3.5).

²¹ There are additional congregational prayers performed after the night prayer (isha) during the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the month Muslims believe the Quran, Islam's holy book was revealed and during this month Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset.

Set 5: Ethnicity/diversity: Rustem Paşa's journey from Croatia to Paşa as a devşirme.

Figures 3.0-3.5 are screenshots from the series.



Figure 3.0 Rustem leaves his siblings



Figure 3.1 Rustem marches with other boys, led by Janissaries



Figure 3.2 Rustem remains strong on the difficult journey



Figure 3.3 Other boys suffer, perish.



Figure 3.4 Rustem witnesses suffering, yet remains defiant.



Figure 3.5 Rustem reflects on his past, now on the verge of achieving his ultimate success.

Has the series exploited the means of representation to favour one viewpoint and render all other viewpoints irrelevant? (Iedema, 2001: 184). Although Rustem has left on his own accord, the reader does not see whether other Balkan families were complicit in giving up their sons to the devşirme system. Nor does the viewer see any ‘unsuccessful’ devşirmes in adulthood besides weaker boys who could not endure as Rustem did. This distinguishes Rustem as a character while also removing blame from the Ottomans for the boys who did not survive. Whereas in feudal Europe birth determined status in ones life, the Ottoman system was meritocratic and advancement was based on ability (Ahmad, 2005: 4). Successful devşirme’s in the series support this assertion.

Scene 6. Wedding ceremony of Ottoman official Malkocoglu Bali Bey to Jewish girl, Armin in an Istanbul home.

Scene 6 shows the marriage between Ottoman official Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey to a Jewish girl, Armin in Season 2, Episode 32. Their road to marriage has not been easy. Armin first refused Bali Bey’s advances. When she finally agreed, her father, Joshua Efendi refused and responded by sending her away from Istanbul to prevent the couple from meeting. The reason for Joshua’s resistance is not entertained but when the ceremony eventually takes place, the reader presumes Joshua has granted permission in an effort to give his daughter

fleeting happiness. Armin has contracted the plague and will inevitably die. Indeed, she does on her wedding night.

The ceremony takes place according to Islamic convention and the reader can presume that Armin has become Muslim. The ceremony is led by an Imam and a witness for each party (Figure 3.6) who are all seated. Only Joshua stands (Figure 3.9) although whether this is because he is against the marriage, from grief, not Muslim or simply not an immediate party to the wedding is not known. The marriage contract appears in Ottoman script (Figure 3.7) prefaced by the Islamic opening ‘Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem’ (in the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful). Each party is asked if they accept the other to marry. Armin and Malkoçoğlu repeat three times ‘Kabul ettim’ (I accept). Even when the bride and groom appear in a shot together, the Imam is also in view, emphasizing the religiosity of the event. The ceremony concludes with the wedding parties raising their hands in prayer (Figure 3.8). There is no dialogue, rather a gentle waltz theme titled ‘Aşk-i-derun’ (the deepest love), which is played in the series during scenes of romance or love. The scene is filmed in slowed time and the camera almost panning or curving adds to the gentleness of the scene.

Armin wears a white, veiled wedding dress, which is an imported modern concept. During traditional Muslim/Turkish weddings, brides customarily wear red to signify their virginity during the henna night. The reader cannot visually distinguish that Joshua is Jewish. Prior information such as his name, accent and slightly different attire, such as non-Islamic headgear suggest that he is not Muslim. Hence religion or ethnicity serves to distinguish characters but is not used as a discriminating factor.

Set 6: Screenshots: Diversity/Ethnicity: The marriage of Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey with Jewish girl, Armin.

Figures 3.6-3.9 are screenshots from the series.



Figure 3.6 The wedding scene.

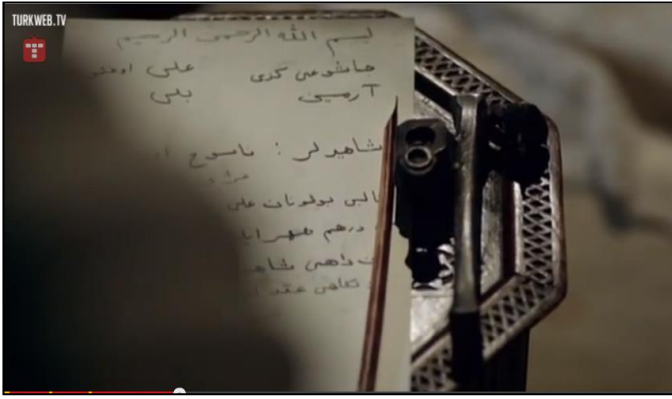


Figure 3.7 Marriage contract in Arabic/Ottoman script.



Figure 3.8 The wedding couple



Figure 3.9 Armin's father Joshua looks on downcast, unhappy.

