Framing Violence

Framing Violence:

Conflicting Images, Identities, and Discourses

Edited by

Banu Baybars-Hawks

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This book is dedicated to the loving memory of my father,
Necdet BAYBARS…
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CHAPTER ONE

FRAMING DECENTRALIZED, INDIVIDUALIZED AND MEDIATIZED VIOLENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

SARPHAN UZUNOĞLU AND BANU BAYBARS-HAWKS

As a major theme in mythology, drama, literature, and popular culture; violence and terrorism have become trending topics in both the political and media spheres recently due to the rise of new actors all around the world. Every day we are faced with a new story of violence driven by states, individuals or non-state actors. We learn more about new organizations or individuals that instrumentalize violence with various motives.

The most important characteristic of violence that people agree on is that it is intentional. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (WHO 2002).

If we Google the term violence, according to statistics that we come across in Google Trends, the leading subjects are "violence—TV genre," "domestic violence—field of study," while leading search terms are on "domestic violence," "domestic," "women violence," and "violence against women." Violence, according to Google – one of the most global manifestations of the new media world – is mostly conceptualized as domestic forms of violence. However, these are not the only definitions of violence. When talking about violence, we refer to different categories such as physical, non-physical, warfare, and others. Violence is in every aspect of our lives. It is nearly impossible to finish a political conversation without mentioning the role of violence or violent actors—especially in

conflict zones. From interpersonal relations to international politics, the role of violence has gained a critical importance. However, violence in the political sense is mostly studied and conceptualized as "terrorism." While there is no consensus on the definition of the term within the scholarly community, "terrorism" is generally seen as a politically motivated form of violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience (United States Department of State 2003, xii). In order to understand the concept of violence and how violence is framed or mediated, we need to understand the perceptions of violence and how these perceptions have evolved.

The 20th century was a century of collective violence. Two great wars and many other wars and conflicts were experienced. It was reported by the New York Times that at least 108 million people were killed in the 20th century during wars (Hedges 2003). Technology-driven violence has also given birth to non-violent movements which enjoyed discourses that were mostly based on voluntary participation and decentralization. From Mahatma Gandhi to Martin Luther King Jr., the rise of violence caused the rise of counter-violence voices around the globe, and their movements received global sympathy and support, even political success in the short- and long-term. However, there are still dozens of wars going on around the world and violence has become more visible than ever. This condition depends in part on the representation or framing strategies regarding violence and technological impact. The 21st century marks the time when violence became decentralized and individual forms of violence became more visible through these new technologies, enabling the framing of violence to be easier for everyone, and changing the political context of the world regarding human rights. Non-violent, non-governmental organizations are gaining power, while armed non-state actors and individual or collective violence are also on the rise. Therefore, we cannot make a clear distinction between the 20th and 21st centuries but we can talk about decentralization and the borderlessness of violence, which are key factors when talking about how violence is framed.

The post-9/11 world of the 21st century is still traumatized by violence but it is not alienated by it anymore. With emerging anti-terrorist governmental security strategies and the redesign of social life, different forms of violence are now a routine form of news content, and such forms are at the center of political conversations in new media spheres. Therefore, violence is not framed only by the media any more: mediatized cultures and the increasing use of new media technologies by the masses caused the emergence of new techniques framing each form of violence. In

terms of politically motivated violence or terrorism, the borderlessness of conflict and the structure of organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are observable in social networks. Today, thousands of messages directly supporting the acts of ISIS are shared on social networks (Narin and Ayaz 2016). There is a global network of people who communicate with each other via different social networks. From the PlayStation network to local social networks, violence is openly supported or manifested.

This is what makes framing violence in today's media sphere more difficult than ever. Snapchat or Instagram posts from the conflict zones are posted thousands of times each day and neither governments nor scholars have sufficient resources to study or analyze this kind of data, which are a result of physically decentralized but highly concentrated networks that grow day by day. Researching violence and conflict can be challenging for many reasons, including security risks to researchers and sources, restricted or lack of access to informants and field sites, and the poor reliability of official data. Likewise, research on framing violence is also difficult to do according to the decentralization and augmentation of media landscapes as exemplified below. Before explaining how these new difficulties emerged, first we should define how violence was traditionally framed.

