THE PHENOMENON OF FREE-FLOATING VIOLENCE IN POST-1990S TURKEY THROUGH TWO FILMS BY SERDAR AKAR: *GEMIDE* AND *BARDA*

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This thesis scrutinizes the main mechanisms underlying behind the emergence of the phenomenon of free-floating violence in post-1990s Turkey. On the basis of third-page news referred to as the concrete examples of this phenomenon, the nature of free-floating violence is characterized as being apolitical, reactive, arbitrary and unpredictable. Its definition goes beyond the boundaries of such types of violence as honor killing, family violence or violence against women. This distinction determines the central mission of the study, which is to gain an insight into every dimension of the new phenomenon. As a groundwork material, two films written and directed by Serdar Akar have been analyzed in a detailed manner. The findings of these analyses provide the essence of the chain of free-floating violence, which is comprised of three interlocked rings. The ring in the first order is the exclusionary ring in which the focus is on the micro-effects of the global and the neoliberal changes on the lives of ordinary people. Secondly, the discussion centers upon the arbitrariness ring which is mainly about the roles of illegitimate state violence, the impunity culture and the absence of law in determining the nature of free-floating violence in Turkey. Thirdly, the inner dynamics of male homosocial groups have been considered with a closer look into the aspects of collectivity and hierarchy in the homosociality ring. The locking-together of these three rings shows that free-floating violence is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. The global – local – social group dynamics have merged and gave rise to the emergence of free-floating violence as a phenomenon of the post-1990s Turkey.

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Başlık: Serdar Akar'ın İki Filmi üzerinden 1990 sonrası Türkiyesi'nde Başıboş Şiddet Olgusu: *Gemide* ve *Barda*

Bu tez 1990 sonrası Türkiyesi'nde başıboş şiddet olgusunun ortaya çıkışının altında yatan temel mekanizmaları incelemektedir. Bu olgunun somut örnekleri olarak başvurulan üçüncü sayfa haberleri temelinde, başıboş şiddetin ana özellikleri apolitik, tepkisel, keyfi ve öngörülemez olmasıdır. Tanımı namus cinayeti, aile içi şiddet ya da kadına karşı şiddet gibi şiddet türlerinin sınırlarını aşmaktadır. Bu ayrım bu çalışmanın başlıca görevini de belirlemektedir: Söz konusu olgunun her boyutunu ayrıntılarıyla kavramak. Çerçevenin üzerine kurulacağı ana zemin olarak Serdar Akar tarafından yazılıp yönetilen iki film, *Gemide* ve *Barda*, ayrıntılı bir biçimde analiz edilmiştir. Bu analizlerden elde edilen bulgular birbiri içine geçmiş üç halkadan oluşan başıboş şiddet zincirinin esasını temin eder. Birinci halka küresel ve neoliberal değişimlerin insanların günlük hayatları üzerindeki mikro düzeyde etkilere odaklanılan dışlanma halkasıdır. İkinci olarak, keyfilik halkasında tartışma yasadışı devlet şiddeti, cezasızlık kültürü ve hukuk eksikliği gibi faktörlerin Türkiye'deki başıboş şiddetin doğasını belirlemede ne gibi roller oynadığı üzerinde durulmaktadır. Üçüncü olarak, homososyallik halkasında, erkek homososyal grupların iç dinamikleri topluluk olma ve hiyerarşik yapılanma noktaları üzerinden tartışılmaktadır. Bu üç halkanın birbirinden ayrılamazlığı başıboş şiddetin karmaşık ve çok boyutlu bir olgu olduğunu göstermektedir. Küresel dinamikler, yerel dinamikler ve sosyal grup dinamikleri biraraya gelmiş, 1990 sonrası Türkiyesi'ne ait bir olgu olarak başıboş şiddetin ortaya çıkmasında belirleyici olmuşlardır.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, every period has had its own particular soul, and the people of a decade – ranging from the ruling elite to the ordinary people in the streets – are both the producers and the products of that specific period in question. When we think upon the terms used, such as the interwar period, the Cold War period or the post-9/11 period, we realize that periodization of the past serves not only to analyze a specific era by highlighting its unique characteristics, but also discusses a break in association with its before and after by seeing it as a part of the whole picture.

When it comes to looking at today's world from this aspect to better understand what we are going through, what should we ask ourselves in order to reach the correct answer? Just like the children of the 1980s are the grown-ups of the millennium whose stories on the micro-level are written down each and every day, has the twenty-first century inherited its soul from the last two decades? What legacy directs our social and cultural life in the millennium age, for instance, so as to make us different from the 1980s' society? Going beyond a mere effort to categorize the new century, these questions are asked essentially to answer the big gnawing question in our minds: What makes it a blatant reality to breathe in a *free-floatingly* violent society in today's world?

These questions, which occupy the minds of millennium people in different parts of the world, undoubtedly vary depending on the specific circumstances of a specific country, a specific city in that country and a specific society living in that city. As Ruşen Keleş and Artun Ünsal quoted from Emile Durkheim's words, the stress is here upon *social facts*, which have an existence in and of them and are not bound to the actions of individuals. Social facts have an independent existence greater and more objective than the actions of the individuals that make up a society and can be explained only by other social facts. Therefore, understanding the 'inner dynamics' of a specific society is indispensable to shedding light on the deep-rooted social crises of the country in question.[1] Thus, an answer cannot be found to the big gnawing question specific to Turkey unless we track down the transformation process and the breaking points peculiar to this country and the society in the recent history.

In an attempt to resolve the big question, we first have to thoroughly analyze and understand what leads us to ask those questions. Of equal importance to the question itself, this point refers to the instruments basically functioning as a ground on which the whole study is established.

In terms of the free-floatingly violent society in the post-1990s period of Turkey, third-page news in the newspapers is one plausible option, among the others, in terms of having its roots in the dynamics of Turkish society. This is particularly noteworthy when we consider the fact that people reading

[1] Ruşen Keleş and Artun Ünsal, "Kent ve Siyasal Şiddet," *Cogito Şiddet*, no. 6–7 (Winter-Spring 1996), pp. 91–104.

newspapers or watching the news in Turkey are up against a picture that is becoming darker each passing day.

In an interview of 1996 on the history of violence, Halil Berktay drew attention to the appearance of a new kind of violence in society and warned against the fact that Turkey was on the verge of turning into a society of violence.[2] Looking at it from today's perspective, it now can be said that Turkey has already crossed the line and become a society of free-floating violence.

Everyday, different examples of violence are reported in the headlines. One day, we read news about Ebru, who killed her rapist by shooting him in the genital organ.[3] Another day, we read the news of a young teacher and her mother who were kidnapped on their way to a relative's wedding in Umraniye, raped a dozen times and savagely murdered by a group of glue-sniffers.[4] And only a few years ago, this time, we read that those rapists and murderers who had been earlier sentenced to 75 years were released from prison after seven years thanks to the new Turkish Criminal Code.[5] With this piece of news in our minds, Ebru's story stands as a typical example for how the feeling of justice is satisfied in the absence of law.

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[2] Halil Berktay – Zafer Toprak; Moderator: Ahmet Kuyaş, "Tarihçi Gözüyle 'Şiddetin Tarihi' Üzerine Bir Söyleşi," *Cogito Şiddet*, no. 6–7 (Winter-Spring 1996), pp. 197–206.

[3] *Hurriyet*, 25 January 2009.

[4] *Sabah*, 9 October 1998.

[5] *Vatan*, 1 January 2009.

Married, with one child, Ebru began to work for a hairdresser in Keçiören in 2006. A man named Osman Mert fell in love with her when he brought meat to the butcher shop next door. Upon Ebru's rejection of his insistent offers to have an affair, Mert kidnapped the young woman and her child at gunpoint. Taking them to a friend's house in Istanbul, the man molested her repeatedly. Grabbing one rare chance, she managed to escape together with her kid and sought shelter at a police station. Arrested only for a while, Mert was held and released pending a trial 15 days later upon his lawyer's plea. Afterwards, Ebru's husband began to follow Mert around to take revenge for the sufferings through which his wife and family had gone. This chase ended when Mert escaped from being shot, as the husband was sentenced to prison for eight months in January, 2007.

The story did not end there, because neither the law nor the state could put out the still-burning fire of the pain in Ebru's life. "Something needed to be done." This time, Ebru followed Mert around and found him in Keçiören in the end. Having waited for this moment for a long time, the fierce woman fired seven shots at Mert. The man immediately died at the venue. Shooting at the genital organ of her rapist, the young woman, unable to control her anger, kicked at the dead body and swore at him. In surrending herself to the police, Ebru was heard saying: "Now, justice is done!" This single sentence stands at the core in terms of showing the essence of all the similar third-page news in Turkey from the 1990s onward.

When we go back to the groundwork on which this study is founded, we see that there is an alternative to third-page news, which is as indicative

of socio-cultural transformation as newspapers headlines. As Christian Metz pointed out, "every film has its own reality as a factual phenomenon from the social and analytical perspective." "Every film comes into being as a product of the society which consumes it and as an orientation of consciousness."[6]

In parallel with this view that each and every work of art carries traces of the culture and the social structure into which it is born, *Gemide* (On Board) and *Barda* (In the Bar) are the points of departure in this study. Thus, we will set out on a journey which will enable us to realize to what extent and in what ways these two films can serve as mirrors of the social atmosphere in the post-1990s period.

