TELEVISION'S LEGITIMATIONS: AN OVERVIEW OF LUXURY CONSUMPTION, ILLEGALITY, AND STEREOTYPES IN THE SERIES BABİL

TELEVİZYONUN MEŞRULAŞTIRDIKLARI: LÜKS TÜKETİM, İLLEGALİTE VE KLİŞELERE BABİL DİZİSİ ÜZERİNDEN BİR BAKIŞ

Ayça GÖKDEMİR

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Ayça GÖKDEMİR [1]

Keywords:
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ABSTRACT

Consumerist patterns of behaviour reproduced by the media industry appear on our screens almost constantly; together with this content, our habits, attitudes and behaviours are influenced. Both social media platforms and enduring traditional media outlets abound with messages that inject consumption and popular culture into public consciousness. Undoubtedly, these contents influence the reception of the masses; in particular, they lead to dramatic changes in traditional values and consumption habits. Television series, essential actors in the diffusion of consumption and popular culture, deserve to be studied regarding the messages they convey regarding this transformation. To this end, this article conducts a critical discourse analysis of the television series Babil.The article analyses 22 scenes from the first 9 episodes, during which it consistently topped the ratings. The findings reveal that Babil promotes the typical consumption patterns imposed by today's capitalist socio-economic structure, glorifies wealth and the implementation and legitimizes any form of illegality undertaken to achieve it. The series reproduces the stereotypes of wealth versus poverty, tradition versus modernity and sexist stereotypes, and legitimizes the fact that people may have to integrate into the capitalist consumer society, even to the point of comitting fraud, using the justifications of life-threatening illness and perceived injustice, while ignoring the fact that this is a moral degradation.

ÖZ

Medya endüstrisinin yeniden ürettiği tüketim odaklı davranış kalıpları, ekranda neredeyse her an karşımıza çıkmakta; bu minvaldeki içeriklerle beraber, alışkanlıklarımız, tutumlarımız ve davranışlarımız etki altında kalmaktadır. Gerek sosyal medyada gerekse popülerliğini koruyan geleneksel medya mecralarında tüketim ve popüler kültürü enjekte eden sayısız içerik yer almaktadır. Kuşkusuz bu içerikler, kitlelerin alımlamalarına etki etmekte; özellikle de geleneksel değerler ve tüketim alışkanlıkları üzerinde dramatik dönüşümlere yol açmaktadır. Tüketim ve popüler kültürün yayılmasında önemli bir aktör olan televizyon dizileri, söz konusu dönüşümle ilgili verdiği mesajlar bakımından irdelemeye değerdir. Bu amaçla makalede, Babil adlı televizyon dizisinin eleştirel söylem analizi yapılmaktadır. Analiz çerçevesinde, önemli görülen 22 sahne çözümlenmektedir. Yayınlandığı ilk 9 bölüm boyunca reytinglerde zirve yapan dizi, günümüz kapitalist sosyo-ekonomik yapının empoze etmeye çalıştığı tipik tüketim kalıplarına; yüceltilen zenginliğe ve buna ulaşmak için her türden kanunsuzluğun uygulanması ve meşrulaştırılması anlayışına yönelik mesajlar içermektedir. Zenginlik-yoksulluk, geleneksel-modern, cinsiyetçi klişeleri yeniden üreten dizi, insanların kapitalist tüketim toplumuna entegre olmak zorunda kalabileceklerini ve bunun için dolandırıcılık yapılabileceğini; ölümcül hastalık ve haksızlığa uğrama gerekçeleriyle meşrulaştırırken, bunun bir ahlaki yozlaşma olduğu gerçeğini göz ardı etmektedir.

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INTRODUCTION

Consumption is meeting our basic needs and determining our social position, creating a class identity, and creating a sense of belonging. The mass consumption of non-essential products and its mass consumption, which emerged with capitalism, brought along the understanding of consumption culture. Consumption culture shapes and transforms our habits, traditional values and social roles. As a result of the industrial society, humans are the subject of consumption culture (Kula, 2012, p.513). In this process, the role of the media is central. Since it emerged as an audiovisual medium, television has added a new dimension to mass media and has assumed a vital role with its countless content that encourages consumption. Unlike the news media, the target audience of television, with its thousands of channel options under the entertainment umbrella, covers a wide range. The pillars of the sector, channel-producer-advertiser[2], are also effective in encouraging consumption in line with the profit maximization target of the capitalist media economy.

In the capitalist economy, in times of entertainment, recreation and leisure, much of the content on TV, especially TV series, encourages necessary or unnecessary purchasing and consumption behaviour. We use the word fictionalized because the lives, events or needs shown as accurate on the screen are full of false realities, images and clichés produced by the capitalist economy using the media industry. Aksoy and Narmanlı reveal that the uniformization created by the culture industry is visible in the content of prime-time series. They state that the series, which tells a love story about a rich girl and a poor boy or vice versa and luxurious lives in mansions, presents similar stereotypes (Aksoy & Narmanlı, 2019, p. 545). As supported by the literature below, especially series that focus on wealth and making/spending money, which depict luxurious lives, also play a role in encouraging the consumption of the audience.