How is traditional media used to frame violence?

Politically motivated and decentralized violent attacks all over the world are still dominating the global media agenda while terrorism and violence are mediatizing themselves through new strategies, gaining the sympathy of new audiences. Traditionally, these stories of violence and terror raise issues of conflict, power, and human integrity. Mass media simplify and standardize these stories, put them on a cultural assembly line, and build them into a daily ritual for nearly every home. Exposure to violence begins in infancy and continues throughout life. News content about war has become standardized, and visuals and information about war have become traditional news content. The saturation of modern cultures with mass-produced images of violence and terror becomes constant and inescapable. Since this is so, research on selective exposure, preferences, and perceptions may have only marginal significance. Studies of exposure to media violence reveal a limited number of influences such as the availability of different media and genres, socio-economic status, gender, and some selection patterns. Schramm's (1949) study on the reading of the news showed two basic preference patterns: stories yielding immediate

reward (crime, corruption, accidents, disasters, sports, recreation, social events, and human interest), and those yielding delayed reward (public affairs, economic matters, social problems, science, education, and health). Higher levels of education led to an increased interest in delayed reward stories.

Most of the popular works about the representation of violence in the media were focused on the 20th century's American media sphere. Noam Chomsky has had an important role in helping us to understand the framing strategies of different forms of political violence by the media. Warfare, as the most recognized form of violence, is framed in mediascapes in problematic ways. Chomsky (2010) proposed that the American media during the Vietnam War were focusing more on why the United States (US) was not that successful in war rather than why war was a bad choice in the first place. This is basically a traditional perspective on mainstream media in the modern sense. Mainstream media organizations position themselves to be a representative of national interests, which is an ethically questionable approach. For instance, in the occupation of Iraq, mainstream media companies constructed a hegemonic discourse in line with the official government and military accounts of the conflict (Burrows 2013). Rather than questioning the results of the violence committed by every actor involved in the conflict and its social outcomes, mainstream media organizations mostly tend to frame the conflicts and wars as subjects regarding successes and achievements of the armies. Most of the time, due to national interests, the results of warfare violence were not covered by mainstream media organizations (Siegler et al. 2008). Media mainly focused on framing the political achievements of the war rather than the outcomes of the violence. This perspective is still not outdated, but with its dominant focus on political forms of violence and its focus on centralized types of wars, it is still missing the *zeitgeist* (soul of the era). However, Chomsky (1995) also proposed that American culture has always been driven by violence, stating that the power structure and economic system were based essentially on the extermination of the native populations and the control over slaves. Chomsky also referred to the American culture as a culture of violence and this term can be used to define the contemporary global culture. From video games to the content of the Internet, tools of violence or violent content are becoming more and more available and new generations are born into this culture of violence. This provides a different narration of violence than the violence we observe in daily national newspapers and magazines. This is problematic as it has been found that there is a positive relationship between playing violent games and aggressive behavior, decreasing the prosocial behavior

level of people (Anderson et al. 2004). From the Deep Web to other black market zones, acts, visual materials, and tools of violence became more reachable for millions of people who have basic new media literacy skills. It is nearly impossible to combat against such violence-motivated new media organizations, as one of the major characteristics of these terrorist websites is their ability to manage the rapid changes of Internet addresses (Lewis 2002, 114).

Why do we need to study more than conventional media to see how violence is framed?

Based on the facts outlined above, we should analyze more resources in addition to the traditional media outlets with atypical research methods, and we should not only depend on the platforms that are assumed to have content related to politics or violent actors. We need to admit that each media sphere can represent or reproduce violence. Accordingly, conventional research methods are insufficient to understand how violence is framed in the new media sphere or how media itself has become a tool for organizing violent acts. As terrorism is now mediatized and has gone across the well-known structures of traditional media, not only has the content of the violence changed, but also the ways that the framings of violence are reproduced or consumed.

