

AT THE EDGE OF A NEW COGNITIVE MAPPING: ETHOS (BİR BAŞKADIR)

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ABSTRACT

The fact that the digital platforms in Turkey are a decisive force in content production (film and TV series) has enabled the production of freer and more creative content in several creative fields such as screenplay, narrative language, cinematography, costume/set design and acting in the context of TV series. The rules and pressures of the Turkish state agency RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme

Council) and the executives of traditional television channels have caused a tendency towards digital platforms in the audience. This article focuses on the Netflix series *Ethos* (Turkish title: *Bir Başkadır*), which aired in 2020. Within the framework of the concepts of nostalgia and cinematic mapping, the article aims to analyze *Ethos*' political plane, references, characters, and the social class/identity and lifestyles that the series gives voice to. While analyzing the hybrid narrative of the series, this paper attempts to reveal the cinematic mapping along with the characters, spatial representations and values that express them, and will discuss how the concept of nostalgia works and functions as a tool providing such mapping. In this context, we read *Ethos* as a call for confrontation for the new cognitive map, especially at a time when the desire of people to coexist has been seriously damaged due to polarization between them as a result of the government strategies and belligerent policies of the last two decades. The series employs a nostalgic gaze through a hybrid narrative to construct the vanishing present.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the TV series produced for digital platforms in Turkey have gained a significant importance. The widespread acceptance of digital platform mobility is considered the result, not only of technological factors, but also cultural changes (Tryon 2013). In this respect, digital platforms are a new global economic power operating both in distribution and production as a global actor (Lobato 2019). It can be argued that all the production and screening problems of the TV series sector in Turkey have seen progress in a positive way through this new economic power. Digital platforms have become a new production area for the creative workers of the cinema and TV series industry. Significant progress has been made in certain creative areas, such as screenplay, narrative language, cinematography, costume/set design and acting in the TV series made for these platforms. Digital platforms have also become a refuge for industry professionals and audiences who have grown tired of the pressure exerted by Radio and Television Supreme Council¹ (RTÜK) and the executives of traditional television channels. Unlike the series produced for television that lasted for years, elaborate productions with relatively different and freer content with less episodes, where the narrative was not extended to fill the airing hours, have enabled the middle-upper class audience in Turkey to use digital platforms (Gül 2020; Kaptan and Algan 2020). However, despite positive developments in the production area, Netflix removed access to an episode of the series *Designated Survivor* and canceled the series project *If Only* (*Şimdiki Aklım Olsaydı*) in Turkey due to the demands of RTÜK. This situation has been evaluated as censorship due to depiction of LGBTQ characters (Yücel 2020) and has increased the concern that productions on digital platforms may also be restricted.

One of the obvious trends in the TV series made for digital platforms such as Netflix and BluTV² is the focus on productions with a period atmosphere. For example, *Yeşilçam*³ (2021), directed by Çağan Irmak, has a meta-narrative regarding the inner workings of the film industry in Turkey in the 1960s that deals with the relationship between producers

and politics. The series *The Club* (*Kulüp*) (2021), directed by Zeynep Günay Tan (a number of its episodes are directed by Seren Yüce), focuses on the entertainment life of 1950s Istanbul and tells of a Jewish family whose story starts before the events of September 6-7⁴. *Ethos*, the 8-episode Netflix production made in 2020 and directed by Berkun Oya, focuses on Turkey's recent past. The series, which was screened at a time when everyone was locked in their homes due to the pandemic in Turkey, has been widely criticized because it deals with social breaking points and controversial subjects such as secularism, conservatism and ethnic identity in Turkey. Online academic meetings have also been held regarding this series.

Within the framework of the concepts of nostalgia and cinematic mapping, this article aims to analyze *Ethos*' political plane, references, characters, and also the social segments that the series gives voice to. The article will also analyze the characters through cinematic mapping using the values and the spatial representations expressing them. It will discuss how the concept of nostalgia works and functions as a tool that enables such mapping. Taking influence from Jameson, the concept of "cinematic mapping" proposed by Kellner (2010) as a mapping to represent historical/social events, individuals, character types, cultural norms and other defining features of a particular society can be an explanatory tool to comprehend both the series and the historical and cultural references on which it is based. We suggest that the concept of nostalgia can be seen as an element that connects social segments which are not in contact with each other in the series and which completes the cinematic map. The series includes many nostalgic elements: The Turkish title *Bir Başkadır* references the song "Bir Başkadır Benim Memleketim" ("My Unique Country"), which is familiar to almost all members of Generation X in Turkey; the music (pop-arabesque) of Ferdi Özbeğin in the credits; references to the 1970s cinema in its narrative aesthetics; and finally, the visual texture of the entire series. In this context, this article examines the visual/cinematic nostalgic tools of the bond that establishes itself between different social segments through cinematic mapping. In the article, the relationship between cinematic mapping and nostalgia will be established through visual codes and music.

1 Public institution that regulates and supervises radio and television broadcasting in Turkey.

2 Blu TV is Turkey's first local digital platform, established in 2015.

3 Yeşilçam, which is the name of the street where the offices of film companies were located in Istanbul before 1980, also refers to a production model and film style in the period of Turkish cinema when a lot of films were made.

4 The events of September 6/7 are the most severe attack in the history of the Republic against Christian and Jewish citizens of the Republic of Turkey living in Istanbul in 1955. These attacks, which caused great loss of property and life, were seen as the elimination of minorities from the demographic and economic structure (Güven 2011).