As ‘people of the book’ the Jewish community enjoyed legal protection and a comparatively high level of freedom during Ottoman times. Recognised as one of the four millets, the Ottoman authorities permitted the development and preservation of Jewish culture (Jung, 2001: 155). In the series, Jews are portrayed neutrally, favourably and historically accurately. They are not singled out because of their religion. Jewish female merchants for instance were intermediaries between the Harem women and the outside world, securing purchases from outside the palace and providing loans when necessary. The character

Raquel who is introduced as ‘Yahudi tacir’ (Jewish merchant) provides both Valide Sultan and Hürrem with loans (Episode 93). Raquel is distinguished by her name, accent and headdress, all of which are different to Turkish speaking Muslims. Similarly Moshe Hamon (Episode 98), a prominent Jew during Süleymans reign who even accompanied him on military campaigns, is accurately depicted as Süleymans chief surgeon and is specifically requested in times of heightened medical need, suggesting his stature with the Sultan. He speaks with an accent and wears a kaftan though distinguished, but dissimilar to those of the imperial court.

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Other minorities and adversaries

In considering diversity/ethnicity, the series represents a plurality of what are considered minorities - Alevis, Greeks (Rumelians/Rums), Venetians as well as Christian adversaries, yet ethnic or religious background does not factor as an ‘issue’ in the narrative.

When non-Ottomans or minorities appear including the Genovese, Venetians, Rums, Jews and European envoys, they are first distinguished as different by their attire. They speak Turkish with an accent. Unlike other characters, adversaries are shown as incompetent by action - failing to win battles, scheming and deserving of Ottoman force based on the injustices they commit such as King Lajos executing Ottoman envoy Behram Cavuş, and returning his head embalmed in honey as a ‘gift’ (Episode 3). Although the series is popular in Arab countries, Arabs do not feature. There are scenes in Cairo and Baghdad, yet at these locations, the focus is on Süleymans retinue who are Turkish or devşirmes, who have been sent to fight or govern. Orthodox Christians again are not represented based on their religion but on their role. Rums (Greeks) run taverns, are traders or employ other skills - such as the carpet weaver Helena who attracts Şehzade Mustafa’s attention, eventually entering his Harem (Episodes 66-72) or Genovese Signora Gabriela Sfenzi De Feo (Episodes 88-89), a trader who seeks Şehzade Mustafa’s help in addressing business affairs.

What is not represented is as important as what *is* represented (Hall, 1997). Minority groups in the Ottoman and contemporary Turkish context include the Alevis, Armenians, and Kurds. Armenians, along with Jews were two of the four recognised millets in the Ottoman system but are not featured. Turkey’s largest contemporary minority population, the Kurds, are also absent. Alevis are represented through the Janissaries and troublesome religious orders.

Armenians and Kurds

Although Mimar (architect) Sinan is thought to be Armenian, his ethnic background does not enter as a topic of conversation. He is featured for his engineering and architectural successes as well as for being in love with the Sultan's daughter Mihrimah (Episodes 93 and 97). No other Armenian characters appear. This may be because Armenians were traditionally artisans during the 16th Century and began to enter palace and political life more so at a later stage. Although Rustem Paşa is dispatched to Diyarbakir, a seat of the Kurds during the 16th century and today, there is scant reference to or representation of the Kurds. Diyarbakir is shown through the eyes of Rustem, who does not venture outside his personal quarters. Today, Kurds comprise one-fifth of Turkey's current population and tensions over questions of their identity and representation remain.

Alevis and Janissaries

Just as religions besides Islam were permitted to exist and be practiced without interference, religious orders not of the majority Sunni Islam variant were also present. Alevis were not initially considered in the visual analysis sample yet appreciable representation warrants some inclusion. The Bektaşî's were a mystical Islamic brotherhood founded in the Ottoman Anatolian heartland by Haji Bektaş Veli, a leader/teacher of Alevism in the thirteenth century. In the series, the Bektaşî order is represented by the Janissaries. With its Shia (Alevi) background and the incorporation of Christian elements, the Bektaşî order is of a syncretistic nature and has been opposed by the Sunni Muslim orthodoxy (Jung, 2001: 57, note 18). Although 'leading religious Sunni clerics (*ulema*) had made common cause with the Janissaries in revolts, a basic hostility existed between them' (Jung, 2001: 38). Today, the religious orders are internally fragmented and have developed various religious currents and *cemaat* (community) (Jung, 2001: 130, note 17). Within the series, the Janissaries invoke Haji Bektaş and other references to Alevism during prominent battle scenes or official ceremonies (Episodes 46) such as 'Allah Allah' instead of 'Amin' and 'Bismişah' instead of 'Bismillah.' In Episode 31, a *zîkr* (remembrance of God) is led by Kalendar Şah where his followers are seen beating their chests.²² This is suggestive of self flagellation, common in the Shia branch of Islam.²³

²² See 1:13:35-1:15:26 of Episode 31 URL http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_dTi8-GFVU Last consulted 12 August 2013.

The Janissaries are sometimes portrayed as troublemakers, not because of their religious affiliation but because they mutiny when their desires, as going on campaign (they are after all trained to fight), or the demotion of Ibrahim Paşa, are not met. Such rebellion is dealt with harshly - in Episode 20, Sultan Süleyman personally executes their leader. Where religious challenges to Sunni Islam are presented, they are also quickly suppressed. Kalender Şah who leads an Alevi religious order (Episode 30-31) and Sheikh Maşuki, who leads a Sufi religious order (Episodes 93-98) are both eliminated for disrupting public order. Kalender Şah is killed in battle while Sheikh Maşuki is executed in the hippodrome - to this day a prominent location in Istanbul's historic Sultanahmet district. The Shia Ottoman rivals, the Safavids (Episode 68) are also depicted but the issue of religion is not raised. Rather they are territorial and hence battlefield adversaries.