What is new about framing violence in the 2010s?

Our basic understanding of violent conflicts is influenced by the interpretative frames in which they are placed. The selection of a level of explanation for contemporary violent conflict is a serious political act in the sense that representations have political implications. The way in which violent incidents are coded and categorized will play, intentionally or not, a role in casting blame and responsibility. From colonial racism, to the Cold War, and to the War on Terror, different systems of "knowledge" have all produced "authorities" who define and interpret local incidents of violence, but also, and more importantly, act upon these interpretations. The portrayal of a bar room brawl as an "ethnic clash," car-burnings in French suburbs as the "new intifada," and sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria or Iraq as "a weapon of war" are examples of how violent acts are increasingly framed in terms that are removed from—but certainly feed into—the local settings in which they occur. Conversely, violence is not a geographically limited agenda or a theme that can be explained only through physical forms or political

motivations. While politically motivated violence is still the one most frequently represented in conventional media, new and contemporary forms of violence are experienced in digital spheres or financial markets. Even different forms of art are used as forms of violence (Moody 2007). Due to this variety, violence has been discussed in various disciplines ranging from literature to computer programming studies. However, most of the works regarding violence in media studies should be questioned in order to gather a rational understanding of how to frame violence in the media sphere.

What should we be careful about in our media studies on framing violence?

Media's role in framing violence should not be caricaturized nor reduced into a massive effort or contribution by the sinister. There are also some points that need to be addressed under this context. For example, demonizing the media is not the best method for counter-violence action or strategies. The media are also influential counter-violence instruments, and traditional subjects, conceptions, and themes in violence studies are not sufficient to respond to the nature of violence that is experienced globally.

Chapter Contents

The chapters in this volume explore many of the questions that have arisen regarding violence. As a result of the emergence of new forms of violence, the mediatization and new conceptualizations of violence have also begun to be studied. *Framing Violence* provides case studies across an array of geographies while also proposing some theoretical and conceptual explanations. This book is divided into three parts. The title of the first part is "Framing Violence and Conflict in Pop Culture."

Part I

The first part starts with the chapter of Çağrı Yalkın. Her chapter, titled "Vicarious Violence: Fear of Occupation and Gendered Consumption of Turkish Soap Operas", discusses the gendered aspects of the reception of Turkish soap operas in the ex-Ottoman cultural field. Yalkın focuses on the present-day fear and remembrance of the Ottoman occupation in the Balkans where the Turkish entertainment industry is currently gaining more power. Observing the behaviors of soap opera consumers in the Balkans, Yalkın proposes that the fear of the invader and the ethnic and

cultural "contamination" associated with it has been sustained. While the reception and consumption of soap operas can be different across the Balkans, these soap operas create a new platform to negotiate their contested common history.

In the chapter carrying the title "Outmoded Evils: A Longitudinal Analysis on the Arab-as-villain in Post-9/11 American Action Cinema," Lennart Soberon focuses on the enemy images in the post-9/11 entertainment industry, and how the Middle East has been exoticized in Hollywood. Proposing that Arabs are still portrayed as villains through a genre-defined role, Soberon provides a detailed analysis that underlines that Arabs no longer occupy the space of Hollywood's villain of the week.

In Chapter Four, Liam Harte elaborates on how terrorist violence is narrated in popular culture. Harte, in his chapter titled "Evil, Necessary and Otherwise: Narratives of Terrorist Violence in Popular Culture," claims that news frames and genres of fictional terrorism narratives resemble each other and that there are three main categories available: Violence as an always unjustifiable issue, violence as necessary for radicalization, and lastly, using violence in an emergency situation to fight terrorism. Analyzing several movies, he states how these themes in counter-terrorism narration are old and omnipresent, and concludes that these frames produced by popular culture tell us how to consume the news.