Many films and TV series that deal with the historical/social past in Turkey were also made before digital platforms. These productions used the past as a backdrop to create an atmosphere of a period or they confronted the past. During the period (1974-1975) when İsmail Cem was the general manager of the state-owned TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), this adventure started with the adaptation of works from Turkish literature made by Halit Refiğ, Metin Erksan and Lütfi Akad, prominent filmmakers of Turkish cinema. Starting with the 1974 adaptation of *Aşk-ı Memnu* (*The Forbidden Love*), directed by Halit Refiğ, and continued until the 1990s, many TV series of TRT became a field of confrontation due to the cultural policies and perspectives that changed with new governments. One of the most concrete and bitter examples of this is that the original 35 mm copies of Halit Refiğ's TV series *Yorgun Savaşçı* (*The Tired Warrior*), adapted from Kemal Tahir's novel, which were burned by the state even though the production was made by TRT (Duruel 2006). During the 1980s and 1990s, the TV series and literary adaptations dealing with the recent history of Turkey formed indispensable sources of Turkish television productions. Since the 2000s, Turkish TV series have found considerable interest from the foreign market, and they have become an important export item.

It is a common approach in Turkey to critically evaluate TV series as products of popular culture. For example, Kahraman (2007) states that it is difficult to make technical and structural innovations in TV series. They appeal to a middle-class mentality, and therefore they exhibit a structure that is easy to follow and not open to experimentation, which adheres to traditional, average and common morality. Although such productions are common on television and the criticisms have some justification, one can observe that different productions also find their place on television. Due to the bond that television dramas establish with large audiences, it is important to increase the number of TV series and popular productions that deal with social problems. The way these TV series approach social problems and historical events have been evaluated with different perspectives in Turkey. Using the TV series *My Heart Won't Forget You* (*Bu Kalp Seni Unutur Mu?*) as an example, Çelenk (2010) states that television, as a memory space, contributes to the strengthening of social memory, and draws attention to the possibilities it offers to confront the past. Emre Çetin (2014) focuses on the transformation of the TV series in Turkey in a politicized media environment, and through the TV series *Valley of the Wolves* (*Kurtlar Vadisi*, 2003–2005) and *Magnificent Century*,

Once upon a Time Ottoman: Rebellion (*Bir Zamanlar Osmanlı: Kiyam*) she emphasizes that politicization has become dominant and that the less powerful side is silenced by pressures and interventions. However, he also states that due to such politicization, the TV series which deal with social problems like *My Heart Won't Forget You*, *Behzat Ç.* (2010-2013) and *Lost City* (*Kayıp Şehir*, 2012-2013) have critical understandings of various social issues such as military coups, femicide, crime and immigration that open a space for the development of alternative voices. As Mutlu (2008: 184) points out, TV films/series not only dramatize social problems, but also publicly discuss these problems, thereby making them accessible. The power of television dramas to shape personal and social identities (Caughie 2012: 50) and their contribution to shaping the national imagination as a product of popular culture (Sandbrook 2015) are of great importance. It is also valuable as a space where the problems, wishes and cultural values of a society are clarified and negotiated (Steiner 2018).

2. RECENT HISTORY AND NARRATIVE IN *ETHOS*

2.1. Fault Lines of Recent History

Released on Netflix in November 2020, *Ethos* seems to take place today, but it draws a panoramic view of Turkey's recent history by referring to the 1980s and the 1990s in several scenes. The series builds its story on the fault lines of Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s through dualities such as secular and religious, Turkish and Kurdish, rich and poor, as well as center and periphery. In particular, using the secular, conservative and Kurdish identities in Turkey, it tells the encounter of different social segments that cannot be limited only to these identities. In this context, it gives the impression of a series made with the hope of reconciling a polarized society. The fact that the characters of *Ethos* and the elements that make up the atmosphere of the period come with anachronism and historical slips allows the reading of the series in the context of nostalgia. It also causes the structure, which cannot be separated from the present, to be questioned in the context of reality and fiction or representation and allegory relationship.

Ethos opens with the cleaning lady Meryem entering a luxury apartment with her key after coming from the periphery of the city and she faints while doing her daily routine. After the title of *Ethos*, which is shown over the chaotic view of

the city taken from an upper angle, we see Meryem sitting in front of the psychiatrist Peri at the state hospital. Behaving in a distant manner, Peri listens to Meryem, who tells her that she faints for no reason from time to time. However, Peri is bothered by Meryem's words when she says that she will not continue the sessions without getting permission from her mosque imam in their neighborhood. After her encounter with Meryem, Peri realizes that she distances herself from patients wearing hijabs and begins to question herself. In her routine meetings with her supervisor Gülbin, she tells her about Meryem. Meryem has impressed Peri with her intelligence and quick wit. However, for Peri, there is a wall that she needs to overcome that prevents her from establishing a healthy doctor-patient relationship with Meryem. This wall is the headscarf. In the face of this confession, Gülbin, who is of Kurdish origin, becomes uncomfortable with Peri's view of the hijab and identity, and drifts away from her. Gülbin also has her own problems. Her older sister Gülan, who wears a hijab that Peri is already uncomfortable with, is a newly rich, politically engaged conservative voter. The two sisters are constantly at odds over what is right for their adult brother at home, who was born with a disability (cerebral palsy) because their mother was hit whilst he was still in her womb. Gülbin tries to remedy the situation she cannot avoid by making love with the inept Sinan. Sinan, for whom Meryem works as a cleaning lady, is perhaps the most unsympathetic character of the series, living in a luxury residence and seemingly not working at any job. Although Sinan has a sexual relationship with Gülbin, he has his mind on the actress Melisa. The other person positioned opposite Peri, who will provide support for Meryem to find a way out spiritually, is the imam Ali Sadi. The imam is a mild-tempered man who gives general advice to everyone, and who leads a simple life with his wife and daughter; later in the series, it is revealed that the daughter is LGBTI. The older brother of Meryem, on the other hand, is Yasin, a former commando who works as a bodyguard in a bar. The story of Yasin and his raped wife Ruhiye proceeds in another direction. In short, in the series where Meryem's story is in focus, a portrait of Turkish people and their problems emerge with stories representing different socio-cultural segments.