Location

Istanbul features prominently in the series and is a place where different religious, linguistic and ethnic groups coexisted cordially. The Galata Tower (Figure 4.0) located in the Pera district (Greek meaning far or away), preludes meyhanes scenes. The tower and meyhanes remain (Figure 4.1). This area was known for its Rum (Greek population) who lived and work in the locale.

The Topkapi Palace was the seat of Ottoman rule for approximately 400 years and remains as a museum today. Its landmarks feature in the series including the Divan Tower (Figures 4.2 and 4.3), Divan chamber, Harem (Figures 4.4. and 4.5) and various courtyards. Ibrahim Paşa's palace sits also in a prominent Istanbul location and is now the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts. The Bâbüssaâde (Gate of Felicity) of the Second Court in the Topkapi palace (Figures 1.6, 1.6.1, 1.6.3) is recognisable from the series as 'real' today.

Locations which do not appear in the same form today are reconstructed. Besides those in Anatolia (Bursa, Trabzon, Manisa, Edirne, in addition to Istanbul), the series reconstructs Cairo, Baghdad, Vienna, Belgrade, Rhodes, all suggesting the vastness of the Empire by the expanse of locations presented and the Ottomans ability to reach them.

²³ See "Why Self Flagellation Matters for Shias" for more information. URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/aug/28/religion.islam> Last consulted 12 August 2013.



Figure 4.0 Galata tower as portrayed in the series
Esra Doğramacı, 2013.



Figure 4.1 Galata tower today
Esra Doğramacı, 2011.



Figure 4.2 The Divan tower as portrayed in the series.
Esra Doğramacı, 2013.



Figure 4.3 The Divan tower today (2012)
Esra Doğramacı, 2013.



Figure 4.4 The Harem courtyard in the series



Figure 4.5 The Harem courtyard todayç
Esra Doğramacı, 2012.

Language

Language is significant to the soap opera genre where (Butler, 1986: 64) '[a]lmost everything that happens...takes the form of verbal activity,' (Katzman in Butler, 1986: 65). As a representational marker, language is interpreted to 'refer to or *reference* the world' (Hall, 1997: 22). Language facilitates the construction of a 16th century 'world' (Pearson, 2005: 403) reflecting the diversity within and distinguishing adversaries. 'Ottoman Turkish' which integrates Arabic and Farsi appear in dialogue. Farsi is used in letters and poetry. Arabic is used with all Islamic religious invocations as shown in Scenes 3 and 5. When non-Ottomans are represented, their language is employed, whether Latin, French or German with Turkish voice overs, or Turkish spoken with a distinct 'foreign' accent.

Shots and Framing

Shots and framing contribute to the status of characters, and support certain themes. In all but one scene (that of Hürrem praying), the scenes are structured using 'alternating syntagmas' which are shots of various shots of different people participating in the same interaction (Iedema, 2001: 189). This is best demonstrated in the wedding scene where shots rotate between 4 sets of characters. Malkoçođlu and Armin are the key characters here, and they appear in 15 of the 26 shots.

Main characters appear centre screen and 'bigger' than everyone else. Other characters are off to the side, behind them or especially in Süleymans case, subordinate. Main characters have longer visual turns (Iedema, 2001: 185), that is they are seen and heard of more than other characters. In Süleyman's accession, although his attendants, officials, Janissaries and members of his family appear, the focus is Süleyman who appears in 35 of the 46 shots. In the Battle of Mohác, 25 of the 38 shots focus on Süleyman. This weighs the perspective of the Battle from the Ottoman standpoint but also reinforces the idea that Süleyman is the definitive, powerful leader of a loyal, committed, strong Empire as represented by its military.

The characters 'hold the appeal for viewers' (Hobson, 1989: 156) and a pilot study held prior to this research affirms this where respondents demonstrated strong reactions ranging from admiration to hate, even wanting particular characters to die. Shot framing compliments this. Close shots suggests intimacy and reduces the space between the viewer and the character. Hürrem is featured in medium and close up shots as she prays. The viewer becomes partial to an intimate scene - the stress on Hürrem's face, her teary and tired eyes

while she prays in solitude. The intimacy by proximity is contrasted with the distant army at prayer. Close and medium shots in this scenario do not create the same intimacy as being close to Hürrem. Similarly, the viewer is kept distant from Süleyman with medium to long shots. Even when his pages are dressing him, the viewer does not see his face during the close ups.

Time and sound

The structure of the series provides ‘a more socially realistic treatment (which) takes us closer to reality while keeping us firmly in the world of fantasy and illusion’ (Pearson, 2005: 400). The characters and events seem live, which means that they could be real, even if the setting was over 500 years ago. The historical format lends itself to stretching out the story - and conventionally by developing the characters (Liebes et al, 1990: 71). Diegesis is the representation of real-time, real events into television or film time (Iedema, 2001: 187) so that 21 years have been compressed into 3 seasons over 3 years. The day long Battle of Mohác for instance is compressed into 17 minutes. Temporal continuity is achieved by maintaining sound continuity across visual cuts (Iedema, 2001: 188). In *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, recurrent musical themes facilitate this, with much of the soundtrack including ‘Ottoman’ elements - Ottoman or Turkish musical instruments and themes. Musical themes are used to invoke certain emotion. The released soundtrack reveals certain themes titled ‘Lament’, ‘Ambush’, ‘Intrigue’ and even ‘Fall of the Dynasty’ (see Appendix 3).