Çelenk (2010, pp. 21-22) mentions that the adventure started with a French TV series in 1972 in Turkey, and in a short time, domestic TV series came on the scene. She says that it became a phenomenon in the late 1990s and 2000s and was broadcast in the generation after the main news bulletins of major television organizations, thus taking the form of evening entertainment for the Turkish audience. We can expect the audience, whose leisure time and evening hours after work are spent in front of the television, to be naturally influenced behaviourally, culturally and mentally by the content they see on the screen. However, this is part of the literature, and we present various examples of this effect-response relationship in the first section. This article focuses on the reflections of consumer culture in TV series. The article analyses a critical discourse in the case of the television series Babil, which deals with the capitalist economy and the consumption culture and changes it brings with it.

In the series, the life of a professor, who is slandered and therefore dismissed from his job, is turned upside down when his child is caught in a relentless disease. The surgery required for his child's recovery is very expensive, and the professor's circumstances are not enough to afford it. The main character, who becomes a desperate father figure, first borrows money from a mafia with his friend's encouragement and then establishes a Ponzi system that will defraud many wealthy people, including the mafia. The series contains countless messages stating that science, goodness, and loyalty are worthless while money, power and wealth are valuable. Although the series deals with the harsh realities of the capitalist consumer society and the displaced traditional values, the narratives that legitimize and naturalize the elements of fraud and violence in the script require a critical evaluation of the series. This study analyses 22 scenes of the series, of the first nine episodes with high ratings, that are appropriate for the study. The clichés of the rich-poor contrast are revealed: the father who takes illegitimate ways because his child is sick, passive women who want to be rich, the evil mafia, the dishonest friend, and the conflict between the mafia's mistress and his jealous wife. Segments encouraging consumer culture, exaggerated displays of wealth, normalization of moral degeneration and sexist stereotypes are among the prominent findings of the study.

2 For details: Karaboğa, 2016.

Reproducing Consumption Culture: TV Series and Stereotypes

Consumption, an essential part of human life, is the result of physiological, economic, social, cultural, and political needs (Torlak, 2016, pp. 28-29). The consumption phenomenon, which has been an essential part of human life since ancient times, has gained a new dimension with capitalism. In pre-capitalist societies, the production-consumption relationship, which stood in a balance to meet people's basic needs, has evolved into unreal needs and mass consumption created with capitalism. ‘In other words, goods are produced for authentic needs and for meeting different needs’ (Yanıklar, 2010, p. 26). Non-essential goods that emerged after capitalism and industrialization created consumer and mass culture concepts.

Consumer culture, which is characterized by the fact that consumption has become the centre of social life and cultural values, means much more than economics. Consumer products also have symbolic and cultural meanings (Kula, 2012, p. 511). Beyond the material use value, symbolic value meaning is attributed (Bocock, 1993). Another result of consumption culture is the understanding of 'leisure time'. With mechanization, the decreasing need for the workforce has created a surplus of time, and the creators of the consumer society fill this process, which they describe as 'free' time, with practices that encourage consumption (Kula, 2012). At this point, the concept of mass culture comes into play.

In the most general definition, the content created by the mass media and disseminated to the masses is defined as mass culture. Adorno and Horkheimer defined this as the Culture Industry. According to them, the culture industry refers to a system that tries to uniformize different levels of art, turns the masses/consumers into commodities, manipulates their consciousness and fills the mass media with content in line with the aims of the powers that direct the culture industry (Adorno, 2003, pp.76-77). Social media, television series, movies, and digital series platforms play a role in cultural transfer (Mertoğlu, 2024, p. 43). The vast majority of the masses referred to here are within the economic parameters representing the lower-middle class of society.

In cases where economic insufficiency restricts cultural activities, television becomes a cheap means of leisure time activity. Those who cannot access other artistic and cultural activities for various reasons find satisfaction in television (Dağtaş, 2009, pp. 120-121). Television series offer consumption products with their characters and advertisements. However, it also directs people on what to consume in their free time and how to buy products and services(Karaboğa, 2016, p. 206). Among the mass media, especially the TV series and entertainment programmes broadcast on television, which are preferred by large segments of people today due to their audiovisual nature, are seen as an area where individuals can fill their 'free' time by having fun and getting away from the problems of life. However, this situation can go beyond entertainment and reach a level that can affect the target audience's consumption habits and behaviour in social life, even their ideologies and world views. What we are talking about is not always a positive influence. Because TV series, one of the building blocks of mass media, contains many stereotypes (Yaktıl Oğuz, 2000). As Adorno (2003) refers to, the cultural, social and economic domination of the dominant group is spread through these stereotypes.