Within the whole history of Turkish cinema, the 1990s refers to the rise of a new Turkish cinema, on which all the effects of globalization process and the concomitant discourse of change had a deep influence.[7] During the 1990s when the process gained speed, the idea of "catching up with globalization" came to the fore through the discourses of change and transformation on the one hand, while the concerns of "being kept out of the circle" or "feeling provincial" took a strong hold for the first time on the other hand.[8]

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[6] Christian Metz, "Story/Discourse: Notes on Two Kinds of Voyeurism." In *Movies and Methods 2*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), p. 545.

[7] Asuman Suner, "1990'lar Türk Sinemasından Taşra Görüntüleri: *Masumiyet*'te Döngü, Kapatılmışlık, Klostrofobi ve İroni," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 92 (Spring 2002), p. 177.

[8] Asuman Suner, "1990'lar Türk Sinemasından Taşra Görüntüleri: *Tabutta Rövaşata*'da Agorafobik Kent, Açık Alana Kapatılmışlık ve Dehşet," *Toplum ve Bilim,* no. 94 (Fall 2002), p. 89.

Within the social context of the 1990s Turkey, the "new Turkish cinema" focused on the dilemmas which revolved around the questions of identity and the sense of belonging.[9] In other words, the films by these new filmmakers discussed the crises related to the matters of identity and belongingness through the topic of "province."[10]

"Province" was set as a paradoxical venue, which produces both claustrophobia and agoraphobia at the same time. Being in the province does not only mean being at the center of the circle, locking yourself in and being unable to get out, but being locked out and excluded as well. The province is both a very specific somewhere and an unknown nowhere.

The feelings of being shut off in a definite space and feeling lost are simultaneously experienced. There is immobility and stagnancy on the one side while falling into the vacuum and plunging into the stream on the other. In this respect, we can say that this paradoxical concept of "province" in the post-1990s cinema represents the new form which the state of "in-betweenness" in the modernization process of Turkey took from the 1990s on.[11]

In a parallel manner, Istanbul became a mere provincial city. Even in the films where the full story takes place in Istanbul, we are shown little of the urban side of it. Events occur in claustrophobic interior places: poor apartments, work places and public offices furnished with provincial

[9] Suner, *Masumiyet*, p. 180.

[10] Suner, *Tabutta Rövaşata*, p. 86.

[11] Ibid., p. 105.

aesthetics. Even when the camera turns its eye to the city, we only see the views of unidentified streets crowded with people. Neither its natural beauty nor priceless historical buildings are displayed. In other words, the post-1990s cinema does not highlight a perfect image of Istanbul which we had been used to see in the Turkish cinema.

On the contrary, Istanbul now becomes banal, monotonous and boring. The characters have neither friendly nor hostile feelings for the city itself. They are apathetic and insensible in their own worlds. The rupture is observed in an individual's relationship with space. In this sense, feelings of dissonance and alienation caused by the chaos of the city life become central in the new Turkish cinema.[12]

The use of filmic space also turns into the main element in the hands of a director to convey the internal/external sense of the "in-betweenness" in the films of the new Turkish cinema. Of these films in which a special effort to visually set the "province" is perceived, atmosphere creation is one of the most distinctive characteristics. The provincial state of mind penetrates the soul of the space and shapes the nature of interpersonal relationships.

Just like an extension of filmic space, characters are created within and enclosed by this aura. Therefore, this new cinema does not simply tell stories taking place in the province. Rather, these films reconstruct the "province," redefine the feeling of being provincial and seek new ways of re-conceptualization.

[12] Ibid., p. 92.

Apart from the rise of province, there is another dimension of the new Turkish cinema which is complementary to what is mentioned above. Pointing out that masculinity had lost its potency in women's films during the 1980s, in 2004 Nejat Ulusay stated that to the contrary of the previous decade, there had appeared a new wave of buddy films from the mid-1990s on. These films, in which male characters are at the center of the narrative, refer to a new masculine identity crisis.[13] Ulusay continued, noting that women had been eliminated from the narrative space or pushed into the background as side characters and the central issue of films had become the development of the buddy friendships between men.

According to *The Complete Film Dictionary*, a buddy film is "a film that features the friendship of two males as the major relationship." "Such films extol the virtues of male comradeship and relegate male-female relationships to a subsidiary position."[14] According to the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, a buddy film pushes women out of the center of the narrative and replaces the traditional romantic relationship between a man and a woman with a buddy relationship between two men or among a group of men. Women as potential lovers are thus eliminated from the narrative space.[15]

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[13] Nejat Ulusay, "Günümüz Türk Sinemasında 'Erkek Filmleri'nin Yükselişi ve Erkeklik Krizi," *Toplum ve Bilim,* no. 101 (Fall 2004), p. 144.

[14] Ira Konigsberg, *The Complete Film Dictionary* (New York: Penguin Reference, 1997), p. 41.

[15] Philippa Gates, "Always a Partner in Crime: Black Masculinity in the Hollywood Detective Film," *Journal of popular Film and Television* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2004), p. 25.

As for the Turkish buddy films of the post-1990s, it is mainly father – son relationship between or among them especially when there are no real fathers. The senior member in the buddy group takes on the role of a father. Baran in *Eşkıya* (The Bandit) looks after Cumali just like a father would do. The captain in *Gemide* puts himself in the position of a father in regard to his ship's crew. And in *Karışık Pizza* (Mixed Pizza), a real father is replaced by a mafia boss.[16]

In a corresponding way to the definition, women are almost completely distanced away from the narrative in the post-1990s Turkish films. The space for women is limited in men's world. In quite a few films, we see female characters in the role of a prostitute who turns into an instrument of exchange between men. Apart from this, the most striking metaphor in men's films, in Ulusay's view, is the silence of women who either refuse to talk or cannot speak because they are foreign and do not know the language. This is how buddy films relegate women to subsidiary positions in the new Turkish cinema: silencing.[17]

Considered all in all, Turkish cinema in the post-1990s period basically can be distinguished by the films of a group of independent directors that stand out with their own non-commercial and dominantly auteuristic styles of writing and directing. On the subject level, the post-1990s films revolve around the common themes such as being on *the edge of life*, *claustrophobic*

[16] Ulusay, p. 151.

[17] Ibid., p. 154.

atmospheres, *socially excluded lives*, *buddy groups*, *silencing of women*, bodies and places as *consumption* and *satisfaction* material.

Although the general definition lights our way for outlining these main characteristics, it is necessary to go beyond and come to the question of how these men's films can be related to the socio-cultural background peculiar to Turkey. Is it possible to find a hidden critical approach to the ruling tradition of masculinity in the country in these films, or are they literally mere examples of men's films?

Fırat Yücel's argument is quite to the point here. According to his view, such films of the 1990s as *Eşkıya, Laleli'de Bir Azize* (A Saint in Laleli) and *Gemide* put forth a filmmaking tradition which continues in films of the twenty-first century.[18] The common thread here which could be described as a tradition is to see the notion of "masculinity" and "morality based on masculinity" as the key question at the core of this country; to label the matter of "proving masculinity" and "the need to prove masculinity" as the main problematic; to put this at the center of everything that happens in Turkey.

When the arguments of Ulusay and Yücel are considered together, a third way emerges: A radical break with the past – as in the 1990s – and its outcomes cannot be thought apart from the established values or traditions of a specific country. Therefore, as for the new Turkish cinema in the post-1990s, this new filmmaking tradition cannot be understood thoroughly unless culture of masculinity is taken into account. In other words, we argue that

[18] Fırat Yücel, "Erkekler de Ağlar," *Altyazı*, no. 33 (October 2004), p. 34.

these men's films are basically neither films of masculinity crisis nor films of social exclusion on their own. To the contrary, this new cinema mirrors the picture when the crisis of social exclusion collides with the tradition of masculinity in a country such as Turkey.

In accordance with this, two films by Serdar Akar which represent all the characteristics of the post-1990s period with references to the effects of the neoliberal age on the individual will be the groundwork to discuss the micro-level effects of macro-level changes on the daily lives of ordinary people, which takes us to the emergence of a type of free-floating violence.

In the second chapter, we will describe *Gemide* (1998) and *Barda* (2006) in a detailed manner so that the characters and their stories will provide a projection of the social reality of post-1990s Turkey and Istanbul in particular. By touching upon such themes as *living together* in peace or conflict; *social inclusion* and *social exclusion*; *poverty*; *consumption* and *self-satisfaction*, the chapter will be concluded with three rings on the chain of free-floating violence: exclusionary, arbitrariness and homosociality.

In the third chapter, the exclusionary ring will be entered basically through two main facts: *social exclusion* and *consumption*. Against the historical backdrop the consequences of which take us to free-floating violence among the members of society, we aim to gain an insight into its global dimensions and to focus on the changes in an individual's perception of the self and the others in the society.

At this point, we will take into account the national agenda and the psychology of people in Turkey in the same period so that we can grasp the

essence of the long-term effects and reactions on the micro level. Likewise, Şerif Mardin, in his study *Ideology,*[19] emphasizes that how individuals behave within the society is essentially a consequence of the integrity of a specific culture, which has its own inner dynamics and characteristics.

Taking this argument as a departure point, we should note that social facts such as social exclusion, poverty and consumption, which are the most discussed and worked on in the post-1990 period, will not be considered to be independent from each other in our study. On the contrary, each contributes to the chain reaction of free-floating violence in its own right. Therefore, by linking all of them together, the multi-dimensionality of the problem will be emphasized. Stressing its cumulative nature, it will be argued that free-floating violence among the members of a society is located at one junction between social exclusion and consumption in the post-1990s period.

In other words, we accept free-floating violence as the critical endpoint of a process, which is not only too complex to be reduced to a single factor but also simple enough to track down the roots. By doing that, we will also remember to link all the background information to the details of our films in the first chapter.