In Chapter Five titled "Legitimacy at 24 Fps: How *Zero Dark Thirty* Negotiates the Death of the Other," Charlotte Bence discusses the representation of the legitimacy of death in war films, focusing on how *Zero Dark Thirty* signals a shift in how scholars conceptualize the relationship between law and violence. Bence's main focus is on how a prisoner of war, accused of supporting terrorism, is turned into *homo sacer* (the accursed man) so that the act of torture is permitted within the law.

Part II

The second part of the book is composed of the chapters dealing with how violence and identities are framed in legal structures and the media. The sixth chapter of the book is titled "The Future of Law: Escalating Conflicts and Country Perspectives." In her chapter, Banu Baybars-Hawks explains the relationship among terrorism, media and the law, observing the legal spheres in the US and Turkey. She argues that incidents of terrorism appeared to be the primary justification used by both the Turkish and American governments to impose restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms. Emphasizing the importance of a healthy balance between national security and individual rights and freedoms, Chapter Six ponders

on the possible negative outcomes of anti-terrorist laws, such as not respecting the fundamental values of modern democracies.

In "From Economic Consequences to the Personal Impact Frame: Representation of Turkey in the German Media," Çiğdem Bozdağ and Ebru Turhan clarify how Turkey is framed in the German media. Focusing on the media framing of the German mainstream press for Turkey since early 2013, the authors argue that there has been a sharp turn in the framing of Turkey by major German newspapers. Paying particular attention to the similarities and differences of framings between the right-wing and left-wing newspapers on the representation of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government and the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the authors note an increase in the negative tonality in the German media in relation to Turkey.

In Chapter Eight, "Whose Violence?: Frame Analysis of International Papers," Efe Sevin questions the framing of violence with reference to its impact on public diplomacy. Sevin examines the media portrayals of violence and identity during the Ferguson shooting and the subsequent protests by the international press. The research unpacks the relationship between a country's official international communication attempts—or public diplomacy—and the media frames used by the foreign press.

In Chapter Nine, "'Permission to Narrate' and the Palestinian Politics of Representation through Digital Media," Olga Solombrino focuses on Palestinian politics of representation, emphasizing the importance of the permission to narrate for everyone in the digital sphere. Solombrino sees the configuration of the new media environment as the new space for expression and self-representation, contributing to a demarginalization and a reaffirmation of the identity and agency of Palestinians.

In Chapter Ten, Aşkin İnci Sökmen studies the role of foreign fighters in the Syrian war. Looking into the complex structure of the civil war where multiple groups are involved, Sökmen highlights the impact of foreign fighters whose numbers are believed to be about 25,000 people from more than 100 countries. In this chapter, Sökmen defines and states the push and pull factors involved in becoming a foreign fighter.

Suncem Koçer, in Chapter Eleven, explores the representation of women who fight against ISIS by transnational media institutions. Koçer examines the YPJ (Women's Protection Unit), which represents 35% of the YPG (People's Protection Unit) forces fighting against ISIS. While the broader dominant media frames are embodied by representations of women fighters in Kobane, it is stated that the historical construct of these women is based on difference, namely as sexualized, exotic, and oriental or "abnormal" objects, while they are also functioning as publicizing

subjects. Koçer suggests that the Western publics, who were attracted by the images of female guerrillas fighting against ISIS, are now following the Kurdish stance in the Syrian war.

In Chapter Twelve, titled "Representations of Violence against Women in the Turkish Press: 5W1H Components and Discourse Analysis," Ayten Görgün Smith and Lidia Peştemalcıoğlu investigate representations of violence against women in the Turkish press. Observing 5W1H components and analyzing the discourse in Turkish newspapers, this chapter underlines that the discourse practiced in the news covering violence against women legitimizes and normalizes "violence against women," by using dramatic and romantic words in the headlines.