In recent years, the number of TV series with rich life fiction has increased in Turkey. The target audience, a member of the middle-lower economic class, is affected positively or negatively by the content they constantly see. At this point, it is necessary to mention TV series, especially those in prime time, which are usually watched by the whole family together. In addition to commodities such as excessive money, luxury cars, servants, violence, sexuality and intrigue, stories are abundant (Aksoy & Narmanlı, 2019; Dağtaş, 2009). Karaboğa lists typical scenarios in TV series as follows: 'social issues and problems such as poverty, love, wealth, violence, war, heroism, gender, family, justice, health, education, religion, youth, murder, theft, suicide etc.' (2016, p. 187). Banu Dağtaş (2009) categorizes the types and contents of television series in Turkey under five main headings: Family TV series, community TV series, Singer-Artist TV series, TV series centred on working life and business relations, and TV series focusing on the lives of the rich. He also states that, especially in the 2000s, there was a

significant increase in series about 'luxury life'. In these series, the characters also appear before the audience with certain stereotypes. Especially the roles assigned to women include dozens of stereotypes that reproduce the dominant social structure and discourses.

Varlı Gürer and Gürer (2020), analyzing women's roles in Turkish TV series, reveal that women are generally represented as devoted mothers and wives, education and career are not enough, physical beauty is emphasized, and older women reflect the masculine language as traditional women who maintain customs and traditions. In another study, Aytekin (2018), based on the Yaprak Dökümü series, states that stereotypes are produced in the form of housewife/housewife who maintains traditional domestic roles, the woman who advances in class and attains wealth thanks to her marriage, the woman who seduces a man but still needs male protection. The findings of Sucu and Çolak's (2022) study on women's stereotypes in the TV series Acı Hayat' and 'Masumiyet' show that women are positioned through their honour their bodies and presented in passive forms, such as being deceived and not being able to express themselves, while men are represented through power, authority and success in business life.

In their 86 Turkish TV series analysis, Aksoy and Narmanlı (2019) argue that stories, characters, messages and music repeat each other. Beautiful/handsome actors, rich girl-poor boy stories, characters with similar characteristics, and messages on goodness-truth-honesty are common themes in the series and do not have different qualities. Tarhan and Karakoç (2020), who made a semiotic analysis of the series Hatırla Sevgili and Sevda Kuşun Kanadında, reveal that ideologies have become commodities through TV series. As an object of consumption, physical products and ideologies become popular cultural products.

TV series/film characters, who are a point of attraction with their appearance, demeanour and clothing, also affect the audience's consumption habits. According to the results of Karaboğa's (2016) study on the relationship between series characters and consumption with 400 people in Mersin province, consumption products offered through series characters attract a large part of the target audience and are especially effective on young people and women.

Production companies, TV channels and advertising companies also play a role in determining content that will increase consumption within the scope of economic interest relations. Kula, who analyses the production of consumption culture in TV series, examines ten Turkish series that are night soap operas and reveals that the main characters influence transforms the consumption habits of the masses from their lifestyle to their clothes (Kula, 2012). According to the results of Arslan's (2015) study on the series 'Medcezir' and luxury consumption, the clothes, luxurious lives, vehicles, and belongings of the series characters affect the consumption behaviours of the audience and direct people to consume.

Apart from this, it distracts the target audience, who want to get rid of the internal conflict created by this class distinction, from real life by presenting them with distorted formulas that the way to earn easy money is either 'doing illegal jobs' or 'having a rich wife'. The TV series 'Babil', which is the subject of this study, is essential both as a typical example of a TV series dealing with a luxury lifestyle and as it has a scenario that offers tactics to earn money through illegal means.

METHOD

In this study, a critical discourse analysis approach is adopted. "CDA is characterized by the common interest in demystifying ideologies and power through the systematic and reproducible investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken, or visual)" (Wodak, 2014, p. 303). Critical discourse analysis is essential in qualitative communication research. Critical discourse analysis, which is based on linguistic studies, interacts with other disciplines such as rhetoric, anthropology, philosophy, social psychology and literary studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p.1). The critical approach argues that discourse cannot be independent of ideological, economic and political aspects. Critical studies on discourse often emphasize social and political issues. Not only are discursive structures analysed, but social interaction and structural features are also evaluated. Focusing on topics such as the abuse of power, legitimizing, affirming or reproducing relations of domination. This analysis has an interdisciplinary outlook (van Dijk, 2015, p. 467). Wodak states that critical

discourse analysis in the context of the critical theory tradition examines social inequalities and differences at the discursive level. This method is used to identify linguistic elements that spread and legitimize discrimination and inequality (2014, p. 311). The aim is not to decontextualize words; on the contrary, it involves the evaluation of discourse together with existing power relations (Kazancı, 2002, p. 81)

Critical discourse analysis does not have a specific theoretical framework (van Dijk, 2015, p. 468). It does not have a particular methodological direction; on the contrary, the studies are pretty diverse and address different theoretical backgrounds, data and methodologies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 5). As van Dijk emphasizes, it is a type of analysis that includes concepts such as power, domination, hegemony, ideology, class, gender, discrimination, social structure/order, etc. and examines the use of discourse to reproduce social domination (2015, p. 468). Fairclough (2003) also placed social analysis at the centre of this analysis. However, regardless of the subject matter, approaching events from a critical perspective, revealing hidden power and power relations and producing results constitute the common aspect of these studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 20)

Purpose and Limitations

This study aims to critically analyse the messages given by television, which has a significant impact on social change and is still the evening entertainment of a large audience, and to make an academic contribution by presenting a cross-section of the current situation. The study conducts a critical discourse analysis of the television series 'Babil', which includes the changing consumption habits and new value standards injected with the capitalist economy and its reflections on social life. The series, which ranked first in the ratings (Star TV, n.d.-c) in the EU audience group for nine episodes since its broadcast, deals with a faculty member's experiences in becoming a part of the unethical competition brought about by capital and capitalism. In this process, I found it worth examining as it contains sequences that reveal the shocking changes in capital becoming the most critical value in our age and the degeneration of traditional values, male-female relations, and labour-labour concepts.