In the fourth chapter, we will focus on the "arbitrariness" ring basically referring to the realities of Turkey, which seem to "normalize" or "justify" violence in a way to lead people to think that violence can be a means of self-help. Among these, we will dwell upon the illegitimate use of state violence, lawlessness and the culture of impunity. On the road to the justification of

[19] Şerif Mardin, *İdeoloji* (Ankara: Sosyal Bilimler Derneği, 1976), p. 125.

violence in the minds of the actors, we will go into how individuals perceive and react to the rule of arbitrariness in their relationship with the state.

In the fifth chapter, we will discuss the homosociality ring in depth in relation to free-floating violence by taking into account the buddy groups in both *Gemide* and *Barda*. Giving concrete examples from both cases, we will try to grasp the underlying mechanisms of male homosociality that can be associated with the origins of free-floating violence.

CHAPTER TWO

AN INSIGHT INTO THE RINGS THROUGH DETAILED ANALYSES OF *GEMIDE* AND *BARDA*

Within the new cinema of the post-1990s, *Gemide* and *Barda* stand at a core point in terms of how these two films not only embody the social atmosphere of the decade in which they were produced, but also signify a thematic continuity when discussed together. Revolving around the themes of social exclusion, feelings of dissonance and alienation, loss of hope and empathy and finally drifting into violence in the absence of equality and justice, *Gemide* and *Barda* question the nexus of potency and violence.

Considered on the basis of the historical continuity, it can be said that *Gemide* (1998) represents the initial after-effects of the transformation process in the 1990s as one of the early examples of the new Turkish cinema, while *Barda* (2006) indicates the endpoint of the same process reached in today's millennium world. As a matter of fact, this is another way of expressing the idea that we are now living in the post-1990s period and all the seeds of promise planted yesterday are not blooming, but bleeding. In this respect, these films by Serdar Akar are important in turning our attention to this bleeding and leading us to think and work upon them.

By setting out from the questions how we should read *Gemide* and *Barda* in relation to the historical background of Turkey, we will go into the world of the characters on board in the first half of the chapter and try to grasp the essence of *Barda* hidden in the details in the second half. Thus, we

will be able to outline the basic factors involved in the multi-layered process leading or exposing us to free-floating violence. In this way, the following chapters will be much more revealing so as to irreversibly change both our way of reading films and our way of looking at ourselves and the society in which we are living.

Gemide: Homeland on Board, Men with No Hope

> A ship is like a homeland. Everything needs to be in order and under control. Rules and laws must be obeyed. And I am like the leader of this homeland, the prime minister, so to speak. I am the one in charge of everything. When I set out to sea, this small ship turns into a homeland. In fact, I have much more work to do than a prime minister. At least, he has ministers and officers and this and that. And I don't. In this ship, everything from security to education, from health to entertainment is in my charge. Kamil is the swellest assistant of the prime minister. And you are the citizens. Like civil servants. So, we have to be pretty swell, disciplined, active and alert. All the time, we should look out for ourselves and each other.[20]

At the end of these lines, accompanied by views of an Istanbul evening, we are introduced to the ship where the whole conversation takes place. Around the table, we see three men chatting and smoking joints. Asking "Where did we leave off?" the captain begins to talk about his sexual relationship with a woman to the crew, none of whom can know whether it is real or a fantasy.

As he continues his storytelling, we hear the other two's sounds of arousal. In a sense, the story of the captain becomes the collective fantasy of

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[20] *"Bir memleket gibidir gemi, her şey düzenli ve kontrol altında olmalıdır. Kaidelere uyulmalıdır. Kanunlara nizamlara. Ben de bu memleketin baş şeyi gibiyim, başbakanı mesela. Her şey benden sorulur. Denize çıktım mıydı bu küçücük gemi memleket oluverir. Aslında bir başbakandan daha çok görevim var. Çünkü onun bakanları var, adamları var, falanı var, filanı var. Benim yok. Bu gemide güvenlik de, eğitim de, sağlık da, eğlence de benden sorulur. Kamil de başbakanın en kıyak yardımcısı. Siz de vatandaş. Aynı zamanda memur gibisiniz. Bu yüzden de çok kıyak, çok disiplinli ve çakı gibi olmalıyız. Sürekli kendimizi ve birbirimizi kollamalıyız."*

the crew. Furthermore, by "achieving a great success," which could hardly have been experienced by the others, the captain solidified his status over the crew.

Shortly after, we figure out that the captain and the crew has been waiting for a character known as Boxer, the fourth on the ship, to return from shore with provisions. This wait ends with the arrival of Boxer, but not in the usual way. Swimming out to the ship, Boxer tells them how he was mugged and lost all their money in Laleli. Already suffering from hunger, the captain gets angry at hearing this story and attempts to attack him. Like a father scolding his child harshly, Captain Idris swears at Boxer, which unveils the hierarchical nature of the "buddy" relationships.

Enraged and determined to take revenge, all four – Idris, Kamil, Boxer and Ali – go ashore to find the thieves. While they are looking up and down for them in Laleli, we see scenes from the district, not only the streets but also interior places such as *pavyon*s and beer houses where men drink beer and watch porn. Just like the crew, who spends their life in the enclosed atmosphere of a ship day and night, we are now exposed to the world outside the ship and introduced to the chaotic night life of Laleli, uncanny-looking men approaching to sell women by giving a price or inviting them to their pubs.

Still, the whole chaos does not make the captain forget his hunger, but rather adds to it. At one moment when he loses his temper, Boxer overconfidently points to a group of four, including one woman, obviously to save himself from the captain's rage. Violently attacking the suspected

thieves – the captain beats one's head with an iron club under the influence of marijuana – the ship's crew recovers not only their money and food, but also the foreign woman in the group upon the suggestion of Boxer.

Filling their stomachs, the captain and his crew go back to their routine of drinking alcohol and smoking joints. Then, the captain begins to tell his story again using the strong language as he does most of the time. Knowing that the captain is already high, Boxer finds an opportunity to leave the table and sneak into the room where he has hidden the woman. Benefiting from her unconscious state due to the beating, Boxer attempts to rape her. To his surprise, the "prostitute" turns out to be a virgin, but this does not stop him.

On the following day, we witness the working routine during the daytime. Everything goes on in its usual monotony. Suffering from a hangover and a headache, the captain controls the system from the wheelhouse. Then, right at the moment when the anchors are lowered to the bottom, the captain calls back disconnected images from the depths of his memory. The deeper the anchors are plunged, the clearer the images become. And when the anchor finishes its work, the circle is completed. The captain remembers the details of the previous night; that they went to Laleli, fought with a group and even brought a woman along with them. Enraged, he calls Boxer to ask for an account and what he did with the woman. Again, Boxer avoids from the captain's scorn and insults by lying. "I already sent her away," he says.

Later, we see Boxer and Ali – the blonde and least masculine-looking character among the crew – talking about the *trouble* and what they will do

with *the woman* in one corner of the ship. Explaining that she turned out to be a virgin and that they have gone down an irreversible road, Boxer needs help to get rid of her. He threatens Ali with spilling the beans to the captain, saying that he was not alone, and they both raped her.

Even though Ali is pretty sure that he did not even touch her, he also knows that he was almost unconscious under the influence of marijuana and alcohol, and that he could not prove the truth. He agrees to help him, but at the same time fears being caught when the police eventually find the body.

Boxer's reply at this point is revealing and thus critical in referring to the courage and the mentality behind crimes and misdemeanors of every scale in gradually increasing numbers in Turkey: "Nobody inquires after a foreign prostitute... No one can find her, man! You think this sea is purely clean? Who knows how many dead bodies lie below in layers? What do you think all these fish eat? Half of them feed on human flesh, man!"[21] They decide to tie a sandbag to her feet and throw her into the sea that night.

In the evening, the routine nightlife of the crew takes the stage: smoking joints, drinking alcohol and telling sexual stories. As time passes and the captain gets high, Boxer and Ali leave the table to carry out their plan. With her hands and mouth tied up, Ela neither moves nor reacts. Now, before getting rid of her, Ali says that he wants to *do it* once or otherwise will spill the beans to the captain. Boxer goes mad as Ali makes him wait outside by getting too nervous and hesitant to abuse her in this way. Noticing that it

[21] *"Gavur bir orospuyu kimse aramaz....Kimse bulamaz oğlum, sen bu denizi temiz mi sanıyorsun? Kim bilir kaç kişi var aşağıda marul gibi. Bu balıklar ne yiyor sanıyorsun. Yarısı insan etiyle besleniyor."*

is taking a long time for the other two to come back, Captain Idris goes to look for them and sees them playing a trick behind his back. He stops them just before they threw the woman into the sea.

The captain questions Boxer and Ali, while Ela stands in the background with her hands, mouth and legs still tied up. Kamil suggests taking her back to where they got her, which is the only way out in his view. However, Boxer opposes this by admitting that they have raped her without knowing that she was virgin. Thus, "this will be their end if they take her back." Kamil's words at this point show the same problematic perception of justice and law in the minds of the public: "Doesn't matter. No police would put young boys in jail just because they raped a foreign prostitute."[22] The head of the ship turns into the voice of conscience at this moment and looks at the issue from the opposite side: "You tie the hands and the mouth of the poor girl and rape her. Then, you are shivering like dogs. And you are saying that she was a virgin. If so, isn't your conscience shivering? Don't you have a sister? On top of it, you are attempting to kill her!"[23]

Considered in terms of the characters, we can say that Idris is the dependable old man on the ship. Just like a father at the head of a family, the captain sometimes oppresses his own children, while remembering to show sympathy at other times. Despite his weaknesses and faults, he is the one listening to the voice of conscience. Thus, we can argue that the film supports

[22] *"Olsun, hiçbir polis gavur bir orospuyu siktiler diye delikanlıları içeri atmaz."*

[23] *"Elin zavallı kızını, elini kolunu bağlayarak sikiyorsunuz, sonra da it gibi titriyorsunuz. Bir de kızdı diyorsun. Ulan bu garip kızsa, vicdanın titremiyor mu? Senin bacın yok mu puşt? Bir de kızı öldürmeye kalkıyorlar."*

the traditional idea of seeing a father – even if he is a substitute– as the pillar of a family in this respect.