Part III

The third part of the book focuses on the new conceptualizations in violence studies and covers chapters analyzing artistic expressions of violence. In Chapter Thirteen, Sarphan Uzunoğlu takes precarity as a form of financial violence in decentralized digital markets and media spheres. Underlining the importance of assured labor, Uzunoğlu proposes that the digital sphere as a globally reachable market is open to financial exploitation, which enables financial violence to be practiced free from borders, laws, and other similar limitations. Emphasizing the evolution of production processes and the rise of social networks, Uzunoğlu points out the shift from consumerism to prosumerism.

The fourteenth chapter of the book carries the title "Insanity, Violence and Crisis: Cinnet Exhibiton." In this chapter, Gürkan Mıhçı elaborates on his first solo exhibition called *Cinnet.* "Cinnet" is a Turkish word related to violence and insanity. He uses this term as a metaphor for the capitalist society. Mıhçı reveals how the capitalist society is in a crisis and how this crisis causes insanity and violence.

In Chapter Fifteen, Çınar Narter and Serkan Bayraktaroğlu focus on the social aspects of terrorism, specifically looking at design. Narter and Bayraktaroğlu aim to identify prominent designs that specifically focus on security, how security concerns determine the use of these objects, and how these designs address security needs in public areas.

The final chapter of the book, titled "Challenging Identities Between Conflict and Negotiation", is written by İrem İnceoğlu. The study is based on data collected during a civic initiative project called BAK, which is designed as a cultural collaboration and exchange project. In the chapter, she analyzes the role of effective communication and collaboration between the young adult BAK participants from eastern and western cities

in Turkey, focusing on everyday life discourses including the ones in relation to food, gender, city, and memory. She concludes by arguing that communication involves the creation, construction, and interweaving of situated meanings and discourses not only towards external settings but also towards the internalized ones during encounters in the BAK project.

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PART I.
FRAMING VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT IN POP CULTURE

CHAPTER TWO

VICARIOUS VIOLENCE:
FEAR OF OCCUPATION AND GENDERED
CONSUMPTION OF TURKISH SOAP OPERAS

ÇAĞRI YALKIN

Introduction

The aim of this study is to understand the gendered aspects of the reception of Turkish soap operas in the ex-Ottoman cultural field. To accomplish this, the focus is on the present-day fear and remembrance of the Ottoman occupation in the Balkans. The Turkish entertainment industry was a 6 billion USD business in 2008, and has achieved a major player status in the Balkans and the Middle East as a result of the airing of the show, *Noor*, which triggered a Turkish soap opera mania. The Turkish soap opera, *The Magnificent Century*, is watched in 43 countries by over 200 million people (Rohde 2012). Around 100 Turkish soap operas are exported to North Africa, the Balkans, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America.

The post-colonial Ottoman area is conceptualized as a cultural field, a notion borrowed from Adrian Athique (2008). He suggests using the cultural field as a structure for locating media communities as a site of social practice. He conceptualizes a media audience as the inhabitants of a cultural field: this community is formulated as a population constructed through its participation in the production, distribution, or consumption of a media artifact (Athique 2008). Bernard Lewis (1992) also notes that the early Ottoman Empire recruited its slaves from the Balkan Christian population. Consequently, some people in the Balkans still hold negative sentiments and fear toward Turkey and Turkish cultural goods such as soap operas.

Literature Review

Historically, today's nation-states that are (geographically speaking) in the ex-Ottoman sphere have had troubled pasts with the Ottoman Empire. According to Suhnaz Yılmaz and Ipek Yosmaoğlu (2008), the Ottoman legacy did not invoke a positive image in the countries that were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the Middle East. For example, the tense relationship between the Orthodox Balkan countries and Turkey took the form of the hated neighbor truism (Miscevic 1999), as a consequence of ethno-religious tensions dating back to the Ottoman times and minority rights issues within the past century. The Turkish Foreign Ministry's goal of "zero problems with Turkey's neighbors," which was popularized by the former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's book *Strategic Depth* (2001), aimed at a new era of foreign policy that sought to overcome the conflicts between Turkey and its neighbors. *Strategic Depth* suggested that Turkey functions as the center of the last non-Western civilization basin and claims that Turkey does not have any imperial agenda, and that Turkey's relationships with the former Ottoman regions are reminiscent of Japan's influence over the Eastern Pacific region (Davutoğlu 2001). However, by claiming Turkey as the center of the last non-Western basin, this agenda ran the risk of positioning Turkey as the potentially hegemonic party, which was also accentuated by Turkey's history as the former Ottoman Empire.