In addition to attracting attention as a digital platform series, *Ethos* has been widely discussed in academic circles and in the popular media as it has triggered debates on the relationships, coexistence practices and problems of different social segments in Turkey (Çelenk 2020; Mollaer 2020; Kivanç 2020; Dellaloğlu 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; Taxidis 2021;

Özer and Gül 2021). These debates can be categorized under two main groups: the class-based political economy approach (Dellaloğlu 2020) and the identity-based allegorical, culturalist approach (Mollaer 2020).

Describing *Ethos* as an important series because of the hope and excitement it evokes, Özmen (2020) cites a series of opinions that summarize all its interpretations: On the one hand, *Ethos* "has a liberal/conservative perspective and embodies the liberal/conservative fantasy that does not give importance to the structural/class division in society and uses culture/identity issues instead". On the other hand, he expresses the thought that the series "brings structural divisions and class inequalities to the fore, and touches on some burning problems, such as the functioning of the capitalist machine, the Kurdish issue, trauma, and gender inequality". Özmen draws attention to a more fundamental issue in this dual structure: the originality of the series. He states that *Ethos* "(...) has a framework that calls us to confront ourselves and the other in ourselves, emphasizing that conflict and division are both between different subjectivities and within ourselves".

At another level, the series focuses on lifestyle, which has been frequently discussed in Turkey in recent years in the context of debates on class-identity (ethnic identity, sexual identity, etc.). Kalaycıoğlu (2012: 171-174) emphasizes that there are two contrasting images of "the good society" left to the Republic of Turkey from the Ottoman political legacy: On the one hand, those who form their lifestyles around the image of a good society that puts science and the human mind at the center; a secular perception of good society. On the other hand, those who prefer a lifestyle based on religion and tradition, a conservative perception of a good society. Although the concept of lifestyle has been frequently discussed in academic circles in Turkey with the phenomenon of consumption, it is also an area of discussion in contemporary politics. Kalaycıoğlu (2012: 174) emphasizes that the secularist-modernist center existed until the 1950s, changed rapidly since the 1950s and disappeared completely in the 1990s. Giddens (2001) states that while social classes still maintain their importance, traditional class distinctions are largely disappearing as individuals pursue various lifestyles that remove the boundaries between classes. Since lifestyle is influenced by factors such as demographics, social class, motivations, personality, emotions, family life curve, culture and past experiences, it provides a framework that also covers class-identity debates. Chaney (1996: 4) defines lifestyles as "patterns of action" that "help to make sense of what people

do, and why they do it, and what doing it means to them and others". It is possible to read the concept of lifestyle through class analysis (Bourdieu 1984) based on social status (Weber 1968) and cultural consumption. *Ethos* is the story of the encounter between the lifestyles of Peri, a secular, urban woman from the middle-upper class, and Meryem, a conservative, lower-income woman living on the periphery of the city. It makes the center-periphery paradigm (Mardin 1973) and its transformation visible. In Turkey, especially during the last two decades, these two lifestyles have been polarized and confronted (Erdoğan and Uyan Semerci 2018). In addition, the series also shows a clash of different lifestyles in the same family through the sisters Gülbin and Gülan.

The Turkish title *Bir Başkadır* references Ayten Alpman's song "Memleketim" ("My Country") ("Bir Başkadır Benim Memleketim" / "My Unique Country") that left its mark on the 1970s and enables the Generation X in Turkey (part of today's digital platform audience) to recall its own memories. The fact that "Memleketim", which became a cult song after the September 12 military coup, is selected for the title of the series features irony. Abbreviated as *Bir Başkadır*, the series deconstructs these references. The series brings together characters who are socially constructed "in terms of dominant ideologies" (Kellner 2010: 45) by building a number of equations. Outside Turkey, the series was released internationally by Netflix under the title *Ethos*. In philosophy, *ethos* is considered as the vital habits of individuals that belong to their past and shape their worldview (Cambridge Dictionary 2022). *Ethos* refers to a person's character and lifestyle based on habits. On the date of its release in Turkey, the series was ranked number one on the charts and featured in the "top 10" lists of Netflix in sixteen countries (Cumhuriyet 2020). In parallel to the interest from an international audience, the attention paid to the series by the academic community is also significant. For example, George Taxidis (2021) examines the series in the context of psychotherapy and gender, and although the series is specifically about Turkey, he states that *Ethos* "continuously dances around universal experiences of familiarity and alienation, skillfully depicting the act of relating to others as inherently full of pain and joy" (2021: 340).