The series started on January 17, 2020, on Star TV and lasted for 20 episodes. In this study, I selected the first nine episodes as a sample. Since each episode lasts an average of 2 hours, it is not possible to examine and include all sequences in the study; therefore, I limited the analysis to 22 plans that include encouraging consumption, sexist stereotypes, and traditional-modern, rich-poor contrasts. I analysed four scenes from episodes 1 and 2, and 2 scenes from each of the other episodes. The number of scenes analysed here differed from the others, as the first two episodes contain more explicit scenes to explain the scenario. Fairclough states that discourse has a textual aspect in interviews, television programs or websites that include verbal expressions and written texts (2003, p. 3). Therefore, I transcribed the episode on television. I analysed each plan under Scene, Tirat/Dialogue and Analysis titles.

Series Plot and Characters

Ay Yapım produces the series. The director is Uluç Bayraktar. The characters in the series are as follows (Star TV, n.d.-a):

İrfan (Halit Ergenc): Founder of the fake company Babil, former economics professor

Eda (Nur Fettahoğlu): İrfan’s wife.

Deniz (Beren Kasımoğulları): İrfan and Eda's 8-year-old son.

Egemen (Ozan Güven): İrfan and Eda's childhood friend.

İlay (Birce Akalay): İrfan’s ex-girlfriend, businessman Suleyman's mistress.

Süleyman (Mesut Akusta): Rich and mafia businessman.

Ayşe (Aslı Enver): Undercover cop.

Kudret (Veda Yurtsever): Süleyman's wife.

An idealist economics professor, İrfan, while expecting to rise in his career (to become a dean), is fired from his job due to the slander of another colleague who sees him as a rival; in the meantime, his son is struggling with a brain tumour and needs urgent surgery. When he needs money for this costly surgery, İrfan's life is turned upside down

when he becomes unemployed. İrfan cannot find a response to his request for help from anyone he goes to. İrfan's wife, Eda, asks for help from a character named Egemen, who is their childhood friend. Egemen is a middle-aged, unemployed man whose life is full of failures and obsessed with money; therefore, he suggests a dark path to help İrfan and his family. He convinces İrfan to borrow money with interest from a mafia leader named Süleyman. Meanwhile, Süleyman, who is married to someone else, is together with İlay, who is also İrfan's ex-girlfriend; İlay and Egemen continue their friendship. İlay, an economics consultant, survives after the collapse of her business and with the support of her client Süleyman, and at the end of the day, becomes his mistress. Süleyman's wife, Kudret, knows who İlay is and attempts to kill her. Finally, Ayşe is an undercover cop assigned to solve Süleyman's dark deeds (Star TV, n.d.-b).

FINDINGS

Episode 1

Scene 1: The series starts with a speech İrfan makes in front of a mirror. İrfan is a faculty member who has been fired from his job. He angry because he has been unfairly put in this situation.

***İrfan (*1 min. 17. Sec..):** "You say that the most important thing in life is peace, family and health, but it is not like that! Everything is money! What keeps a person's head up, what makes them look like a man, and what makes their children look at their faces with peace is money!... I advise you never to fall; if you do, all the doors will close in your face. All those you call your friends and relatives will not even answer your phone. You will hit rock bottom. I know because I have seen that rock bottom, and I made a decision. This World is an unfair, mean and despicable place. And I will destroy this World. Living like a human being is your right and mine, and I will take what is rightfully mine."

Analysis: The series' central theme, fraud, is legitimized by being disguised with injustice. While referring to injustice with these discourses, feelings of revenge and hatred are emphasized. The sub-message that every person who has been wrong can resort to unofficial means to take revenge is seen.

Scene 2: **(47. min.):** İrfan, who is in urgent need of money due to his child's illness, goes to Süleyman, a loan shark and mafia, with his friend Egemen and asks him for a loan.

Süleyman: 'Look, you have been a university lecturer, but life has brought you to a man like me, a primary school graduate.'

Analysis: This statement, which is likely to shake the concept of education to its foundations, contains a message that there is a connection between having wealth and illegal activities. A narrative of contrast between the two is created by putting capital and capital against science and education. On the other hand, this contrast is against education and science. Instead of engaging in scientific activities or receiving an education, engaging in illegal activities is presented as a way to get wealth quickly.

Scene 3 (1 hour 6 min.): They need to go to America for the treatment of Deniz's brain tumour, but it is very costly. To cope with this situation, Egemen plans to commit fraud. Thinking that the money is distributed unfairly, Egemen says they should get their fair share by cheating.

Egemen: 'This money that you didn't save your son's life, they spend it like peanuts. Their mistresses' cars are 1 million liras. They don't live in houses worth 1 million; their employees do. They buy watches for 1 million! Their ex-wives' alimony is 15 million. Tea here costs 20 liras. They eat, 1000 liras.'