Unlike the captain, Kamil – the second oldest man in the ship – is used to being just an onlooker to events. Without any common sense, Kamil is ready to solve problems to their advantage even if it will be at the expense of the *victim*. However, in his view, Ela is not a victim at all but the origin of the *trouble* itself. We can perceive this gynophobia from his looks and his way of approaching her. Used to passively consuming any sexual materials – a story or a magazine – around him and deriving pleasure from them, Kamil does not take any action to rape her like Boxer and Ali did. It is not simply his way of getting sexual satisfaction. He prefers to become aroused by passively watching, looking or listening but not by actively having a real sexual relationship.

In the end, all four decide to take Ela back and to deny responsibility if there is any accusation or complaint. But for Idris, concerned about the whole situation, it is not easy to understand how the crew ends up in a situation like this: *"How can the order break down in such a small ship, Kamil?"*[24] Remembering the comparison between a homeland and a ship in the opening scene of the film, we are inevitably encouraged to ask the same question for Turkey.

Remembering hitting one's head with an iron club, the captain cannot help giving into the fear that the man might have died from his blow. At this moment, Ali, who in general seems to be in need of proving himself most,

[24] *"Şu küçücük gemide niye düzen bozulur be Kamil?"*

realizes the captain's concerns and jumps at the opportunity to turn the captain's weak point to his benefit. He goes ashore to see if the man really died or survived. He would be the one to give the news and to direct the case for or against the captain. "The destiny of the captain, who always orders them what to do or not to do and scolds them for their mistakes, will be in his hands now."

Persuading the crew of the need to know what happened to the man, Ali goes to Laleli. Spending time in the same beer house in Laleli, where men drink beer and watch porn, he runs across the group they attacked, and sees the man in question, alive. He flees the pub and rushes to his shelter's warmth.

In the meantime, not only doubts but also questions gnaw at the captain's mind. Unable to fill in the blanks of the full story, the captain feels that Boxer must be lying at some point. "How could you identify those who mugged you in that chaotic crowd? What did they save this girl from those men for? *Who are we to save someone?* In one way or another, I am going to solve this mystery,"[25] the captain says.

Before long, Boxer loses hope of any way out under pressure and cannot keep on hiding the truth any longer. He believes that the captain will understand and forgive him despite all his attacks and insults. He spills the beans:

> "I was passing a street. One man was bargaining with a prostitute. She did not like the offer and pointed at me. 'With that amount, I would

[25] *"Onca adam arasında sen nasıl buldun paranı çalanları? Ne diye bu kızı o adamlardan kurtardık? Biz kimiz de adam kurtarıyoruz? Ben de çözücem bu olayı!"*

> rather sleep with him but not with you,' she said. Then she turned to me, 'If you have money, we can do it anywhere you want.' I said, 'No, I have other things to do.' You were all waiting for me, but she laughed at me. 'Don't you have money to fuck me? Doesn't your cock get up?' She really pissed me off. I swore on fucking the most beautiful woman here. I wouldn't be doing it on my own, Captain!"[26]

At this moment, Ali shows up with all the trumps in his hand. He says that the news is bad and the man lost his life after the captain's deadly blow. According to his report, even the street peddlers are still talking about what happened that night and the fellows of that man are looking for us and this girl everywhere. Ali even goes so far as to say that those even beat a few to death, thinking that they knew them.

Revealing the truth behind Boxer's story and thinking about the muddle in which they are stuck, Captain Idris pours out his concerns to Kamil: "The order breaks down, Kamil! We have to be careful! The world will collapse because of two things. One is buildings and the other is adultery. On the Day of Judgment, the sea will want all of the buildings back. Just like all submerged countries. The sea will take its sand back in the end. There is no escape. No way out!"[27] Signifying the common state of mind of the era, these sentences can be interpreted as a reaction to the transformation during the 1990s, of which we will go into detail in the following chapter.

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[26] *"Bir sokaktan geçiyordum, herifin biri bir orospuyla pazarlık ediyordu. Karı parayı beğenmeyince herife beni gösterdi. 'O parayla bununla yatarım, seninle yatmam,' dedi. Sonra karı bana, 'Paran varsa istediğin yerde yatarız,' dedi. Ben de, 'Olmaz, işim var,' dedim. Sen bekliyordun, Kamil abi bekliyordu. Karı bana güldü abi, 'İbne misin sen?' dedi. 'Beni sikecek paran yok mu?' dedi. Ben oradan koşarak kaçıyordum abi. Karı arkamdan bağırıyordu, 'Senin sikin kalkmıyor mu?' diye. Çok kızdım abi. Ben de buranın en güzel kızını sikmezsem bana da Muhammet Ali demesinler dedim abi. Tek başıma yapamazdım abi."*

[27] *"Kamil, düzen bozuluyor, dikkatli olmak lazım! Bu dünya iki şeyden yıkılacak. Bir binadan, bir zinadan. Allah sonumuzu hayır etsin. Mahşer günü bütün binaları deniz geri isteyecek. Batan bütün memleketler gibi. Deniz kumu eninde sonunda geri alacak. Çaresi yok bunun."*

Then, Ali attempts to sneak into the captain's room where Ela sleeps because it is thought to be the safest one in the ship. We see Ali's dreamlike fantasy with the woman. The striking dimension is that his fantasy is the same as the captain's story at the beginning of the film. Showing that his sexual experience is only limited to indirect ways of satisfaction such as listening to sexual stories or watching porn in a pub, this scene is essentially an indicator of full dissatisfaction in real life. Far from experiencing sex with a woman in reality and thus suffering from any real source of inspiration, Ali builds his fantasy upon the details of the captain's story.

The following day, when Ela appears with a bruise on her cheek, we understand much better that the dreamlike scene of the previous night is nothing but a fantasy which could not be realized. Even though Ela does not give a name when being asked and just says that she fell down, it is obvious that resistance was met in beating her. When Ali gets stuck about the bruise on Ela's face and turns to Boxer to support his lie, Boxer does not take risks beside the captain and Kamil. He prefers to deny any involvement.

As is seen here, buddy relationships ideally based on solidarity and friendship could be easily shattered. In other words, the appearance of trust on the surface is fragile in essence. The whole matter of spilling the beans between Ali and Boxer from the beginning of the film supports this argument.

Another example showing the negative effect of hierarchy in buddy relationships is also witnessed in the tension between Idris and Kamil about the so-called murder. The captain cannot tolerate Kamil's criticisms of him

about joint-smoking and getting so drunk every night that he loses consciousness. As the head of the ship, Idris easily forgets about their friendship beside Boxer and Ali by replying: "You must have a reason if you have been so close to me for so long."[28] However, later when he goes to Kamil's room to convince him to stay on board, he speaks in a manner to summarize the situation and the psychology of being socially excluded in the best way:

> What will happen if you leave here? At least, you are the wisest here. What about outside? You will be the most ignorant one. Here, you have someone to cook for you, wash your dishes and obey your orders. What will happen if you leave here? You will be the one who obeys the orders. We are the same. What can we two do outside?[29]

The following night, in spite of all their trouble, Ali sneaks into the captain's room once again, but this time with a knife in his hand. He brings Ela to the deck by pressing the knife against her back. He begins to rape her at knife point.

In the meantime, we see Kamil in the background. He not only remains an onlooker to this scene, but also derives pleasure from watching. At that moment, Boxer shows up and tells Ali to stop. But this time, Ali is determined to *do it.* Holding the knife against her back, he begins to argue with Boxer, telling him to walk away. The expression on Ela's face conveys

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[28] *"Bana yakınsan bir sebebi vardır."*

[29] *"Burdan ayrılırsan ne olacak? Burda iyi kötü buranın en akıllısı sensin. Ya dışarda? En cahili sen kalacaksın. Burda iyi kötü adamların var, yemeğini pişiren, bulaşığını yıkayan, emirlerini dinleyen. Ya dışarda? Sen emir dinleyeceksin. Sen başkalarının adamı olacaksın. Biz bu yerin dibine batasıca kakalakta birbirimize bağlıyız. Senle ben dışarda ne yaparız?"*

that she can take it no longer. She puts an end to all of the chaos by pushing herself back so that the knife is stabbed into her body.

Petrified with horror, Ali stammers, "I didn't do anything. She did it herself. I didn't."[30] Gathering around Ela's body on the ground, all four are perplexed by this unxpected act and begin to put the blame on each other. In order to get free of the trouble, Kamil makes an unsurprising suggestion and says that they should throw her into the sea now. After all, "they have no responsibility for what happened to her at this moment. She has solved her own problem by herself."[31]

Making him stop talking, Idris captain steps in and orders all of them to take responsibility. "They will take her to the doctor together, just like they got into this muddle altogether." When the crew and the wounded woman go ashore, they hear the wail of police sirens. They leave her on the roadside at a point where the police can find her. Trying to make themselves feel relieved, all four are heard saying: "We did the right thing!" or "This was the best to do!"[32] In a cyclical pattern, the film ends at the point where it begins. Idris captain's question turns into a curtain which closes the story: "Where did we leave off?"[33]

Considered all in all, *Gemide* is basically an interior film apart from the scenes in Laleli. No matter how dependent they are on the outside world for

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[30] *"Ben bir şey yapmadım. Kendi yaptı. Ben yapmadım!"*

[31] *"Tamamdır işte. Atalım denize, kurtulalım şu kancıktan. Kız meseleyi kendi kendine çözdü."*

[32] *"En doğrusunu yaptık."*

[33] *"Nerde kalmıştık?"*

their basic needs such as food, the main characters are bound to spend their lives on board. In a sense, they are enclosed in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the ship. This feeling of being shut in, which appears as the main recurring theme throughout the film, refers not only to a physical situation, but to the psychological state of being socially excluded as well. Therefore, the space in its all darkness and monotony turns into an instrument through which Serdar Akar conveys the characters' feelings of being outcasts and losers.