2.2. Hybrid Narrative with Cinematic Flavors

Another reason why we consider *Ethos* within the framework of the concepts of cinematic mapping and nostalgia is that the audio-visual structure of the series is established at the intersection of these concepts. *Ethos* depicts a nostalgic gaze

cinematically through the concert footage of Ferdi Özbeğen and an impressionistic attitude similar to that encountered in the Turkish films of the 70s and 80s. The series draws a comparison between the image of Meryem trying to find her way in the crowds on the streets and overpasses of the city, shot from a high angle, and the texture of the films of the 1970s, which depict the new urbanite lost among the overlapping buildings of Istanbul. These elements of the series are also supported by its colors and 4:3 aspect ratio. The shots in which we see Meryem walking on the streets, avenues, and overpasses from a high angle, and in which we get closer to her with sudden zoom movements, carry flavors from the cinematic narrative of the 1970s. Showing the character in the flow of life on the street establishes a relationship between the material world and the characters in films (Ryan and Kellner 1988). This cinematography is adorned with traces of an attitude that describe ordinary people in their social reality. The characters we see in the films of many esteemed filmmakers of the 1970s, including Lütfi Akad, Yılmaz Güney, Zeki Ökten and Tunç Okan, who try to find their way in a crowd where they do not belong, who are poor, who resist in order not to be oppressed, and who differentiate themselves with their pride, resilience, and determination, have been replaced by Meryem in *Ethos*. In the series, which tells the stories of men and women rushing between home and work on the streets, working in factories and making their living the hard way, we see visual codes that reflect an alliance with the left-wing politics of the 1970s. Meryem also reveals the trace of social change in Turkey. With the Justice and Development Party, which borrowed the leftist rhetoric "on the side of the oppressed" in the early 2000s, Meryem's position has also changed.

Ethos also features the transformed elements of the impressionist attitude that we have come across in the films directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan and Zeki Demirkubuz who represent the New Turkish cinema. This cinema is known for its long-lasting fixed close-ups, monologues, still scenes, and shots that mark the moment. The first episode of *Ethos* opens with Meryem's nineteen-minute monologue. Because the series is a character-driven sectional story instead of a plot-driven one, it benefits from the codes of the New Turkish cinema. The credits also feature several film scenes that highlight and nourish the conflict between tradition and modernity, represented by Meryem and Peri in the series, with nostalgic references. These nostalgic references are established with the concert recordings of Ferdi Özbeğen, the old Istanbul images in the documentary *Bosphore* (1964, Maurice Pialat) in

the end credits of the fourth episode, and the Ankara scenes in the film *The Herd (Sürü)* (1979, Zeki Ökten, Yılmaz Güney). In short, the visual texture of the series, which includes an interesting omnivorous element, contains a hybrid aesthetic fed by the visual codes of Turkish cinema (from the films of the 1970s to the present day). This is precisely why *Ethos* has a cinematic flavor unlike any ordinary TV series. Despite the fact that it is a series that progresses with long dialogues, has few outdoor scenes and is dominated by theatrical elements, this cinematic flavor still persists. The use of music in *Ethos* is important enough to deserve a separate article. Since there was no copyright law in the 70s and 80s, foreign soundtracks were frequently used in Yeşilçam films. In *Ethos*, these music tracks are used to support the period atmosphere. In addition, songs by well-known artists, such as Ferdi Özbeğen, Zerrin Özer and Aşık Mahsuni are included in the credits. However, unlike the music used in Yeşilçam cinema, the soundtrack of the series is not a mere copy of another film soundtrack. These musical pieces, taken out of context and reused in *Ethos*, create a sense of authenticity found in the films of that period. This type of music usage also contributes to the hybrid narrative of the series.

3. FROM JAMESON TO KELLNER: FROM COGNITIVE MAPPING TO CINEMATIC MAPPING

Based on cognitive mapping, the concept of cinematic mapping was introduced by Kellner. Cognitive mapping refers to a cognitive structure used in various fields, such as environmental psychology, urban and regional planning, and is used to define a person's relationship with space. In this structure, within a contextual framework, the cultural characteristics, and the historical background of the society in which the person lives (the knowledge and perception of the environment that one lives in and what they represent for the person) are shaped in many ways due to various social and psychological factors (Göregenli et al. 2013: 30). It may be argued that "cognitive maps are not an exact reflection of the objective environment; they are cognitive representations in which physical reality is reconstructed together with social realities" (Göregenli 2013: 30-57). Jameson (1981; 1984; 1991) states that we are unable to map our past experiences due to major economic, political and social trends occurring globally. Seeking a solution to the inability to map and imagine past experiences, Jameson proposes a reconstruction of the cog-

nitive maps that were destroyed by postmodernism. Jameson (1984) uses the concept of cognitive mapping to point out the relationship and the position of individuals with their social spheres. He draws on Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* (1960) which explores how individuals in cities imagine their surroundings. In his empirical study, Lynch (1960) shows that, in an alienated city, people are unable to map the city and their own position in their minds. Jameson establishes a relationship between Lynch's and Althusser's definition of ideology. According to Althusser (1971), "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence". Jameson (1991: 52) argues that Althusser's definition "allows us to rethink these specialized geographical and cartographic issues in terms of social space". Using Althusser's redefinition of ideology, Jameson (1991: 54) expands the concept of cognitive mapping by including ideological criticism and therefore, comes up with a global definition of cognitive mapping on a social and spatial scale. Jameson (1991: 52) seeks to "cognitively map our individual social relationship to local, national and international class realities". Within this framework, the cognitive map works as a model for individuals to develop class consciousness. Therefore, he hopes that a class consciousness will help people determine their place in the social totality dominated by the cultural logic of late capitalism (Jameson 1991). In his preface to Jameson's book *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (1992), MacCabe (1992: xiv) notes that this new model can work as an "intersection of the personal and the social". MacCabe further argues that it also provides a model that we can use to bring together the local and the global as well as the micro and the macro. The model functions as a "metaphor for the process of [the] political unconscious" (MacCabe 1992: xv). According to Shuqair (2019: 364), "the political unconscious herein is how individuals are already part of a broader socio-political context of which they are most likely unaware, but which nevertheless shapes who they are and what actions they can or cannot take in their own society and world".