Analysis: This tirade describes the life of İrfan's son and the fact that these rich people do not even have a month's expenses. However, in the background, the child's struggle between life and death is turned into a tool for legitimizing the fraud. Having money means becoming a part of the wheel of consumption in our age, buying prestige, and buying an image. In the capitalist system, consumption appears not as a need but as an object of desire (Bocock, 1993). Although İrfan resorts to this only for his child, his friend Egemen uses the child's illness as a cover for his greed for consumption.

Scene 4 (1 hour 22 min.): Egemen tries to convince Süleyman to go abroad to cheat him. For this, he uses the anniversary of Süleyman and his beloved İlay as an opportunity because Süleyman is undecided about the gift to buy for İlay.

Süleyman: 'I want to buy a necklace for İlay, but she doesn't like it'

Egemen: 'Then go abroad. Something sophisticated that İlay will like'.

Süleyman: 'Something light in weight and heavy in cost'.

Analysis: The necklace worth tens of thousands of liras is too ordinary for this wealthy businessman to give to his girlfriend. They have repeatedly used and consumed such commodities and searched for new ones. These exaggerated scenes create false realities and manipulate the audience.

Episode 2

Scene 1(15. min.): When Süleyman realizes that İrfan and Egemen have cheated him, he takes them both to a construction site and wants to kill them by pouring concrete. Realizing this, İlay reports Süleyman to the police because he killed a security guard working at his workplace. The police arrive at the scene and take Suleyman to the police station.

Police: 50,000 TL were found in the murdered man's house. He's a security guard. Where would he get that kind of money? Only if he stole it from you, Mr Süleyman.

Süleyman: 'No one stole anything from me. Besides, am I going to kill him for 50 thousand TL? Look at who is sitting in front of you and speak accordingly.'

Analysis: This dialogue, written to emphasize how rich Süleyman is, also underlines the difference between poverty and wealth. Class differences are revealed by showing the money Süleyman does not intend to earn, as if a security worker could not earn it but only by stealing.

Scene 2(1 hour 34 min): Süleyman's wife, Kudret, comes to İlay's house and insinuates that she is with her husband for money. She says that she wants to talk a little. She aims to make an offer to take İlay away from Süleyman.

Kudret: 'You are not fresh; one day, you will wither. What will you do when Süleyman gives up on you? He'll buy a car, let's say, a house at most. And a few jewellery items. Then what?'

İlay: 'The value Süleyman gives me is more than you can imagine'.

Kudret: 'Are you going to eat and drink the value he gave you when you get old? I give you more than Süleyman gave you.

Analysis: There is the cliché of offering money to save one's husband/wife/child from poor and manipulative people. The sequence clearly shows that people are treated as commodities. On the other hand, the discourses of a car, a house, and a few jewellery items are presented as simple things for Süleyman's lover, but in real life, they are products that require lifelong work for many people. Both women being with the same man is shown as normal behaviour for wealthy men. The fact that Kudret comes to the house of her husband's lover and her lover is with a married man refers to moral corruption and reproduces the patriarchal system. The expression 'You will be worthless when you get old' reveals that women are treated as commodities in this male-dominated system. Values such as love, affection, and happiness are disregarded as if they were only indexed to money.

Scene 3: İrfan and Egemen prepare for the fake company they are trying to establish. In the meantime, they distributed an invitation for the launch, written in gold on anthracite paper, with the following words: 'You are invited to our rich club'.

İrfan **(1 hour 45 min):** 'Babil is the Sumerian word for the gate that scatters gold and money.'

Analysis: The meaning of Babil, which gives its name to the series and refers to money, contains the most crucial explanation for the scenario. Even the series' title reproduces the indispensable value of capital in the World.

Scene 4 (1 hour 52 min): İrfan, afraid of lying to people and making false promises at an event organized to gather investors for Babil, throws himself into the sink with the help of Ayşe (a secret police officer who infiltrates the company disguised as a secretary). While washing his face and hands, Ayşe takes out a paper towel, but he wipes his face with a handkerchief from his pocket.

Ayşe: 'Is that a cloth handkerchief? I thought it was wiped off the face of the earth with the dinosaurs, but...'

Analysis: Clean, ironed cloth handkerchiefs have become a nostalgic. The fact that handkerchiefs are used by almost every segment of society and that a cultural element has become a despised object is the most important example of

our changing consumption habits. It is possible to interpret paper napkins, which are suitable for throwing away, as a symbolic indicator of tangible and intangible values consumed and thrown away, especially identities.

Episode 3

Scene 1 (10. min): Süleyman wants to punish his wife, Kudret, for trying to kill his lover, İlay. Kudret is out shopping, but since Süleyman has taken away her chauffeur-driven car, she waits for a taxi with shopping bags in her hand; at that moment, a minibus honks its horn.

Kudret: 'Go away, I don't leave it to you, repentance estaghfurullah'.

Analysis: As if getting on a minibus is horrible and shameful, she repents, whereas a large part of the society uses public transport. With this expression, public transport is belittled and creates a disgusting effect, especially on young people, who are the target audience of television.