CONCLUSION

Increasing references to Ottoman history reflect what Robins suggests the ‘*real* Turkey reasserting itself against official and state culture’ (2005: 72). *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* is to date Turkey’s most successful televisual product. With this unique position, does the series go beyond gratifying entertainment of information needs by making a political or cultural statement? Could it be used as an extension of soft power or public diplomacy in line with neo-Ottomanism? Failing to secure interviews with the shows publicists, producers or historians, the intention for creating the series and whether such goals were intended is difficult to definitively answer. Rather, the social semiotic visual analysis demonstrates that the show is essentially a cultural product representing a Turkish conception of Ottoman identity as powerful, multi-ethnic and multi-religious, consistent with the historical reality. The representation of this identity on screen as a popular text presents a significant break from the unitary, secular Republican notion of Turkish identity.

In *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, the narrative, characters, and the negotiated spaces between reality and fiction facilitate interest, criticism and praise which highlights the key precept: audiences draw different meanings and interpretations which resonate or conflict with the needs of particular communities. Although the original target audience is Turkish, the series has managed to resonate with viewers who can be regarded as the vestiges of an Ottoman diaspora suggesting that the show provides meaning and identification to hundreds of millions who rest outside popular Western discourse (see Appendix 2). The series reflects nostalgia for this Ottoman past without upsetting the status quo of a particular culture (Pearson, 2005: 403; Turner, 2005: 417). The Ottomans, and Islam are presented in a positive, powerful light, while using ‘the appeal elements of a Hollywood series’ (Giomi, 2005: 466). The positive attributes of the period and their depiction on screen feed directly into the optimistic notion that ‘diasporic viewership are defined by a sense of possibility than loss’ (Ruddock, 2007) which can then question or facilitate the (re)construction of identity. That identity can still be modern and democratic but rather than reversioning history, it can revitalize and revision it (Robins, 2005: 72, 75). Yet can a television series overcome decades of negative (Republican) perceptions or associations? (Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi, 2013: 18). Within viewing communities (and cultures), the text may become a social node - some audiences may use this fictional reality to confirm or reject the assumptions and definitions of their own perceptions of the Ottoman world in the *real* world (Giomi, 2005: 467, 478).

Further research may choose to focus on how the series resonates with those who are viewing *outside* the Ottoman context and whether doing so generates more interest in Ottoman history and Turkey in general. Similarly, audience focus groups and in depth interviews, particularly with those who have an oppositional reading to the text would identify whether the show has inspired a revisiting of historical understanding or assumptions. While the show can be made into a popular cultural product by its viewers, it should not be used as a contested domain through which the ‘past, present, and future are (re)worked and (re)formulated’ (Barfu, 1999: 43), especially to serve or stoke political purposes.