Douglas Kellner (2010: 18) states that the aim of cinematic mappings is to "represent historical events, individuals, character types, cultural norms and other defining features of a specific society". Taking influence from Fredric Jameson's (1981; 1992) concept of cognitive mapping, in which film texts, literary texts or cultural texts contribute to the process of placing an individual in a broader social context (the society where one lives or the world in general), Kellner (2010: 45, footnote 18) develops cinematic mapping. Jameson states that such mapping consists of a mixture of ideology and uto-

pia, and in many cases constructs individuals according to dominant ideologies; however, they may also reflect the utopian motto “another life is possible”. Drawing attention to the fact that cinematic realism is fiction and using the historical dramas of Oliver Stone as an example, Kellner (2010: 45) describes films as “interpretations whose critical visions of social and historical realities have their own ideological and idiosyncratic biases and perspectives. Properly interpreted and contextualized, films can provide key insights into specific historical persons, events, or eras”. In this context, Kellner (2010: 45 footnote 18) argues that cinematic mapping “shows some of the ways that cinema constructs visions of social, political, and individual life that provides access — often distorted by ideology and bias — to contemporary social life, politics, and history.”

As an allegory, *Ethos* can be considered as a call to create cognitive maps by confronting the social issues related to the present and the past. In the series, the individual and social groups attempt to reconstruct this map together while trying to position themselves in today’s crisis of identity, class, status, and belonging. *Ethos* also describes the need to start somewhere, despite possible shortcomings and mistakes, for the reconstruction of the map.

2.3. Reckoning/Confrontation

In the context of social issues, *Ethos* returns to the 1990s to question recent history. Although the 1990s was not the beginning of Turkey’s problems, it marks one of the breaking points at which the knot of these problems became visible. The 90s were a period when distinctions based on secularism, religion and ethnic identity in Turkey had sharpened (Barbaros and Zurcher 2017; Heper and Sayan 2012). Not accepting hijab-clad students at universities and the emergence of protests against this, the increase in terror attacks by the PKK, and the conducting of low-intensity warfare in areas where Kurds live in large numbers are examples of the political and social tensions that emerged during the 1990s. Perhaps for this very reason, *Ethos* draws a connection between the present and the past and addresses the issue through a conscious temporal shift. In other words, the series considers the 1990s as a touchstone or a field of confrontation in solving today’s crisis of identity, class, status and belonging. However, it is a separate discussion topic to evaluate whether the characters representing different social groups are successfully created in a way that will enable this confrontation to occur. Whether these representations are provided on a realistic ba-

sis or whether the existing stereotypes are strengthened by repetition instead of creating a confrontation are also other questions that will not be discussed in this article.

“Confronting the past refers to a daring attitude of being open to discussing the problematic past as well as revealing and being ready to accept the truth about this past” (Sancar 2007: 32-33). Therefore, confrontation also includes “giving up on blocking the collective memory” (Sancar 2007: 33) by bringing repressed and postponed issues to the agenda. *Ethos* ventures into controversial areas, most notably in the area of identity, and in a sense attempts to lift the veils that block memories through social “rehabilitation”. However, the burden is quite heavy. Touching on the long-standing fundamental issues and nerve endings of Turkey in the triangle of religion, secularism, and ethnic identity, the series nudges the breaking points of today’s construction in the context of the social segments represented by its characters. More precisely, it offers a perspective on ongoing issues in the context of Turkey’s changing conjuncture (it is the reason why the series has attracted so much attention). *Ethos* is promoted by Netflix with the following: “They have different lives, different dreams, different fears. Even if they seem opposite to each other, when their paths cross, the borders will disappear and they will all touch each other’s lives”. So even if their paths cross, do the boundaries between the characters really disappear?

Considering the representation of certain characters and their current realities it is also evident that certain characters have changed places from the 90s to the present day. For example, it is clear that the secular representation symbolized by Peri and her family, who hold economic power, is no longer the way it is presented in the series today. Positions in society, especially economic power, have already been reversed. In addition, it can be seen that the imam Ali Sadi, who symbolizes the conservative groups’ relationship with religion, is now a figure that can rarely be encountered in society. Similarly, Meryem, who comes from the periphery, has already settled in the city center.