Scene 2(18-21 min.): İrfan comes to pay the instalment of his debt to Süleyman.

Süleyman: 'Why did you cheat me if you could make money?'

İrfan: 'The answer is obvious, I had no other choice, I had to. Think about it: why don't so many hungry and desperate people commit fraud while you live in such prosperity?"

Süleyman: 'If you ask those losers, I am a good person; that's why they say so; they are not good; they are cowards. The courageous one gets what he wants; the strong survive, not the good.'

Analysis: İrfan made a sentence complaining about the inequality in income distribution and social justice. Süleyman's response to him, 'the strong survive', is the most vigorous defence of the mainstream narrative. This sentence, which corresponds to the 'social Darwinism' approach that we can say is used to mask the class inequalities in society, underlines the understanding that trivializes the poor and replaces all values with capital and the new corrupt and distorted values (greed, fraud, evil, etc.) brought by it.

Episode 4

Scene 1 (49. min.): While İrfan and Egemen are having dinner, they are looking for ways to keep those who invested in the fake mining company in the system. Meanwhile, a conversation about the use of Internet technology starts between them.

Egemen: 'I have spent years on this. The most important way to attract people there (to the internet) is jealousy. Everyone is jealous of each other's lives— their watches, cars, houses. For example, a lady lost weight and posted her video on Instagram. Watch out, all her friends will lose weight in a week. We need environments, people, riches that will create such envy.'

Analysis: As is known, one of the most critical characteristics of consumer society is 'selfish' individuals. Popular culture, which creates individuality, also brings selfishness with it. Era, the importance of the internet, where the link between the exaggerated presentation of consumption and selfishness finds a place and spreads to broader masses, is shown.

Scene 2(1 hour 21 -33 min.): A party is organized to collect investors for Babil, and Eda also wants to go to this party. However, she complains that she has no clothes to wear. About ten minutes later, she went to the store to buy clothes, and when she saw that the dress she liked was 1300 TL, she tried to steal it.

Eda: 'No, no, no, I have nothing to wear. Mrs İlay will dress up elegantly now. I will stay there like a poor person going to the wedding of a rich relative'.

Analysis: In this scene, the main elements of consumer culture, such as having more than one outfit, not being satisfied with what you have, and the concern of following fashion and waste, are emphasized. On the other hand, Eda stealing the dress because she has no money conveys jealousy and greed and 'stealing if necessary' to achieve her desires and normalize this situation.

Episode 5

Scene 1 (14. Min): There is an explosion in İlay's office. İrfan, who had gone to see her, sees the incident and calls

an ambulance. Hearing this, Eda rushes to the hospital where they are and enters İlay's room. Eda's feet appear on the stage. She noticed that İlay looked at her feet. Eda is wearing shoes that are too big for her -probably her sister's- because she left in a hurry with the fear that something has happened to her husband, and her red socks are seen through the casual and old shoes that she steps on the back heel.

Analysis: The most critical aspect of this scene is to reveal the class inequality between two women who love the same man. After the scene of stealing a dress, such an incident puts Eda in a highly embarrassing situation. But the point that is not understood is here: İrfan's character is, after all, a university lecturer. Even though everything was taken away from him at the last minute, at least he has clean and untorn shoes from the past.

Scene 2 (39th Min.): İrfan puts the money deposited in Babylon into a bag. Then Egemen speaks.

Egemen: Love, romance, family, health, the secret of everything fits in this bag. Everything I have been running after all my life, all the dreams I could not get, everything that hurt me is in this bag.

Analysis: We see the emphasis on the fact that money can buy not only commodities but also intangible things that belong to human beings (emotions, joy, sadness, even health).

Episode 6.

Scene 1 (30. Min): To keep İrfan under control after he defrauded him, Süleyman moves İrfan and his family to a villa in his complex. They are forbidden to go out the door without permission. İrfan goes to the grocery store because there is nothing to eat at home. Meanwhile, there is an argument about the shop with the guards at the gate.

İrfan: 'Did Mr Süleyman say they can't go to the grocery store?'

Bodyguard: 'What's left to go to the grocery store? Pick up the phone and tell him to come from the application.'

Analysis: In Turkey, the grocery store (Bakkal) has become a part of the culture and is one of the indispensable elements of the neighbourhood. Therefore, it still exists as a lifestyle in the communities of Anatolia that have not undergone urban transformation. In this series, on the other hand, 'Bakkal' is portrayed as an outdated and outmoded structure, and the guard has a mocking expression on his face and insults this institution.

Scene 2 (13. Min): Süleyman visits the construction site. The weather is rainy and everywhere is muddy.

Süleyman: I told İlay I am a builder, what do I need shoes worth 8,700 liras for?

Analysis: In this sentence that Süleyman complains about, we see the imbalance between the value given to the commodity and the value given to human beings. Of course, it can be considered normal for people to prefer comfortable products in their working environment. However, the emphasis on the price of the shoe reveals that the difference between the producer and the owner of capital in the capitalist system is evident even in a shoe.

Episode 7.

Scene 1 (7. Min): İrfan tries to escape to America with his son and his wife for his son's operation, but Egemen tells Süleyman about this plan. They get into a fistfight.