The series demonstrates the Ottomans as inclusive and non-discriminatory while Republican Turkey has been portrayed as anti-Ottoman and contemporary Islamist parties as pro. Robins warns against such polarisation suggesting that cultural arrogance can easily turn into cultural hatred when the ‘other’ is marked by ‘insurmountable particularity, and consequently can never be assimilated into our culture’ (2005: 66). This applies for both ideological camps. If Turkey can embrace its Ottoman past without prejudicing ethnicity/diversity and demonstrating tolerance for religions, including Islam, then the best hope for the show is to aim for as accurate historical representation albeit within the parameters of fiction. Inclusion, tolerance and justice were integral elements to the functioning of a historic, successful, cosmopolitan system. The same principles would best serve Turkey through discussion and debate to overcome internal differences where the sum of the parts would certainly be greater than the whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Descended from a family which traces its Ottoman past to the 17th Century, I now understand why my great uncle, Ihsan Dođramacı, son of Dođramacızade Ali, an Ottoman Paşa, encouraged me to pursue this history. This is dedicated to his memory, to my mother Ibtisam and to everyone on the journey with me.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmad, F. (2005) *Turkey. The Quest for Identity*. One World Publications: Oxford.
- Aksoy, A., Avci, N. (1992) Spreading Turkish Identity. *INTER-Media*. Vol. 20(4-5): 39-40.
- Aksoy, A., and Robins, K., (2000) Thinking across space: Transnational television from Turkey. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. Vol. 3(3): 343-365.
- Allen, R.C. (1989) 'Bursting bubbles: "Soap Opera," audiences, and the limits of genre,' in E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G. Kreutzner and E. Warth (eds), *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Barfu, A. Who Owns the Old Quarters? Rewriting Histories in a Global Era. Pp: 31-45 in *Istanbul Between the Global and the Local* edited by Cagalar Keyder. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc. Lanham, Maryland, 1999.
- Barthes, R., and Lionel Duisit. (1975). An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative. *New Literary History*, Vol. 6(2): 237-272.
- Butler, J.G., (1986). Notes on the Soap Opera Apparatus: Televisual Style and "As The World Turns". Vol. 25(3): 53-70.
- Castello, E. (2009). The Nation as a Political Stage: A Theoretical Approach to Television Fiction and National Identities. *The International Communication Gazette*. Vol. 71(4): 303-320.
- Christie-Miller, A. (2013, 11 January). Turkey: Television Drama Generates Official Angst. *Eurasianet.org*. Retrieved from <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66394>.
- Cohen, J. (2001). Defining Identification: A Theoretical Look at the Identification of Audiences with Media Characters. *Mass Communication and Society*. Vol. 4(3) 245-264).
- Dagge, J. (2008). The Noor phenomenon. *Middle East*. [No. 393](#): 66-67.
- Derengil, S. (1998) The well-protected domains: ideology and the legitimization of power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909. London : I.B.Tauris and Co.
- de la Luz Casas Perez, M. (2005). Cultural Identity: Between Reality and Fiction. A Transformation of Genre and Roles in Mexican *Telenovelas*. *Television and New Media*. Vol. 6(4): 407-414.
- Eco, U. (1979). *A theory of semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Eco, U. (1984). *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the semiotics of texts*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Eco, U. (1990). *The limits of interpretation*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Finkel, C. (2005). *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923*. London: John Murray.
- Fisher Onar, N. (2009) Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy. EDAM/German Marshall Fund Discussion Paper Series 2009/03. Available online http://www.gmfus.org/doc/Discussion%20Paper%20Series_Fisher.pdf.
- Fiske, J. (1987). 'TV: re-situating the popular in the people.' *The Australian Journal Of Media and Culture*. Vol 1(2):1-8. Available online: <http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/1.2/Fiske.html> Last consulted 26 August 2013.
- Fiske, J. (1989). 'Moments of Television: Neither the text nor the audience', in E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G. Kreutzner and E. Warth (eds), *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fleischer, C.H. (2007) Shadows of Shadows: Prophecy in Politics in 1530s Istanbul. pp:51-62. in *Identity Formation in the Ottoman World. A Volume of Essays in Honour of Norman Itzkowitz*. Edited by Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir. Center for Turkish Studies. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin 2007.
-

- Fowler, S. (2011, 20 March). Magnificent Century divides Turkish viewers over the Life Of Suleiman. *The Guardian*. URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/20/turkish-drama-magnificent-century-divides> Last consulted 28 August, 2013.
- Giomi, E. (2005). 'It has to mean something...' Reading the success of the Italian soap opera *Vivere*. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*. 8(4): 465-482.
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/Decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds), *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Hutchison.
- Hall, S. (1997). The Work of Representation. In *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by S. Hall. London: Sage.
- Hall, S. (2000). Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation. Pp 704-714 in Stam, R., and Miller, T. *Film and Theory and Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hall, S. (2003) Edoding/Decoding. Pp: 51-64 in Nightingale, V. and Ross, K., *Critical readings media and audiences*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Hall, S., and du Gay, P. (2005). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage.
- Hirsch, E. (1967). *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Hobson, D. (1989) 'Soap operas at work', pp:150-167 in E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G. Kreutzner and E. Warth (eds), *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Iedema, R. (2201). Analysing Film and Television: a Social Semiotic Account of Hospital: an Unhealthy Business in van Leeuwen T., and Jewitt, C. *Handbook of Visual Analysis*. Sage: London.
- Jung, D. with Piccoli W. *Turkey at the Crossroads Ottoman Legacies and A Greater Middle East*. Zed Books, London 2001.
- Kalin, I. (2009) Debating Turkey in the Middle East: The Dawn of a New Geo-Political Imagination? *Insight Turkey*. Vol 11(1). 83-96.
- Katzman, N. (1972). Television Soap Operas: What's Been Going On Anyway? *Public Opinion Quarterly*. Vol. 36(2): 200-212.
- Keyder, C. ed (1999). *Istanbul Between the Global and the Local*. Rowman and Littlefield: Maryland.
- Kim, S.Y. (2006). *Juxtaposition of Semiotic Mediation with Social Mediation: The Effect Of Text Types and Social Interaction of Moral Judgement*. Phd Dissertation (30-35).
- Kotseli, A. (2012) Metropolitan Anthimos Tells Greeks: Don't Watch Turkish TV Series. *Greek Reporter*. URL: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2012/08/21/metropolitan-anthimos-tells-greeks-dont-watch-turkish-shows/> Last consulted 27 April 2013.
- Kraidy, M.M., Al-Ghazzi, O. (2013). Neo-Ottoman Cool: Turkish Popular Culture in the Arab Public Sphere. *Popular Communication: The International Journal of Media and Culture*. Vol. 11(1) 17-29.
- Liebes, T., Katz, E., (1990). "Chapter 5: Cultural differences in the retelling of an episode" from Liebes, T. and Katz, E., *The export of meaning: cross cultural readings of Dallas* pp. 68-81, Oxford: OUP.
- Livingstone, S. (1990). Interpreting television narrative: how viewers see a story [online]. London: LSE Research Online. URL: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000411> [Last consulted 28 August 2013].
- Macedonia bans Turkish Soap Operas. (2012). *Hurriyet Daily News*. URL: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/macedonia-bans-turkish-soap-operas.aspx?pageID=238&nid=34636> and Muhteşem Yüzyıl'a yasak geldi! [Last consulted May 2, 2013].
- Muhteşem Yüzyıl a Yasak Geldi (A Ban on Muhteşem Yüzyıl). (2012). *Haberdar*. URL <http://www.haberdar.com/muhtesem-yuzyil-a-yasak-geldi-3680044-haberi> [Last consulted 2 May, 2013].
-