Unable to find a place at the center of the world, the captain and the crew withdraw into their shells. In this respect, this state of being enclosed is not only obligatory because of exclusionary processes, but also voluntary for defensive reasons. We remember that the captain faces the truth at one moment when he is alone with Kamil: *"What are we two going to do outside?"* Therefore, the ship is basically a shelter and a prison for them at the same time.

Besides stressing upon the element of interiority, we should also point out to the contrast between inside and outside throughout the film. With its claustrophobic and boring atmosphere, the ship symbolizes the periphery as opposed to Laleli at the core. The ship is safe despite its dullness and monotony, while the city is full of life, but at the same time chaotic and uncanny. Even though there have been times when the ship's crew plan to leave home (as Kamil intends to do after arguing with the captain), they are always well aware of the fact that uncertainty awaits them outside. They cannot have the same sense of belonging with that unfamiliar world as they do with the life on board.

As the question of what these men can or cannot do outside makes them feel insignificant and useless within the whole system, we see that they cling more tightly to their homosocial environments in order to overcome the uneasiness in real life. In this respect, in *Gemide*, homosociality appears as the key point which holds the crew together by lessening the effects of social exclusion. In other words, males reconstruct their "damaged" masculinity through these buddy relationships. The captain can take the role of a father *only among his crew;* all four go ashore *together* to take their money back; and Boxer admits making up the whole story of being mugged because he was humiliated when he was *alone* in the city center. They always seem to be in need of each other's help.

As another crucial dimension of physical homosociality, we should note that it enables men to construct their masculinity through excessive swearing and excessively masculine behavior in order to surmount their unfavorable position. Consuming porn in a beer house and swapping sexual fantasies are examples to be taken into account on this axis.

To put it in a clearer way, the captain and the crew resort to these means in order to mask their feelings of uselessness and inferiority. At this point, Nejat Ulusay's argument deserves attention. According to his work, exaggerated forms of masculinity indicate that men are under more threat than ever. This is mainly based on the fear of not being potent enough. In other words, a continuous stress upon masculinity and its excessive manifestations basically refer to vulnerability stemming from the concern of

not looking virile enough.[34] Therefore, when looked at from this perspective, homosocial environments function as a social space where the absence of social inclusion and sexual relationships is recovered in an excessive way to hide the surplus of desire left unsatisfied.

Even though homosocial relationships give men the feeling of a shelter and are ideally based on solidarity and friendship, we see in *Gemide* that there is also a hierarchy even in a group of four men and this hierarchical structure brings along hypocrisy and trickiness towards each other at the same time. The suspense between the old and the young makes its presence felt throughout the whole movie just like in a father-and-son relationship.

By referring to the problematic relationship between a father and a son in real life, Nejat Ulusay notes in this respect that while a father tries to impose his hegemony over his son, he cannot reveal love and respect to his son in a healthy way.[35] Similarly, as Idris – the substitute father on board – tries to establish authority, the dominated develop not only respect but also resentment. Thus, when they grab a chance, they will not hesitate to take the revenge of their resentment in order to see the old in a desperate situation just like they always do.

Last but not least, *Gemide* gives critical hints behind the mentality which encourages people in Turkey to commit acts of free-floating violence in different kinds with different motivations. In a country where the solution of problems is left to people's consciences and where people feel

[34] Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p. 89.

[35] Ulusay, p. 153.

insignificant as human beings and have lost their faith in justice and state action, Boxer can hold an unknown woman on the ship, make her suffer from pain for his own feelings of inferiority and even attempt to throw her body into the sea by thinking that one person's life is too trivial to set the Turkish police into action.

Considering *Gemide* as a whole, we argue that the film highlights the atmosphere of the 1990s. However, the crisis of masculinity that we witnessed and discussed here does not exist on its own. On the contrary, the story portrays what could be the violent consequences when the crisis of social exclusion merges with the tradition of masculinity. This is what makes *Gemide* a social realist film belonging to the history of the 1990s in Turkey.

As long as justice is left to people's own consciences instead of legal institutions and as long as citizens lose their hope of state efficiency, they will be ready to take punitive initiatives to correct the wrong. In this respect, *Barda*, which takes its origin from the twenty-first century social facts, is crucial to show how the crisis of social exclusion portrayed in *Gemide* could make the millennium people end up in the middle of free-floatingly violent experiences.

Barda: A Violent Encounter in a City of Clashing Opposites

Barda (In the Bar) opens in the lobby of Vesika Bar, which is referred in the title. Taking the passport photo of a newcomer, the security guard issues a customized membership card for her. We understand that being a member means having the privileges. With this card, she will not have to wait in the queue or pay any entrance fee when she comes. Obviously, this procedure

creates not only a sense of belonging among the community, but also successfully excludes any strangers failing to meet the criteria.

At this moment, Nail and his girlfriend Nil enter through the door and show their membership cards. Running late for the night, the couple hurry to the table where their group of friends sits. However, the men in the group do not let Nail take a breath and immediately send him to the game with cheers. Thus, we are introduced into another unusual feature of Vesika Bar. There is a pitch where members can play football games between 9 – 11 pm. Whoever wins the game will have drinks for free all night.

With the opening credits on the screen, the game begins. Zooming in on the slogan, "Football is never just football"[36] written on the wall, the director Serdar Akar puts us in the middle of an ongoing game in which Nail attracts attention with his talent. After the match, when Nail and his friends go back to the table and celebrate the victory by toasting each other, we begin to enter into the ordinary lives of these young people and get to know more about their hopes and fears.

Opening up a conversation about Nail's talent and progress in football, the character TGG brings the point to his major life philosophy, which is TGG – short for *Tekrar Gözden Geçir* in Turkish – and in other words, Reevaluate: "You are getting much better every passing day. This is what progress is all about. You deliberate upon the past and upon what is gained from yesterday. And then, when the turn comes to you again, you take to the

[36] "Futbol Asla Sadece Futbol Değildir" is the title of Simon Kuper's book translated into Turkish. However, the original title is *Football Against Enemy*.

stage as a completely different person this time. You see, right? TGG is inevitably in every minute of life."[37] From the reaction of all the other people around the table except Nil, we understand that reevaluation is his obsessive ideology in life.

Originally coming from another city to see her cousin Sevgi and to spend the summer in Istanbul, Nil is relatively new in the group and thus unfamiliar with the topic. When she insists on learning more about "reevaluation," TGG explains:

> "Reevaluation is not paranoia. It refuses to accept anything without a logical explanation. It adopts the principle that the more questions one judgment answers, the more correct it is. Because events are experienced in the way they are perceived; however, the truth comes out much later. TGG never looks into the future as we cannot know what will happen in the future. The past is essential, because it already passed. Events are experienced in the way they are perceived and the truth is always hidden in the very depths."[38]

Other than TGG and his ideology, we learn that Nail and Nil are the newest couple in the group, while Sevgi and Aliş are preparing to get married very soon. Another couple, Pelin and Cenk, seems to have a serious problem. Becoming pregnant out of wedlock, Pelin is spending an anxious night waiting for the abortion appointment in less than 24 hours. All their friends around the table try to share their concerns and to comfort them.

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[37] *"Sen her geçen gün biraz daha ilerliyorsun. Gelişim böyle bir şey zaten. Dünün üstüne bugün yaptıklarını düşünüyorsun, tartıyorsun. Sonra tekrar sıra sana geldiğinde bambaşka bir adam oluyorsun. Görüyorsun, değil mi? TGG hayatın her anında yanında."*

[38] *"TGG paranoya değildir. Mantıklı açıklamaları olmayan hiçbir şeyi kabul etmez. Bir yargı ne kadar çok soruya cevap veriyorsa o kadar doğrudur ilkesini benimser. Çünkü olaylar algılandıkları gibi yaşanır. Gerçek ondan çok sonra ortaya çıkar. TGG asla gelecekle ilgilenmez, çünkü gelecekte neler olacağını bilemeyiz. Aslolan geçmiştir. Çünkü o olmuştur. Olaylar algılandıkları gibi yaşanır ve gerçek her zaman çok derinlerde gizlidir."*

Following day, we find Pelin, Aynur and Cenk waiting in a room. Far from being a health clinic, this place is an unlicensed office for abortions under insanitary conditions. There is another patient inside whose sister is waiting anxiously in the lobby. At this moment, the doctor's assistant asks Cenk to wait outside, saying that the room is too crowded. He joins Nail and TGG outside the building. Cenk is obviously not happy with the situation and concerned about Pelin's health. At this point, TGG attributes this state of deadlock to living life without rethinking and reevaluating. And he asks: "Let's say that a tree in the jungles of Africa grew older and collapsed a hundred years ago. Do you think that this tree fell over or not? If nobody heard anything... If nobody saw anything.... It fell over, my friends. Don't blur your mind!"[39]

Considered within the whole picture, this single example implies the director's message, that we always take history for granted without questioning and inconsiderately live the present moment. In parallel, Serdar Akar affirmed in an interview[40] that TGG ideology basically encompasses the essence of what the film is trying to say. According to his opinion, the ideology tells us not to immediately accept as undeniable truth something which has been stated many times over. Therefore, in his view, as long as we keep revising every moment of our lives, we will definitely reach the truth

[39] *"Diyelim bundan 100 milyon yıl önce Afrikanın balta girmemiş ormanlarından birinde bir ağaç yaşlandı ve yıkıldı. Sizce bu ağaç devrilmiş midir, devrilmemiş midir? Hiç kimse duymadıysa, hiç kimse görmediyse, kafanı karıştırma, devrilmiştir abicim."*

[40] *Hurriyet.* 28 January 2007.

one day, even if not today. In this sense, Serdar Akar's line of thought can be perceived as a criticism regarding the origin of today's free-floating violence events, which recur in different ways in different parts of the country since we easily forget to rethink the past.