İrfan: 'You sold me for money; you threw my son's life into the fire for money. raitor!'

Egemen: 'I sold you, I sold you. You threw me in front of Süleyman; you sold me out.'

İrfan: I didn't betray you. You were supposed to wait two weeks; two million more would come after two weeks, but it wasn't enough for you. You were my brother. But you put my son's life at risk because of your greed. Car, to live in this pile of concrete (apartment)?

Egemen: ‘What concrete? What car? My sister forgave me because I did things a bit better. My father, who hadn't called me for years, asked about me. I could have sold you on the first day if I wanted to, but I didn't.

Analysis: Egemen agitates by saying that his family reconciled with him because he earned money and that they showed interest in him. Thus, he dramatizes his betrayal. On the other hand, there is a reference that the value given in human relations is measured by money. In the family,

the cornerstone of our society, members support each other and cope with problems. In this series, Egemen represents a character who has no profession, resorts to illegitimate means to make a living and is unpopular in society. Under normal circumstances, his family should condemn him for earning money through theft and fraud, and therefore, they should not see him. However, the series conveys that people who earn money by any means are valued by their families and society.

Scene 2 (58- 59th Min): Egemen advises his young employee about human relations.

***Egemen*:** First of all, you will have a network, you will like everyone, you will like people, but not for nothing. These message groups are significant, you will never leave them empty, you will say hello from time to time, you will say auspicious holidays and so on...

Analysis: The advice that Egemen tries to give is that human relations are interest-oriented. To like means to be liked, to have a vast network, to keep people with whom you have a potential relationship of interest at your fingertips. This tirade reveals that capitalist relations displace traditional values.

Episode 8.

Scene 1 (24. Min): Kudret knows that his son has feelings for Ayşe. She goes to her house to get to know her better and to see if she is around for her son's fortune. The house is in one of the middle-class neighbourhoods of Istanbul. While talking to her son on the phone, Kudret says some words about the girl's poverty.

Kudret: 'The girl looks like a good, well-balanced person, but they are poor, son'.

Analysis: The house is designed in a way that most of the people in Turkey live. It is not very big and does not have excessive luxury items, but it is clean and obviously at a level that meets the needs of the people living there. Kudret despises this house. However, it cannot be compared to the magnificent house where the character Kudret lives in the series. Only three people live in a much bigger house than they need. In the face of this ostentatious life, they despise those who live everyday lives.

Scene 2 (56 Min). Egemen receives a call from one of the shopkeepers in the neighbourhood. He says they want to put money in Babylon, where the ultra-rich invest money, according to their budget.

***Egemen*:** The gold business is not that simple; it takes much work abroad.

Tradesman: When the markets are in turmoil, the leaves are not moving in the shop. We say let us go in together with our tradesmen friends. How about 10 of us get together and put money on you?

Egemen: OK, yes

Tradesman: We will get 10% of what we deposit monthly, right?

Egemen: Exactly! You earn more than the money you invest.

Tradesman: Egemen, brother, you are dripping with honey.

Analysis: The scene refers to the fact that people of all economic levels, whether they are ultra-rich or middle-income shopkeepers, have a passion for making money the easy way, and for this sake, human values, rights, and even the teachings forbidden by belief systems are postponed in this system dominated by capitalism.

Episode 9.

Scene 1 (1 hour 09- 17 min.): Flashback is 2 years ago. The company founded by İlay went bankrupt because of her partner, and she lost all her savings. Süleyman had previously offered her a job. İlay accepted the job offer after bankruptcy.

Analysis: İlay is Süleyman's mistress. This flashback explains why an educated, successful woman is a man's mistress. It reproduces the patriarchal stereotype that, although she is a wise woman who stands on her own feet and has established her own business, when things go wrong, she is dependent on the patronage of a man. Therefore, despite all her social status and education, she depends on a man. Here, İlay's past life success is overshadowed.

Scene 2:

There is an explosion in İlay's office. Kudret organises this.

İlay (1 hour 36 min.) 'Mrs Kudret blew up my office'.

Servant (fe.): 'Mrs İlay, I don't understand, isn't this woman a housewife? Housewife gossips at worst. What does it mean to blow up an office?

Süleyman (17. min. (Episode 10): 'I thought he was making pickles at home, he's arson with a woman's mind'.

Analysis: While it is often emphasized that Kudret is a housewife, it is explained that she should have a passive and domestic character according to the dominant norms. Süleyman reproduces the male-dominated discourse by discussing Kudret's 'female mind'. The discourse of the young girl responsible for İlay's cleaning is more striking when she says, 'a housewife is the worst gossip'. The fact that the cleaner makes such a derogatory sentence even though she is a woman herself is a typical indication that the masculine language also affects women who are not aware of it. In addition, this character normalizes gossip as a moral problem and as something innocent.

Dichotomy in Series

There are various contrasts in the series: Rich-poor and modern-traditional. Since people become objects of consumption in consumer culture, sexist discourse is also prominent.