- Makdisi, U. (2005). Ottoman Orientalism. *The American Historical Review*. Vol. 107 (3): 768-796.
- Stam, R., and Miller, T. (2000). *Film and Theory and Anthology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Morley, D. (1980). *The Nationwide audience Television, audiences and cultural studies*; GB; Routledge Ltd. pp.111-122.
- Navaro-Yasin, Y., (1999). The Historical Construction of Local Culture: Gender and Identity in the Politics of Secularism versus Islam. Pp: 59-76 In Keyder, C. ed (1999). *Istanbul Between the Global and the Local*. Rowman and Littlefield: Maryland.
- Necati, A. (2012). Chapter 2: National Cinema, Turkish Film Industry and the Features of Turkish Media. Pp 33- 58 in *Mapping geopolitical Imaginations: Turkish Audiences and "Valley of the Wolves - Palestine*. The University of Oklahoma, ProQuest UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2012 3507436.
- Nichols, B. 1991. *Representing Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press
- Nye, J.S. (2008). Soft Power. *Foreign Policy*. No. 80: 153-171.
- Onar, N.F. (2009) Neo Ottomanism, Historical Legacies and Turkish Foreign Policy. EDAM Discussion Paper Series.
- Oncu, A. (1995). Packaging Islam: Cultural Politics on the Landscape of Turkish Commercial Television. *Public Culture*. Vol. 8: 51-71.
- Ozgenç, M. (2012) Şikâyet 1 ayda 10 kat arttı. *Hurriyet*. URL: <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/22264360.asp> [Last consulted 28 August 2013].
- Pearson, R.C. (2005) Fact or Fiction? Narrative and Reality in the Mexican Telenovela. *Television and New Media*. Vol.6(4) 400-406.
- Rohde, D. (2012a, 8 March). Inside Islam's Culture War. *Reuters*. URL: <http://blogs.reuters.com/david-rohde/2012/03/08/inside-islams-culture-war/> [Last consulted 28 August 2013].
- Rohde, D. (2012b, 14 December). Why Turkey's Prime Minister Can't Stand His Country's Top Soap Opera. *The Atlantic*. URL: <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/12/why-turkeys-prime-minister-cant-stand-his-countrys-top-soap-opera/266274/> [Last consulted 28 August 2013].
- Robins, K. Interrupting Identities: Turkey/Europe. in Hall, S., and du Gay, P. (eds) (2005). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Sage Publications London 2005 (first published 1996).
- Ruddock, A. Chapter 3. Media, Pleasure and Identity: The Meaning of the Meaningless Pp: 54-77 in Ruddock A. (2007) *Investigating audiences*. London: Sage.
- Sahin, H., and Aksoy, A. (1993) Global Media and Cultural Identity in Turkey. *Journal of Communication* 43(2): 31-41.
- Salamandra, C. (2012). The Muhannad Effect: Media Panic, Melodrama and the Arab Female Gaze. *Anthropological Quarterly*. Vol.85 (1): 45-77.
- Seiter, E., Borchers, H., Kreutzner, G., Warth, E.M. (1989) 'Introduction,' in E. Seiter, H. Borchers, G. Kreutzner and E. Warth (eds), *Remote Control: Television, Audiences and Cultural Power*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sexias, P. (1994). Confronting the Moral Frames of Popular Film: Young People Respond to Historical Revisionism. *American Journal of Education*. 102(3): 261-285.
- Shaw, Stanford J, Shaw, Ezel Kural (01/01/1976). *History of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, Vol. 1: Empire of the Gazis - the Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Soap opera tourism. (2010). Online video. Monocle Web. URL: <http://monocle.com/film/culture/soap-opera-tourism/>. [Last consulted 19 April 2013].
-