2.4. Spaces / Houses

Ethos’ narrative, constructed through the characters and the socio-cultural sphere they represent, hints at Kellner’s cinematic mapping of social life, politics and recent history. Each of the spaces is sociologically structured to express a group: The hospital room, the mosque, the yoga studio, the café, the nightclub, the house of Meryem on the urban periph-

ery, the residence of Sinan who lives in the city center, and so on. Except for the scenes in which Meryem wanders the streets and urban peripheries and a small number of scenes between the imam Ali Sadi and Meryem's older brother Yasin, we do not see much of the life on the streets, the flow of daily living and the social reality. We also rarely see the village of Ruhiye, who returns there alone. Over the course of the eight episodes of *Ethos*, the exterior space serves a different function than the interior space. Outdoor scenes are scenes where the series breathes and which allow us to establish a relationship between the social classes, identities or lifestyles represented by the spaces. In other words, these scenes allow us to witness the entire social reality of the series. On one level, the characters who cross paths with each other in certain contexts do not yet know about each other's home/world (even those with similar lifestyles) and keep their distance. The distance between them also reflects the distance between the social classes they represent (religious, secular, Kurdish, and white Turk⁵) outside the areas where they intersect with each other.

Located on the urban periphery, Meryem's house is the home of a low-income, religious, traumatized family. Her older brother, who served as a commando in the military and works as a bodyguard in a bar, is religious, bad-tempered and sensitive. Meryem lives with her older brother Yasin, his wife Ruhiye and their children. Ruhiye is a young woman who prays five times a day, but who always loses the direction of the qibla, and she tries to cope with her past trauma. As the series progresses, it is revealed that Ruhiye was raped by a Kurdish man who had migrated to their village, and that Meryem's commando brother Yasin found out about this just before they got married, but neither the woman nor the brother ever confronted this trauma. One day Ruhiye suddenly says that she wants to go to the village. After this request, Yasin takes his daughter, his son who never speaks, Ruhiye, and Meryem, and goes to the village. Ruhiye suffers a mental crisis during the journey between cities. Yasin had fought enough to injure the man who raped Ruhiye, and yet he tells Ruhiye that the man is dead. Yasin cannot continue the journey any longer and he turns the car back towards home. Instead of confronting the trauma to overcome it, he suppresses his feelings. Both physically and metaphorically,

they cannot get away from their homes, and they postpone the confrontation even though they are so close to it. This confrontation is made by Ruhiye, who returns to the village with her son. Her rapist, who is alive, begs for forgiveness. Ruhiye gets better, and her son starts to talk on the way home. The only scene where Ruhiye goes out of her house is the village scene towards the end of the series.

The mansion of Peri's parents is a house on the shores of the Bosphorus, which symbolizes the wealthy, sophisticated class of an era. However, today, the new owners of this mansion have been the group represented by Gülbin's older sister Gülan. Although Gülbin has a private clinic, Peri's clinic is at a public hospital. The room of this clinic shows that Peri cannot step outside the dominant ideological axis (secular-modernist) of her family. As the antithesis of the secularists, the imam Ali Sadi's house represents the house of a tolerant clergyman. Hayrunnisa, the shy and introverted daughter of the imam (it is later revealed that she is his step-daughter), charts her own path after the death of her mother. Revealing her LGBTI identity, Hayrunnisa leaves her home to go to university. With their differing and conflicting views, Gülbin's parents' house represents a Kurdish home. Sinan's house, on the other hand, is the house of a cynical and inept man where different social groups intersect and use. In contrast to the urban periphery from where Meryem comes, this residence in the center of the city is the home of a white Turk where Meryem works as a cleaner. Moreover, that white Turk is actually a young man from the neighborhood of his mother (this is revealed after he visits her mother). In fact, Sinan is a child of the neighborhood located in the former city center, but somehow at some point, he has managed to climb the social ladder. Another story of a leap at the intellectual level is that of Hilmi, the imam's apprentice, who falls in love with Meryem at first sight and engages in a conversation on Jung at a coffeehouse. Hilmi appears to be the prototype of the intellectual political Islamists who were introduced to Marxism, the Frankfurt School and psychoanalysis in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Talking to his friends, Hilmi tells them about Jung and the philosophy of the series: "A Swiss scientist talks about a belief in the existence of a supreme being, but he says it differently than the writings of Islam, or for example, the Torah, Christianity, or the Quran. It's a matter of being an individual. Mind you, I'm not talking about individualization. What am I saying? Being an individual, he says. There's a social unconscious phenomenon, and Jung describes it as the collective unconscious. What we all have in common are these unconscious states".

5 As a concept, white Turk has emerged with the increase in migration from rural to urban areas due to the effect of neo-liberal policies after 1980 and is used to describe the urban elite in Turkey. The concept was widely used in the 1990s and the 2000s to refer to a minority with a high economic level who adopted a Western and secular lifestyle.

What Hilmi describes here through Jung is the mapping in our social unconscious. On this map, Hilmi does not have a house, and we never see Peri's own house. We only see Peri once in their mansion on the shores of the Bosphorus, and this is after a scene in which Peri is psychologically shaken. In this sense, Peri is actually homeless. Peri is self-critical of her negative attitude towards the headscarf and her class perspective, which she says she inherited from her mother. Peri attributes her feelings and thoughts, even her prejudices, to her upbringing. Although her mother's view of people from different segments of society is ingrained in her, she thinks she is never like her mother, until she realizes how similar they are. It is only when she mistakenly refers to Meryem by the name of the woman (Hazel) who works in her mother's house that she realizes her mistake in creating the prototype of women with the headscarf in her mind and depriving them of their identity to the point of calling them by the same name. Drawing on Lacan, Zizek (1989:58) argues that "in the symptom, the repressed content is returning from the future". The fact that Peri confuses Meryem's name with the name of her mother's cleaning lady and the fact that she becomes aware of this can be read as a sign of healing in the face of the social segments she is prejudiced against. If what is repressed comes from "the future", as Zizek states, then this would mean that Peri will make a new beginning with Meryem.