Meanwhile, the situation gets worse in the doctor's office. Screams are heard from inside and the doctor comes out with his hands and jacket all in blood. Upon seeing this, the woman, already concerned about her sister's health, can not stand any longer and wants to enter into the room. The assistant, trying to stop her, tells Pelin and Aynur that the doctor is tired today and she will make an appointment for them tomorrow.

After they all come back home, Pelin wants to rest for a while. Unable to overcome their fears and to find a way out of the situation, the couple decides to marry. Pelin enthusiastically accepts her partner's proposal. Telling others that he will not join them tonight for the concert at Vesika Bar, Cenk leaves home to talk to his parents about their decision.

At a moment when Nail and Nil are left alone, they find a rare chance to get closer. In the midst of the kiss, Nil stops her partner, saying that she is nervous. "Does it hurt?"[41] she asks. And, Nail timidly reveals that he is a virgin as well. Then, he remembers what a depressing day they have spent and how guilty Cenk feels because of Pelin's pregnancy.

Even though *Barda* mainly intends to focus on the nature of violence, we realize that the film does not begin with an act of violence. Until now, we

[41] *"Acır mı ki?"*

have only been introduced into the social environments and private spheres of these young people. We have witnessed both their dreams and fears. Through this introductory section, Sevgi and Aliş are no longer an ordinary couple in our eyes but a couple planning to get married and to go on a honeymoon very soon. We also get to know Nil and Nail in their purely romantic relationship and Pelin and Cenk as a couple expecting a baby. Therefore, we can say that every little knowledge about personal stories basically serves to create a sense of empathy in us towards the soon-to-be victims of violence.

Inspired by real third-page news in 1998, Serdar Akar thus interprets an anonymous story of violence through a fictional work. Unlike unknown faces and lives on the third-page news, this fictional story in a sense represents the reality of free-floating violence throughout the country. Regarding the violence in the film, Serdar Akar stated in an interview[42] that he tries to touch upon a type of free-floating violence uncharacteristic of Turkey. Stating that this type of violence does not originally belong to these lands, Serdar Akar also refers to the real danger: "Even though *Barda* is the first example drawing attention to this new type of violence, the daily news seriously shows that free-floating violence in real life has already gone beyond that one in the film."[43]

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[42] *Zaman*, 5 February 2007.

[43] *"Film belki Türkiye için bir ilk, ama olaylar o kadar hızlı gelişti ki... Mesela bir mekâna giren adamların oradaki insanlara hiçbir sebep yokken uyguladıkları şiddeti anlatıp bunun absürtlüğünü vurgulayacakken iki çocuk, yollara çıkıp adam vurdu! Ülkedeki şiddet filmden önde gidiyor. Asıl tehlikeli olan bu!"*

The next scene takes us to an empty court room on the wall of which it is written, "Justice is the Foundation of the State."[44] While the camera slowly zooms into the slogan on the wall, an officer puts a stack of files on the judge's desk. After this point, the film interweaves two separate narrative levels. On one level, the story of the group of young friends from the bar goes on from where we left it. We become the sole eyewitness to what is really experienced in Vesika Bar that night. Thus, the first narrative level enables us to see how the events are perceived at that specific moment when they are experienced.

As for the second level, we are introduced to a court room where the suspects stand trial for their act of violence in Vesika Bar. Every time the judge asks them a question, we listen to how they narrate the events in question differently from what we see in the bar. Through these two separate levels interwoven in such a manner that they chronologically complement each other, the difference between experience in the past and narration in the present becomes clear.

Going back to the night of the same day, we see the group watching a concert and enjoying themselves in the bar. After the concert, they gather around the table. Nail tells Aliş and TGG at the bar that Pelin and Cenk have decided to marry, while Pelin shares it with Sevgi and Aynur at the table. Even if the reactions are opposite each other, they all toast to the "happy ending."

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[44] *"Adalet Mülkün Temelidir."*

Right at this moment, they begin to talk about Sevgi and Aliş's marriage plan on the horizon. TGG takes out the brochures of the cruise which they plan to go on altogether as a honeymoon holiday. In the meantime, we realize that there are no people left in the bar other than the group. The bartender tells the security guard that he can leave since it is already too late. After the security man leaves, bartender Barbaros makes an offer that the young cannot refuse: He treats them to another round.

At this moment, a group of "strangers" enters the bar. Even though Barbaros tells them that the service is already closed, they refuse to leave by pointing to the young group still drinking beer. Upon this, he agrees to serve them a single round. However, those "uncanny-looking" faces obviously fall outside the typical customer profile of Vesika Bar.

Feeling uncomfortable with the existence of the unfamiliar in the bar, the friends are unable to refrain from staring strangely at these strangers. "Where did they come out at this hour? We were enjoying ourselves,"[45] says Aliş. Inevitably, a tense atmosphere prevails in the bar, like the silence before storm. Apparently disturbed by the looks of the strangers, the friends decide to leave as soon as possible. Nil was going to go to the restroom, and they were going to leave.

In the meantime, we are also introduced to the table where the strangers are talking about the group of friends among them. By referring to the girls, they complain about how lucky some men could be even if they do not deserve it. At that moment, Patlak – nicknamed after the popping sound of

[45] *"Nerden çıktı şimdi bunlar? Ne güzel biz bize eğleniyorduk!"*

drugs – takes out of his pocket a small box, in which there are opium pills. He hands them out to the others at the table – except Çırak – to take with their drinks. Strikingly enough, excessive swearing forms the basis of their proper self-expression in the conversation, which reminds us of the ship's crew in *Gemide*.

As the nickname suggests, Çırak is working as an apprentice to Selim, who is an exhaust pipe repair man. Badly treated like a pupil in the group, Çırak is apparently the shy and the most obedient person among others. As for Selim, he is not only his master, but also takes the leader role in the group by making decisions and giving orders.

When Nil comes back from the restroom, everyone in the group readily agrees to leave, except TGG. Refusing to give way to any swaggering behaviour, TGG objects to leaving before finishing his drink. Building all his actions and decisions upon rethinking and reevaluating every moment of his life, TGG skips the basic principle this time. He acts on his impulses and obstinately reacts.

At the other side of the bar, things begin to get out of control. When Patlak drops his glass and spills beer on the floor, Selim asks for another round. Being rejected, Selim roars with anger. However, Barbaros is now at the end of his patience. When the argument is about to turn into a violent fight, Nail jumps into the conversation to support their bartender friend against the strangers. In the face of this "unexpected and impudent act," Selim loses his temper.

At the moment when two sides get into a serious quarrel, Selim pulls out his weapon, which tips the power balance in favor of the "outsiders." Everyone freezes. With the gun in his hand, Selim is the only person who dares to speak up: "Where did we leave off?"[46] Manifesting that arbitrary use of guns opens the way to different forms of interpersonal violence within society, this scene critically points to Turkey's gun culture as one element defining the arbitrariness of crime and violence in the country.

Back to the courtroom, which is now full of people, in an ongoing lawsuit, the judge is to give the accused a hearing and listen to their statements about what exactly happened that night in the bar. But before that, the film cuts back to the night in question and we find the young all tied up lying on the floor and Kırkbeşlik beating them with rubber hoses.

The screams rising from the bar are followed by the words of the judge on justice in the courtroom: "Justice is not something made up in order to ease our consciences. Therefore, you may not feel your conscience at ease in the end. This event should never have happened. We wish it had not happened. Maybe, you will think the same way one day."[47]

In a manner stressing the harshness of reality as opposed to the unreality of words, Serdar Akar jumps back to Vesika Bar, in which the violence goes on in its most brutal forms. Nasır, Selim's cousin, takes Pelin to the kitchen and rapes her, while Kırkbeşlik continues beating the ones

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[46] *"Nerde kalmıştık?"*

[47] *"Adalet insanların vicdanını rahatlatmak için uydurulmuş bir şey değildir. Bu yüzden vicdanınız rahatlamayabilir. Böyle bir olay asla olmamalıydı. Keşke olmasaydı. Siz belki bir gün bunu diyeceksiniz."*

lying on the floor. Separating Nil from the others, Selim makes her sit at the table alongside him. He tries to have an ordinary conversation with her and asks her if she has a boyfriend or not. Thus, Selim realizes what is unthinkable for him in real life circumstances: to communicate with a girl with whom he may be walking side by side in the streets but cannot socialize.

The moment when Selim and his friends appear on the stage is significant in showing us that there is not one single type of masculinity. From the manner of talking to the way of getting dressed, Selim and his friends represent a type of masculinity completely different from that of Nail and the other friends. The former bases his masculine identity on swaggering toughness, showing no sentimentality, excessive swearing and aggressive behavior as opposed to the latter's cultivated personalities, attentive treatment of women and openly sentimental behavior.