- Taspınar O. (2008, September). *Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism*. Beirut, Lebanon, and Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Tharoor, I. (2011, 29 September). We Cannot Deny Our Ottoman Past. *Time*. URL: <http://world.time.com/2011/09/29/turkish-p-m-erdogan-we-cannot-deny-our-ottoman-past/> [Last consulted 28 August 2013].
- TIMS Productions. (2013a). Bir Dünya Dizisi (A global soap/series) [Press release] Retrieved from: <http://www.tims.tv/tr/haberler/bir-dunya-dizisi> [Last consulted 18 April 2013].
- TIMS Productions. (2013b). Muhteşem Yüzyıl Dunyayı Fethediyor (Magnificent Century Conquers Italy). [Press release] URL: <http://www.tims.tv/tr/haberler/muhtesem-yuzyil-italya-yi-fethediyor-> [Last consulted 18 April 2013].
- Turner, G. (2005). Cultural Identity, Soap Narrative, and Reality TV. *Television and New Media* 6(4): 415-422.
- Emirates pick up Ottoman show after Turkish Airlines blocks it on flights. (2012). *Turkish Daily News*. URL: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/emirates-pick-up-ottoman-show-after-turkish-airlines-blocks-it-on-flights.aspx?pageID=238&nid=37179> [Last consulted 1 May, 2013].
- Turkish soap opera enraged politicians. (2009). *The Guardian*. URL: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/dec/09/turkish-soap-opera-enraged-politicians> [Last consulted 28 August 2013].
- (2012, 22 July). *The Cafe* (Television broadcast). Doha, Qatar: Al Jazeera English. URL: <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/thecafe/2012/07/2012718143124316947.html> Last consulted 20 February, 2013].
- (2012, 19 December). *Hurriyet Daily News*. Emirates Pick Up Ottoman Show After Turkish Airlines Blocks It On Flights. URL: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/emirates-pick-up-ottoman-show-after-turkish-airlines-blocks-it-on-flights.aspx?pageID=238&nid=37179> [Last consulted 28 August, 2013].
-

APPENDIX 1: A note on terms and pronunciation

Terms

Bey	<i>bay</i> . A title used for a military officer, contemporarily used as respect.
Devşirme	<i>Dev-shir-meh</i> . Young boys, usually from the Balkans who were taken from their families as war booty, converted to Islam and entered Ottoman military/palace service.
Efendi	<i>a-fen-di</i> . A title of respect or nobility.
Harem (from the Arabic حريم)	sacred, in the Ottoman context the personal household of the Sultan closed to men outside of the imperial family.
Muhteşem	<i>muh-teh-shem</i> - Magnificent. Also an epithet used to described Sultan Süleyman by his western counterparts.
Paşa	<i>pa-sha</i> . A high ranking Ottoman (governmental official).
Şehzade	<i>sheh-za-de</i> . The equivalent of a prince - any male descendant of the Sultan or the sultan's sons. Şehzades had equal chances of claiming the throne but were subject to fratricide until the 17th century.
Sultan	The most commonly used title in identifying the leader of the Ottoman Empire. The title also refers to female members of the imperial household (by lineage or marriage).
Valide	<i>Vah-lee-deh</i> from the Arabic والدة (walidah), meaning mother.
Vizier	<i>vi-zeer</i> . The highest political and administrative ranking member of the Ottoman court, in what today's equivalent may be a Prime Minister.
Yüzyıl	<i>yooz-yıl</i> . Century.

Turkish characters

ğ	(silent g) for instance tuğra is pronounced too-ra
ş	sh as in she
ü	oo as in tune

APPENDIX 2

Clip information on scenes selected for semiotic visual analysis

<u>Theme 1: Power: Scene 1</u> Sultan Süleymans accession to the throne at the Topkapi palace, Istanbul.	Season 1, Episode 1 0:09:40 - 0:11:06 (96 seconds) 19 shots 0:11:49 - 0:13:08 (95 seconds) 27 shots Available: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBxXN3HyBcg [Last consulted 16 August, 2013].
<u>Theme 1: Power: Scene 2</u> The Battle of Mohacs, battlefield scene	Season 1, Episode 26 05:01 - 06:18 (96 seconds) (38 shots) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_EAxCIwLWo [Last consulted 16 August 2013].
<u>Theme 2: Islam: Scene 3</u> The Ottoman army in congregational prayer at a field camp before the Battle of Belgrade	Season 2, Episode 25 1:11:00-1:11:44 (44 seconds) 9 shots http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcW8DPjzjPo [Last consulted 16 August 2013].
<u>Theme 2: Islam: Scene 4</u> Hürrem Sultan in solitary prayer at the Topkapi palace, Istanbul.	Season 3, Episode 78 00:00:46-00:01:42 (56 seconds) (8 shots) Available: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfNG6P7YlMQ [Last consulted 16 August 2013].
<u>Theme 3: Ethnicity/diversity: Scene 5</u> Rustem Pasa's journey from Croatia to Pasa as a devsirime	Season 3 Episode 98 (00:06:10-00:08:35) (15 shots - double check) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEYOp8LxfFo [Last consulted 16 August 2013].
<u>Theme 3: Diversity/Ethnicity: Scene 6</u> The marriage of Malkoçoğlu Bali Bey with Jewish girl, Armin	Season 2, Episode 36 00:29:42 -00:31:04 (92 seconds) (26 shots) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8T_YPH9g2E [Last consulted 16 August 2013].

*This is a condensed version of the original, here excluding information of language, set, character, music, contextual information and so on.