Unlike the cramped living space of Peri, Meryem is everywhere: on the main streets of the city, on the bus, in the neighborhoods on the urban periphery, in the hospital, in the imam's house, in the mosque, and in Sinan's luxurious residence. It is Meryem who sees and lives in the city from one end to the other. Each of these spaces reflects the characters' own world and represents their class/identity. It is also Meryem who moves between all these spaces and connects the stories to each of them, helping us to draw a cinematic mapping of different social segments. The map in the minds of the audience of *Ethos* is constructed with Meryem, who is intelligent, sensitive, and uneducated, yet prudent, conservative and outgoing. Meryem can be described in Sina Koloğlu's (2020) words as "the neighborhood girl who smells of stove smoke", and she provides the meeting/encounter between all social segments. At the same time, she indirectly causes the audience to repair the torn pieces in the destroyed mental map. The male characters we often see in the films of the 1970s dealing with "social" problems that walk the streets, resist and strive against the oppression of the city, and at the same time try to exist in the urban crowd, have been replaced by a female character, Meryem, representing the hijab-wearing segment in a digital platform series in 2020.

Moreover, the social responsibility of Meryem who crosses the city from one end to the other and whose passage through the overpasses is witnessed by an observant camera, goes beyond eras and spreads over a much wider period of time.

2.5. Encounters

Ethos' call for confrontation is based on encounters. The characters' encounters take place in many places: Meryem and Peri in the hospital, Peri and the actress Melisa in the yoga studio, Gülbin and Meryem in the residence corridor, Peri and Gülan in her sister Gülbin's office; and Meryem's older brother Yasin and the imam Ali Sadi's daughter Hayrunnisa in the bar and on the street. In addition to such encounters, the television screen also serves as a space of encounters.

Peri's mother watches the TV series starring Melisa in her mansion on the shores of the Bosphorus; the same series is also watched in the slums by Meryem and her older brother Yasin, and in one of the residences of the city by Sinan. A meta-narrative is created by *Ethos* when its characters from different places, cultures, classes and lifestyles watch the same content. Television is described by Gerbner as the most democratic and classless mass media tool and it makes these encounters possible between the characters of the series. We, the audience who watches *Ethos* experience a similar encounter. According to Gerbner and his colleagues (2002: 55), within the framework of the "Cultural Indicators" approach, television puts beliefs, thoughts, relatively static and common images in people's minds. Therefore, thanks to television, which is the new storyteller, people from all walks of life can share many cultural images. The differing views between the traditional television audience and the digital platform audience become critically evident in the dialogues of Melisa and Peri. Melisa says, "Don't watch, it's stupid anyway, it's a 'total' job." Peri asks, "What does 'total'⁶ mean?" Melisa replies, "You know, the general audience. Anatolia, slum, that style."

Much like the characters in Zeki Demirkubuz's *Innocence (Masumiyet)* or Reha Erdem's *My Only Sunshine (Hayat Var)* watching old Turkish films in front of a television screen, the characters of *Ethos* also watch the TV series *The Pit (Çukur)* or popular reality shows targeting female audiences, such as *Esra Erol'da (At Esra Erol)*, at home in front of the television. While the meta-narrative in the series reveals the distinctions between the Yeşilçam cinema audience, the traditional tele-

6 In the dialogue, the word "total" is used in English to describe the general audience.

vision audience, and the digital platform audience, it complements the social mapping with the encounters it displays through the television screen.

3. RESTORING THE LOST PRESENT THROUGH NOSTALGIA

Nostalgia has no single, absolute definition. Nostalgia almost looks like “an old, crusted wound that bleeds again” (Sarı 2017: 12). In this context, it references both the wound and the healing. The concept can “accommodate progressive, even utopian impulses as well as regressive stances and melancholic attitudes” (Keightley & Pickering 2006: 919). It can be claimed that the slogan “another life is possible”, articulated with a utopian attitude, is related to a nostalgic perspective. We believe that it is possible to argue this, at least in the context of *Ethos*. In a sense, nostalgia can be considered as the temporal inverse twin of utopia. Beyond being a longing for the past, nostalgia can be comprehended in terms of remembering and reminding us of the possibilities of the past. The series can be read as an attempt to complete a confrontation that has not yet taken place, both in terms of the lives of the people it depicts and in the context of Turkey’s recent history. Segal (2005: 34) suggests that “nostalgia as represented and explored in photography, cinema and story-telling has the potential to further both self and societal understanding through reflection, reinterpretation and ultimately transformation”. The series *Ethos* brings this potential to the surface.

In the series the ambiguity about whether the events take place in the recent past or in the present is extremely interesting. How can this temporal twist or slip be explained? What can this historical slip be associated with? In his article entitled “*Bir Başkadır: Boşluktaki Mesafeler*” (“*Ethos: Distances in the Void*”) in *Altyazı*, Ekrem Buğra Büte (2020) responds to this question with a sincere grasp of the sociological basis of *Ethos* and defines the attitude in the series as “a sad glance of compassion, thrown with the anxiety that a sense of homeland, which for a long time could not be grasped or patched, had been lost”. This compassionate glance is a nostalgic one. Nostalgia should not be considered only in the sense of seeking refuge in a familiar time or of escaping to a safe space in order to overcome the profound sense of unhappiness and despair felt in the present⁷. Indeed, “contemporary nostalgia