By locking these two separate groups in the same bar, Serdar Akar tries not only to see if they can manage to enjoy themselves together in peace, but to see if the two different types of masculinities can exist together in peace as well. Therefore, through these portrayals, Akar basically points out to one key element on the way to free-floating violence among many others: clashing masculinities. However, we should underline the point that it is not only the masculinities which are in conflict.

In other words, this element needs considering in conjunction with social structure and social exclusion, because each masculinity seems to stand for the stratum of its own in the film. Violence becomes the main instrument which is turned to in order to knock the opposite (opposite group

– opposite masculinity – opposite stratum) out. Therefore, even if everything is thought to be nothing but coincidence at the outset, we realize that a multi-layered and multidimensional process underlies the seemingly free-floating violence on the surface.

This aspect of violence in *Barda* is also emphasized in the interviews regarding the film. For instance, in the interview entitled "Revenge of the Lower Classes,"[48] Pınar Öğünç argues that the whole outburst of violence actually manifests the anger of ordinary men. Agreeing with the argument, the actors of violence in the bar refer to the reality of social hunger as the reason why we fail to live together in peace.

Back at the bar, when Nasır comes out of the kitchen after "finishing the job," Selim gives Patlak a nod to take his turn. Opening the same small box again, Patlak does not take out drugs, but a razor blade this time. With the razor blade between his fingers, he enters the kitchen and approaches Pelin, who is lying on the kitchen counter. He does not rape her like Nasır did. Instead, he cuts her body with the razor blade. Therefore, sexual pleasure is not directly derived from sexual intercourse, but indirectly from making Pelin's body bleed.

In the meantime, Kırkbeşlik takes Aynur, who is TGG's ex-girlfriend, to the bathroom and attempts to rape her. From his reaction when he comes back, we understand that this could not go beyond an attempt. Making fun of his failure, Nasır inadvertently enters the minefield of masculinity, which is

[48] *Radikal,* 27 January 2007.

intolerant of joking about sexual potency or lack thereof. Harshly swearing at him, Kırkbeşlik gets into a quarrel with Nasır in a manner to compensate for his failure through such swaggering behavior. As the leader of the group, Selim scolds them and stops them from fighting.

Right at this moment, Patlak appears, shocking everyone including Selim. He has blood all over his hands, his face and his clothes. Although Selim gets enraged with him for losing control and shedding blood, Patlak looks completely numb and unfeeling. They all go to the kitchen to see if the girl has really died or not.

This break creates a chance for the friends left alone in the room to hope for a way out and to attempt some kind of action. Pulling himself together after the hard blow to his head, Barbaros quietly takes hold of the leg of a stool before him and pulls it away by force. In the meantime, TGG tries to untie himself, while Nil stands up to find her ringing mobile phone.

However, they both get caught by Selim and his friends, who suddenly enter the room. Firstly switching the phone off, Nasır takes money out of her bag to give Çırak. They send Çırak outside to buy something to eat. It goes without saying that Selim remembers to warn Çırak against any communication with any strangers on his way.

Right at this moment, Barbaros strikes a sharp blow to Nasır's leg with the wooden leg in his hand, which costs him his life. While Nasır writhes in pain, Kırkbeşlik begins to beat Barbaros to death with the same wooden leg. However, Selim stops him to let Nasır give the final death blow. Handing out the blooded wooden leg to Nasır, Kırkbeşlik follows Selim's order.

Then, the film jumps forward to the ongoing trial in the courtroom. When the judge asks Çırak to describe how the event occurred, Çırak tries to explain by crying that he was not there at the moment of murder; that he went out to buy something to eat; that he found the bartender having been killed by the others."

Back at the bar, we see that Çırak is literally shocked to find Barbaros murdered. His first sudden response is only to ask: "What did YOU do, brother?"[49] However, Selim's reaction to the question is harsh. Slapping Çırak's face, he tries to make himself understood: "What is this '*you*' crap all about? How could it be possible to talk about you but not us after all this? There is no such difference as you and me any more! We fucked two girls and we razored one of them. We killed one bartender. Hear what I am saying? *We* did it. *We* are doing it. And *we* will do it."[50] The more Selim humiliates Çırak in front of everyone, the more the latter seems to shrink.

This scene is significant in providing insight into the nature of homosociality. Similarly to the case of the ship's crew in *Gemide*, the homosociality here highlights collective responsibility rather than individual actions. For instance, in *Barda*, this collective action works in two opposite ways. On the one hand, we see that feelings of solidarity and security in the homosocial sphere encourage Selim and his friends to challenge the other

[49] *"Abi, ne yaptınız siz?"*

[50] *"Siz ne demek lan? Sizi bizi mi kaldı artık? İki karı siktik, birini jiletledik, birini öldürdük. Bak ne diyom bak. Yaptık. Biz yapıyoruz. Biz yapacağız."*

side and to break all the limits. On the other hand, the same sphere makes it necessary for Çırak to share the blame for the crimes of others.

Therefore, homosocial environments function not only as a haven in which men can mutually affirm the correctness and "normality" of their own perspectives,[51] but also as a prison with all the doors shut for such members treated contemptuously like Çırak.

Understandably, the second function is directly related to the hierarchical structure of homosocial relationships. In the case of *Barda*, Çırak – the most obedient person in the group – is seen to suffer from being at the bottom of this hierarchy. Considering *Barda* and *Gemide* together from this aspect, we can argue that male homosociality is another critical element to be looked into on the way to free-floating violence.

Back in the bar, Kırkbeşlik and Çırak carry the dead body right after this burst of anger, since Selim orders them to put it out of sight. In the meantime, the anger subsides. Knowing that he has hurt the pride of his obedient apprentice, Selim tries to make peace with Çırak. Letting him sit on his lap as if he were his own child, he wants to make sure that there are no feelings of resentment between two of them.

In that respect, their conversation bears resemblance to the one between the captain and Boxer about hiding Ela on board. The character in the leader role among the group harshly scolds the junior for his mistake at one point.

[51] Michael S. Kimmel and Amy Aronson, *Men & Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Press, 2003), p. 397.

Afterwards, he feels remorse about breaking his heart and tries to gain him back in order to end any hostile feelings.

Besides their common roles as the surrogate father figure in the buddy relationship, Captain Idris and Selim have differences as well. First of all, there is an age factor. Seniority plays a crucial role in the construction of Idris' leadership. As the captain, he is the one who steers the ship with his knowledge and experience. However, in Selim's case, there is basically no big difference among the group in such matters as age or experience. To the contrary, Patlak looks older than Selim, but he prefers to remain passive. He does not rape any of the girls or beat them like Kırkbeşlik does. He rather takes indirect ways of sexual satisfaction and observes the ongoing violence silently, which corresponds to the characteristics of Kamil in *Gemide*.

As for the comparison between Selim and Idris, we realize that these two exert their leadership in opposite directions. Trying to rein his crew in, the captain stops them from getting into more trouble and committing more crimes. In contrast, Selim takes the lead in encouraging them to beat, to rape and to kill their victims so that things get out of hand.

As a loser, Idris yields to withdrawing himself. Even if he represents the conscientious side in the film, he is obviously weak and vulnerable. However, Selim, on the contrary, exerts himself and takes everything under his control as a leader. He directs people in what to do. In this sense, we can say in terms of their leadership that Selim embodies the urge for violence and revenge while Idris represents conscience and common sense among the group.

More importantly, when we think their differences together with their similarities in terms of social exclusion, we can argue that Idris signifies the figure of the repressed in the 1990s while Selim exemplifies the return of the repressed in the millennium. Using the phrase "the return of the repressed" to refer to the transformation process in the 1980s, Nurdan Gürbilek explains in her work *Vitrinde Yaşamak* (Living in the Shop Window) that what was once repressed never returns as the same thing. "On the contrary, it returns as something rebuilt and shaped by the needs and the circumstances of the period and the place where it returns."[52] In this sense, if we compare the roles of leaders in the buddy groups suffering from social exclusion, "the return of the repressed" helps us to understand the change during the years from Idris' period to Selim's.

Going back to the point of departure taking us to the whole comparison between the two leaders, we find Selim trying to please his apprentice to restore relations. Giving him the wristband of Barbaros to wear, Selim asks Çırak if he would like to do it with any of the girls, the apprentice shows no reluctance. By treating him kindly, Selim this time sends him to take a look at the girl that Kırkbeşlik has left in the bathroom.

Going to the bathroom as the master asks him to do, Çırak finds Aynur with her mouth and her hands tied up and under the shower. Fearing that he will attempt to rape her, she at first resists. However, he relieves her by saying that he will not do anything. After he turns the shower off and unties her mouth, Aynur asks him one favor: to pull her trousers up. Then, crying,

[52] Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2007), p. 11.

she asks about Pelin and says that she was pregnant. Crouching down in one corner of the bathroom, Çırak takes his head between his hands. There are tears of sorrow and regret on his face.

As the person who is treated as an inferior in the group, Çırak suffers from the pressure of homosocial bonds in conflict with his conscience. In order not to be accused of not being masculine enough, he does not object to any of Selim's attempts or try to stop the others from committing violence. By obeying their orders, Çırak remains included in a secure environment and even hopes to improve his position in that specific social hierarchy.

In the chapter where we will try to understand the relation between homosociality and free-floating violence, we will go deeper into the characteristics of male homosociality so that we can see the underlying mechanisms behind Çırak's dilemma or inaction.