APPENDIX 3

List of 45 countries where Muhteşem Yüzyıl is broadcast (excluding Turkey) and former Ottoman territories

1 Afghanistan	24 Libya*
2 Albania	25 Macedonia
3 Algeria	26 Mauritania
4 Azerbaijan*	27 Montenegro
5 Bahrain	28 Morocco
6 Bosnia and Herzegovina*	29 Oman*
7 Bulgaria*	30 Pakistan
8 China	31 Palestinian territories*
9 Croatia*	32 Qatar*
10 Czech Republic	33 Romania*
11 Djibouti	34 Russia
12 Egypt*	35 Saudi Arabia*
13 Georgia	36 Serbia*
14 Greece*	37 Slovakia
15 Hungary*	38 Slovenia
16 Iran	39 Somalia
17 Iraq*	40 Sudan
18 Italy	41 Syria*
19 Jordan*	42 Tunisia*
20 Kazakhstan	43 Ukraine
21 Kosovo*	44 United Arab Emirates*
22 Kuwait*	45 Yemen*
23 Lebanon*	

Source: M. Uzcan, personal communication, April 19, 2013.**

**Mert Uzcan is the head of operations for *Global Agency*, which distributes the series.

* Indicates former Ottoman territories or presences, bearing in mind this preceded the state system.

APPENDIX 4:

Seasons, episode counts and online viewing records

Season 1	Views	Season 2	Views	Season 3	Views
Episode		Episode		Episode	
1	3899960	25	1840935	64	1401649
2	2837298	26	1317902	65	1072688
3	1911057	27	1042794	66	1137212
4	1662429	28	962116	67	913233
5	1402085	29	1119004	68	895030
6	1481717	30	1010280	69	997553
7	1355777	31	1100209	70	1043026
8	1199165	32	1069156	71	894809
9	1232244	33	902395	72	783882
10	1122603	34	1090143	73	941400
11	998091	35	1126775	74	982487
12	952459	36	996044	75	899318
13	1000567	37	1163812	76	945092
14	996338	38	1248509	77	1044073
15	1097835	39	1220184	78	771734
16	1007759	40	1259024	79	1100896
17	976367	41	1360204	80	1117025
18	945087	42	1402378	81	718529
19	1001415	43	1527394	82	653459
20	1190556	44	1321733	83	762653
21	895087	45	1394385	84	1056365
22	927077	46	1293994	85	826544
23	897784	47	1388801	86	865655
24	1059855	48	2091002	87	555181
Total Season 1	32,050,612	49	1403873	88	897949
		50	1478982	89	1551767
Season 1	16 over 1 million	51	1268053	90	1174370
Season 2	36 over 1 million	52	1332732	91	686915
Season 3	10 over 1 million	53	1017604	92	578941
		54	1161480	93	536103
Most popular	Episode 1	55	1711969	94	667590
Least popular	Episode 102	56	1738348	95	525159
		57	1461028	96	486939
		58	1270274	97	364618
		59	1360000	98	368635
		60	1357286	99	428270
		61	1259917	100	591829
		62	1309812	101	393721
		63	2714724	102	190734
	Total Season 2		52,095,255	103	426788
			Total Season 3:		32,249,821
Total Views	116,395,688				
Average	1,130,055				
Source: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD9D3768EAFE629B					
Last checked: 3 August 2013					

Appendix : 5 Muhtesem Yuzyil Soundtrack Vol.1 2013

Original (Turkish)	Translation
1. Muhteşem Yüzyıl Jenerik 2. Dönmek 3. İktidar Oyunu 4. Ceng-i Âli 5. Savaş 6. Luli (Ninni) 7. Saltanat Dedikleri 8. Hatice'nin Aşkı 9. Bismişah 10. Aynı Göğün Altında 11. Mahidevran 12. Mohaç 13. Parga'dan Beri 14. Sarayda Entrika 15. Evvel Zaman 16. Akıncının Aşkı 17. Aşk-ı Derun 18. Nenni Desem Uyurm'ola 19. İhanet 20. Yirmialtı Saat 21. Hasbahçenin Güllü 22. Hanedanın düşüşü 23. Ayin. 24. Zahir Batın 25. Pirlere Niyaz Ederiz 26. Masumiyet 27. Üç Kıtada 28. Bade Saba (Seher Yeli) 29. Ağıt 30. Demir Yumruk 31. Suud 32. Deliler 33. Hain Pusu	1. The Magnificent Century Opening Theme 2. Return 3. Power Games 4. The Supreme War 5. The War 6. Hürrem 's Lullaby 7. What They Call The Sultanate 8. Hatice's Love 9. Bismişah 10. Under the same sky 11. Mahidevran 12. Janissary Song 1 13. Ever Since Parga 14. Intrigue In The Palace 15. Once Upon A Time 16. Love Of Akinci 17. Deepest Love 18. Hatice's Lullaby 19. Betrayal 20. Twenty Six Hours 21. Rose Of Hasbahce (Privvy garden) 22. The Fall Of The Dynasty 23. Ritual 24. Janissary Song 2* 25. Kalender Sah's song 26. Innocence 27. In Three Continents 28. The Dawn Wind 29. Lament 30. Iron Fist 31. Suud 32. The Crazies 33. Ambush Of Traitors

Muhteşem Yüzyıl Vol.1 (Orijinal Dizi Müzikleri) *Original Soap Opera Music* . URL:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/album/muhtesem-yuzy-vol.1-orijinal/id646983262> Last consulted 16 August 2013.

Electronic MSc Dissertation Series

The Media@LSE Electronic MSc Dissertations Series presents high quality MSc Dissertations which received a mark of 72% and above (Distinction).

Selected dissertations are published electronically as PDF files, subject to review and approval by the Editors.

Authors retain copyright, and publication here does not preclude the subsequent development of the paper for publication elsewhere.