is not so much about the past as about the vanishing present” (Boym 2001: 351). Precisely for today, the series takes a nostalgic look at what has been lost and proposes a utopian reconstruction. Therefore, the sense of nostalgia conveyed by *Ethos* is identical with the anxiety of losing the present. In this context, the series seeks solutions to present-day problems in shared memories which can unite the social groups/audiences that drift away from each other. These memories are hidden in the audio-visual codes of the Yeşilçam cinema, which reinforces the feeling of the “common goodness”. As we have mentioned in the hybrid narrative section, the text of *Ethos* written with the typography of the 1980s Yeşilçam films, the camera from a high angle that watches ordinary people in their social reality with zoom movements, and the music borrowed from the Yeşilçam cinema function as reconciling codes. These reconciling audio-visual codes refer to the eras that were viewed together on screen by different generations and social groups who grew up with Yeşilçam films.

The chaotic city landscape through which Meryem passes consists of roofs covered with satellite dishes, laundry hanging from balconies, overpasses, and minibuses lined up in traffic. For the audience familiar with the 1990s, these images, together with all their flaws, reinforce the sense of the common past.

In the search for a reconciling past, time can also be considered as an element that softens both certain memories and a reckoning. As noted by Dede & Çoruk in their article titled “‘Eski’ ve ‘Yeni’ Türkiye Arasında Özal Nostaljisi” (“Nostalgia for Özal Between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Turkey”) (2020), the dissatisfaction felt when looking at the distant past may change the passing time and we can see the negative stance as softened or altered. According to the authors:

The increasing distance between the past and the present affects our view of the past, and this inevitably brings nostalgia into the context of the debate. (...) The role of nostalgia as a political, social and psychological phenomenon in the twenty-first century deeply affects almost all the ways of relating to the past and also the perception of the aftermath of September 12 in Turkey.

In their article, the authors compare the way in which Özal’s politics have been made a subject of nostalgia to the way in which De Gaulle has been a subject of nostalgia by both the government and the opposition. In the same way that Özal becomes an element of nostalgia for different po-

7 Suner (2010) gives examples from the post-2000 Turkish cinema to illustrate that nostalgia in the narrative has been transformed into a kind of shelter.

litical tendencies when considered from today's perspective, Ferdi Özbeğen's music, which sets the atmosphere of the period in the end credits of *Ethos*, creates a sense of nostalgia symbolizing the Özal⁸ era following September 12. Although secularists distance themselves from the arabesque music and what it represents culturally, the music of Ferdi Özbeğen is part of the common past they share with conservatives, and this music establishes a periodical atmosphere in which cultural distances can be ignored when viewed from the present. In the end credits of the series, Ferdi Özbeğen addresses the audience from a concert recording in the 1980s: "Aşkımı bir sır gibi senelerdir sakladım" ("I've kept my love like a secret for years") ... just like the way many secrets and unsolved problems exist for years.

4. CONCLUSION

Digital platforms have offered a breath of fresh air to TV series by creating alternative approaches both in content and in terms of narrative and aesthetics. Another important contribution of digital platforms is the increased international screening opportunities. *Ethos* is a concrete example of this. The series almost serves as a catalyst for the return of what remains unspoken and repressed due to the political conjuncture and climate. People have been polarized as a result of the power strategies and belligerent policies of the last two decades (Erdoğan and Uyan Semerci 2018) and in a space where the problems, demands and cultural values of a society are clarified and negotiated (Steiner 2018), *Ethos* can be read as a call for confrontation for a new cognitive map, especially in a period when people's desire to coexist has been severely damaged. The series has opened a space for people from different classes/identities to reflect on or to recognize each other's lifestyles.

Calling for confrontation, *Ethos* attempts to create a new cognitive map, but fails to embody it. The series creates only an optimistic call for how to rebuild our destroyed cognitive map. This optimistic call involves creating a cognitive map of a sense of home/homeland by reconsidering our class, identity and lifestyles. Therefore, cinematic mapping offers a method of positioning and reconceptualization in order to comprehend shifting positions in Turkey and to develop a new perspective through which shifting identities are anchored.

8 After the military coup of September 12, 1980, Turgut Özal became prime minister and adopted neo-liberal policies (Pamuk 2014; Şenses 2017).

The series employs a nostalgic look to establish the vanishing present and does this through a hybrid narrative. This hybrid narrative is constructed through references to both the films of the 70s and the music of the 80s, as well as to the New Turkish Cinema after 1995. Therefore, the hybrid narrative not only keeps the audience interested but also serves a creative function for the temporal twists in the series.

Macherey (1978) argues that the place to look for ideology in literary texts lies in the meaningful silences in the text. The places where the series remains silent are the issues of religion and ethnic identity, which constitute the fundamental problems of the founding of the Republic. Despite its reticence on certain of Turkey's fundamental issues, *Ethos* attracts the attention of the audience because it makes a call for social confrontation.

It is obvious that the series on traditional television, which are the dominant example of popular culture, have for a long time avoided addressing individual and social issues, preferring to turn a blind eye to daily life. *Ethos* depicts real problems (forgotten or postponed issues) through deeply felt characters and, in this sense, creates a place for the audience to experience a confrontation. We interpret *Ethos* as a meaningful and valuable case in terms of telling stories that address social/political issues with reference to Ryan's (1988) and Ryan and Kellner's (1988) views on the connection between popular cinema and the masses. In this respect, as a platform series, we consider *Ethos* as a successful and significant example on the matter.

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