Table 1. Dichotomy

Elements of Wealth	**Elements of Poverty**
Mansion, butler	Apartment
Shoes worth 7,500 TL	Casual Shoes
A suit 40,000 TL	A suit 200 TL
Luxury wheels	Public transport
Entering the house with shoes on	Take off shoes at the door of the house
Traditional	**Modern**
Bakkal (grocery store)	Online shopping
Cloth handkerchief	Tissue paper
Tea in a glass cup	Coffee in a paper cup
Gender Streotype	
Inferiority	**Superiority**
Mistress	The selfless mother/wife who was cheated on
woman's reason	man's reason
Cleaner/housewife	Businesswoman

CONCLUSION

The Babil series is a production that draws attention to the fact that in the capitalist world, money/wealth and the power it brings are the only means for people to survive, to be respected and to assert their existence; in this system, concepts such as education, science, loyalty and love have become worthless. The series critically deals with many illegal businesses and actions that are masked under the guise of the cruel realities of the capitalist world. The idea that illegal, unethical and immoral behaviours are legitimised and normalised with justifications such as revenge, survival, and having the best is at the series' heart. Since the main character is a professor, it is shown that even science can be used as a tool for fraud: unjust income distribution, social corruption and erosion of values (Torlak, 2016). The main character İrfan responds to this injustice by committing illegal acts at the expense of his own moral and scientific ethical principles. While the character İrfan and his close friend Egemen defraud people through a Ponzi scheme by establishing a fake company, İrfan's wife steals a dress just because she aspires to a luxurious life; in summary, theft is constantly justified, even though the amount and reasons change.

In the consumer society, a link is established between individuals' social class and status and the products they use. Mobile phones, cars, clothes, and restaurants indicate class position and meet material needs (Karaboğa, 2016, p. 184). To show this class distinction, we see that everyday things are presented as an exaggerated form of poverty. An average apartment, where the majority of the country lives, is treated as a slum, and entering the house with shoes is touted as a sign of elitism. Taking public transport instead of luxury cars (Episode 3) is belittled by the characters. Excessive luxury consumption is glorified by putting ordinary ones in front of a pair of shoes and a suit costing tens of thousands of liras. Süleyman's character's thinking of costly jewellery as a gift, Eda's wanting to buy a new dress even though she has other clothes, Egemen's line '2 thousand lira meals are not considered expensive for the rich' reveal the reality of 'waste' injected into people by the consumer society, from the poor to the rich. Thus, with the analogy of 'wastebasket civilization' discussed by Baudrillard (2008), another example is added to the issue of unnecessary consumption and wastefulness.

Transformations in capitalism affect every aspect of the life of society (Fairclough, 2003, p. 4). Considering that the most significant aim of this system is to maximize profits, the monopolies that own the mass media are dominated by the understanding that reproduces dominant values through this means, corrupts and tries to overthrow the standard, worthless tradition (Adorno, 2003). In this context, various elements in the Babil series present prejudices against the traditional. Shopping at a Bakkal or using a cloth handkerchief is called 'anachronism'. While tea is traditional and vulgar, coffee is transformed into a drink emphasizing status as a popular culture. The placement of the intangible 'value' against the tangible 'money' draws the most attention in the series. What we mean here is cultural, social, familial and ethical values. The dialogue between Kudret and İlay (Episode 2) explains this. It is emphasized that commodities money can buy are more valid today than values such as love, love, loyalty and respect. On the other hand, there is a similar situation in the dialogue between Egemen and İrfan in Episode 7. Egemen complains that his family respects him only because of the commodities that can be bought with money.

There are many stereotypes on television. Stereotypes related to gender roles are numerous (Yaktıl Oğuz, 2000, p. 36). Throughout the series, there are often scenes where women are turned into commodities. İlay, who is labelled as someone's mistress, is valued only for her body/physical features, and she cannot run the business she has established on her own and can earn money thanks to Süleyman, another man. The one who produces the most sexist discourse against İlay is another woman, Kudret. Süleyman's wife and a housewife, Kudret -despite her existence in society only with the role of being a man's wife- commodifies another woman without hesitation. Süleyman makes a derogatory statement like "woman's mind" after Kudret attempts to burn down the house.

Until the 20th episode, the series focused on illegal business, the contrast between rich and poor, revenge and the struggle for survival with a focus on money and consumption. However, in the final episode, the evil characters are punished, while the main character is acquitted and returns to everyday life. In the last sequence of the final episode, the main character recites a tirade about the fact that money cannot buy values such as freedom, peace, family happiness and love. The series Babil has made a critical projection on consumer culture, sexism and marginalisation of the traditional. However, it emphasized the rich-poor distinction, integrated the opposition between the traditional and the modern into popular culture behaviours, gave dialogues glorifying uniformity, and reproduced gender stereotypes, such as women who cannot stand without the patronage of a man, in the capitalist system where everything is seen as a commodity, seeking solutions to problems through illegal means and normalizing this by presenting illness or injustice as justifications. The main message is that capital leads to social and moral degeneration. However, when these realities that the series seeks to criticise are combined with stereotypes, there is a risk that some viewers may take them as a guide instead of learning from the consequences of illegal and immoral behaviour. The possibility that the excessive portrayal of violence and illegality may lead to undesirable readings carries the risk that the central message of the series may be overridden.

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