Noting this potential avenue for tension, the reception of Turkish soap operas in the Balkans and the Middle East has been studied from a variety of perspectives. International relations interpreted the rise of Turkish soap operas in the ex-Ottoman sphere as a manifestation of Turkey's expanding influence in the region, with an underlying neo-Ottomanist restoration (Fisher Onar 2009). Brljavac (2011) interpreted the export of Turkish soap operas as Turkey's attempt to enter the European Union through the Balkan doors. Dimitar Atanassov (2013, 41), in his extensive review of the image of Turkey and Turkish society in Bulgaria, noted that the "Turkish series are not only mediation tools. They have considerable meaning creation potential–position, reserved for academic players on the field in the past" and that the Turkish soap operas were able to deal with the hard nationalistic narratives by meeting the Bulgarian audience's expectations, regional representations, and cultural richness and depth.

The question of hegemony has also been studied in previous consumer culture accounts of Turkish soap operas (e.g. Buccianti 2010; Yalkin and Mumcu 2012) and warrants further evaluation. In order to figure how this presents itself in the gendered aspects of the reception of soap operas, the

focus will be on how consumers perceive and negotiate the prevalence of Turkish soap operas, as "the standard soap themes are family interrelations, romantic triangles, money, and its relationship to power, and social issues" (Allen 1995, 6). According to Jennifer Hayward:

> Soaps keep their viewers coming back by skilled appropriation of serial techniques that have existed for centuries. For example, like Dickens they draw heavily on theatrical plotting and in particular on the 19th century 'well made play' production and consumption strategies. (1997, 134)

One property of soap operas is that they function as resources that are drawn on for use in everyday life (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1995; Spence 1992), which may explain their popularity in the tense ex-Ottoman cultural sphere. Stephen Crofts (1995) charts the cultural conditions such as price, scheduling, local mediascape, unemployment, and publicity that turned the Australian soap opera *Neighbours* into a post-colonial success in the United Kingdom. Miller (1995) studied the consumption of *The Young and the Restless* in Trinidad and uncovered how the soap opera transformed the nature of everyday gossip. Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz (1990) found that Israeli viewers used *Dallas* as a site to reflect on their identities by being morally, playfully, ideologically, and aesthetically involved, and that Russian immigrants in Israel watched Dallas not only to admire the wealth and drama, but to also ridicule American values. Opposing sentiments such as acceptance/resistance, hatred/fascination, and consumption yet rejection may also be present in the reception of Turkish soap operas in the Balkans.

Method

Online ethnography, termed netnography (Kozinets 2002), is the online study of consumer communities. As an anti-consumption or resistive context, an online forum dedicated to everything about the Slavic world named *Slavorum* (www.slavorum.com) has been identified. This website has had heated debates on what the positive reception of Turkish soap operas meant for the Balkans and some Slavic countries. Online communities such as *Slavorum* are tangible for participants (Kozinets 2010, 12):

> Because culture is unquestionably based within and founded on communication […] online communication media possess a certain ontological status for their participants. These communications act as media of cultural transaction—the exchange not only of information, but of systems of meaning.

Since *Slavorum* "writers" build and exchange their own systems of meaning over time, what has been written on the topic has now become the culture of this online community. The discussion on http://www.slavorum.org /forum/discussion/comment/44626/#Comment_44626 was followed for an extended period of time for the purposes of netnography. The writers' nicknames have been removed; only their genders are indicated.

Findings

The findings indicate that (anti)-consumers interpret the shared troubled past by consuming or non-consuming soap operas, and that their reception takes two forms: 1) The male interpretation focuses on the memory of the Ottoman invasion as violence and resistance; and 2) The female interpretation focuses on the issue of female empowerment.

Memory: Occupation and Slavery

The argument that soap operas were a form of soft power quickly found similar and counter arguments in that the prevalence of Turkish soap operas on Bulgarian television (TV) was a new form of hegemony (see Yörük and Vatikiotis 2013). One of the contributors to *Slavorum* thought that Turkish soap operas were the tools through which the Turks mentally occupy and enslave the Slavic ethnicity, likening the average TV viewer to a garbage can. This is very similar to the accounts of viewers in Ien Ang's (2013) study on the consumption of *Dallas*, where the show was dismissed and condescended to precisely because it was mass culture. While other discussants point out that they are surprised that the Slavs, especially from Bulgaria and Serbia, would be watching these shows, these soap operas are perceived on the whole as an attempt of the neo-Ottomans to wield soft power and to change the Slavic people's opinions about the Turks. Some opponents suggested banning the soap opera, *The Magnificent Century*, which revolves around the life of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent and his wife, Hürrem (Roxalena), as the only solution suitable to combat the contamination created by these Turkish productions:

> I don't see anything racist with wanting to ban turkish [*sic*] shows in Slavic countries. Slavic countries should not tolerate TV shows that promote the culture and country that has occupied them for centuries […] We don't want turds [*sic*] or ur [*sic*] degenerate culture in our countries. Nor do we have anything in common with u [*sic*] mongrels. (Male)

Turkish soap operas are treated somewhat like black magic, mentally seducing and occupying the Slavic people's minds, modifying the existing (mutual) animosities: "Holy Christ...Slavs are under total mental occupation. Even places like Russia and Serbia which in my opinion were the most unfriendly towards turks [*sic*] are being mentally enslaved by neo-Ottoman propaganda machinery" (Male). The informants are reminded of the real occupation through the mental occupation with soap operas. Especially in the case of *The Magnificent Century*, the anti-consumers see the consumers as allowing themselves be subordinated:

> Words [like] gâvur and animals [are] mentioned about 20 times in the episode. Even the son of Suleiman constantly was shouting, "My father will kill you all non-believers." I can't explain why in Europe [it] is allowed to watch this especially like [*sic*] Serbia, Bulgaria, Russia and even Greece. (Male)

For some, the consumption of these soap operas is a way of glorifying the Ottoman occupation of the Balkans: "I have no idea why Bulgaria would have a soap opera glorifying the annexation of the Balkans. The Ottomans were responsible for pushing one Slavic group against another as part of the divide and conquer game" (Male).

According to John Storey (2010, 32), "culture industries produce a 'repertoire' of goods in the hope of attracting an audience." John Fiske (2002) notes that in Michel de Certeau's (1984) terms there is a semiotic guerilla warfare going on as the audiences resist such television texts. The idea that popular culture is a site of struggle is reflected in the case of the (anti)-consumption of Turkish soap operas.

Gendered Empowerment vs. Enslavement

The 57-minute documentary called *Kısmet* (Paschalidou 2013) follows the journey of Turkish soap operas across the Balkans and the Middle East, documenting how the consumption of soap operas act as empowering vehicles for the female viewers, differently so but to the same end result in Bulgaria and the United Arab Emirates. On the surface, one interpretation of the reception of Turkish soap operas was that it served as an inspiration for female empowerment. However, in some Middle Eastern countries, Turkish soap operas were perceived as "wicked and evil" (see Hammond 2009) prompting Saudi Arabian clerics to threaten the TV professionals of the channel that imported the Turkish soap opera *1001 Nights* with a *fatwa*. Similarly, in Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, religious authorities have challenged the consumption of