Jumping forward to the courtroom, the film takes us to the moment where the judge calls upon Kırkbeşlik to speak about the night in question. Having obeyed Selim without hesitation at the bar, Kırkbeşlik now blames Selim for everything that happened that night:

> "The first moment when we went into the bar, I told him that we should go back. I insisted but he did not listen. Of course, he refused to leave. He set his eyes on the girls. I did not even know that he carried a gun. The devil tempted me. I am just an ordinary man. I work as an itinerant salesman. I do no harm to anyone. That is why these don't like me."[53]

At that point, the judge stops him by saying that the statement is turning into a defense. Upon this warning, Kırkbeşlik begins to continue from where

[53] *"Bara ilk girdiğimiz anda geri dönelim, çıkalım burdan dedim. Ama Selim inat etti, dinlemedi. Kızları gördü, gözüne kestirdi tabi. Elinde de silahı varmış, benim haberim yok. Şeytan işte, uyduruyor kendine. Ben seyyar kebapçıyım, sevmez bunlar beni."*

Çırak left off. He says that he carried the dead body upon Selim's order and took one of the girls to the kitchen for her to cook.

When we flash back to the bar, we see that Kırkbeşlik pounds Sevgi's head on the countertop and rapes her. Therefore, through this two-tiered narrative structure jumping back and forth between the bar and the courtroom, the film draws our attention to the striking discrepancy between what is experienced and what is narrated, as is seen in this example.

Furthermore, this can be linked directly to the ideology of reevaluation in the film. In other words, we can say that this narrative structure serves as an instrument to critically point to the blanks in the course of justice and the lack of re-evaluation. For instance, in the revealingly critical conversation between the prosecuting attorney and the judge after the ongoing session, we are introduced into the proceedings which define the limits or boundaries of legal power.

Asking the judge if the defense attorney has requested an interview, the prosecuting attorney insists upon doing their best and to bring "these monsters" to justice. However, he cannot overcome the legal procedures on paper. He fails to convince the judge to make a decision based on conscience and common sense.

> Attorney: I examined the case in detail. Everything is evident. You see the kids? Is this fair?
> Judge: Did you look at their criminal records? They are no angels but have clean records.
> Attorney: I know that. That is what I am trying to say. What if Pelin was your own daughter?
> Judge: "What if Pelin was my own daughter?" Is this how we do our work? Am I going to make a decision by thinking what if she was my own daughter or what if he was my father? We have a book. We have

> our procedure. Then, what is it going to be if I say, "what if Selim was my own son"?[54]

In this respect, when we contrast *Gemide* and *Barda* in terms of references to law and justice, we see that there is a concrete difference. In the former, there is no visibility of the state or the police or any legal institution. Only through the words of Boxer or Kamil can we sense the perception of justice and equality in the minds of these ordinary people. Moreover, we do not have any idea about whether they are really caught by the police and appear in court in the end or not.

In the latter, on the other hand, legal institutions and individuals come to the fore to administer justice and punish the suspects in one way or another. Thus, in *Barda*, we witness not only how a crime of violence is committed, but also how the committed crime is discussed, handled and punished by law or in the name of justice.

After this conversation, Serdar Akar turns his camera to the faces of young people waiting outside the courtroom. In a manner to stress the indelible after-effects of violence, their faces look pale and drawn while their eyes are lost in thought. Considered in relation to the dialogue between the judge and the attorney, this scene clearly shows that conscience is positioned

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[54] *"Savcı: Sanıklar ortada, deliller ortada. Çocukları gördün, reva mı bu? Elimizden geleni yapmalıyız. Heriflerin yaptığını görüyorsun.*
Hâkim: Baktın mı sabıka kayıtlarına? Hiçbiri melek değil, ama kağıtları bembeyaz.
Savcı: Ben de biliyorum bembeyaz olduğunu. Benim de söylemeye çalıştığım bu. O yüzü kesikler içindeki Pelin senin kızın olsaydı?
Hâkim: Ne demek senin kızın olsaydı? Biz böyle mi yapıyoruz işlerimizi? Kızım olsaydı, babam olsaydı diye mi karar vereceğim ben? Yazılı kitabımız var savcı bey. Usülümüz var. Selim oğlum olsaydı diye de düşüneyim o zaman. Kadılık yapmıyoruz burda."

as opposed to legal and bureaucratic restrictions on paper, just as harshness of experience is to lightness of words.

Going back to the night in Vesika Bar, we see Selim and his gang eating together at the table. With her mouth and hands still tied up, Nil is forced to sit with them. While they are eating fried eggs, they notice the brochures of the cruise on the table. Unable to take their eyes off the brochure, they heave sighs of envy. After all, they have never been on a cruise. They believe that these young have an easy-going life when compared to theirs.

And then something happens. While looking for something else, Çırak turns on the spotlights of the football field by mistake. In the courtroom, Patlak tells about the rest of the night, which is spent on the football field in question. Back in the bar, we find the group of friends already sitting on the different parts of the field. Trying to understand the point of having a football field at a bar, Selim unties TGG's mouth after threatening him to give a proper answer. Thus, TGG finds an opportunity to speak up. He explains the whole procedure and that whoever wins the game gets drinks for free. Selim reacts harshly by insulting them: "Your life is always free. You already live for free, faggots!"[55]

Selim's reaction to the word "free" is very indicative in that deep-rooted feelings of anger basically lie behind the seemingly free-floating violence committed at the bar. From that specific moment on, Serdar Akar openly makes us realize that all those experienced is not merely due to a

[55] *"Ulan, siz zaten bedavasınız. Yaşadığınız hayat bedava, ibneler!"*

sudden burst of anger, but to the deep-rooted rage of ordinary men like Selim.

This takes us back to the critical conversation between Selim and TGG. This is the first time throughout the film when Selim says directly to the opposite group what he thinks about them and their lives. And TGG is ready to express his own views, which turns the monologue into a dialogue in the end. What is implied is for the first time uttered face-to-face.

Seeing the TGG t-shirt under his shirt, Selim asks what these three letters mean. Staring at him with eyes full of hatred, TGG explains his reevaluation ideology. Calling it "the instructions for life," Selim continues to look down on the group of friends with disdain by talking wildly about how "easy" their lives are: "These faggots cannot live without instructions. We live without any instructions or descriptions, ok? Not only our joy but also our sorrow cannot be described!"[56] However, TGG responds with an objection, which only irritates Selim more.

He orders Çırak and Kırkbeşlik to untie their legs so that the men of two groups can play a football game. It will not be an ordinary game after all the words uttered and violence experienced, but will be an opportunity to retaliate against each other on the football field.

In the article entitled "Play up: Rethinking Power and Resistance," Rowe describes how sport is a crucial site for the reproduction of patriarchal structures and values, a male-dominated secular religion that has celebrated

[56] *"Bu ibneler tarif almadan yaşayamaz. Biz hayatı tarif almadan yaşarız. Tarifsiz. Sevinçleri de tarifsiz, kederleri de tarifsiz. Anladın mı lan?"*

the physically aggressive and often violent deeds of men.[57] In other words, the football field provides men with another homosocial space in which two opposite sides enter into competition to establish domination over one another.

In this respect, we can say that Selim's decision to play football in return for TGG's verbal challenge manifests his need to reproduce masculine hegemony. By stating that, we should also take into account that Turkey is a country where the social and political meanings of football go beyond a mere sport activity.[58]

Back in the film, Cenk worriedly searching for his friends is now busy giving the necessary information to the chief police at the police station, who says that he will personally take care of the situation. However, in the meantime, the violence continues at the bar.

While the others are getting ready for the match on the football field, Pelin pulls herself together and slowly leaves the kitchen. We see that Çırak notices her heading for the exit. Following her until she leaves the bar, Çırak does not try to catch or stop her, but only closes the door after she goes out. Neither Pelin nor Selim sees this.

On the football field, Selim loses his temper because the young men remain indifferent to his orders. In return for all the insults, Nail eventually decides to show his talent in football. When he comes in front of the goal

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[57] David Rowe, "Play up: Rethinking Power and Resistance," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 22 (1998), pp. 241–245.

[58] Ahmet Talimciler, "Bir Meşrulaştırma Aracı Olarak Futbolun Türkiye'de Son Yirmi Beş Yılı," *Toplum ve Bilim,* no. 103 (2005), pp. 147–162.

post where Selim stands with a gun in his hand, Nail kicks a goal after a moment of hesitation. However, this act costs him dearly: Selim shoots at his leg without hesitation.

While Nail writhes in pain on the ground, Selim points to the sentence written on the wall: "Football is never just football." From his perspective, kicking a ball to his goal is an open challenge to his potency. As Selim unleashes his repressed rage, we go deeper into what underlies his release of anger through violence:

> Everything was great, hu? You used to enjoy yourself with girls every night. You had fun. It was only your place. Tonight, it is my place, ok? Tonight, everything is mine. You are mine. That is it! You kick a goal to me, hu? Who do you think you are? Your legs are mine. Here is mine... Your girl is mine, too![59]

Unable to control his anger, Selim takes Nil to rape her. Hearing Nil's screams coming from inside, Nail can do nothing but cry bitterly. This scene is crucial in openly referring to the multidimensionality of the process leading to free-floating violence. Even though Selim has not gone into any attempt to rape the girls until that moment, he immediately takes action to strike back by attacking Nail's leg and his girlfriend when defeated on the football field.

Therefore, the attention is directed to the point at which the problem is not only about social exclusion and inequality, but also about consumption. Furthermore, this is not only a struggle for power and domination, but also a

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[59] *"Güzeldi, değil mi her şey? Her gece burada karılar kızla eğleniyordunuz. Buralar hep sizindi. Bu gece benim ulan burası. Bu gece benim. Hepiniz benimsiniz. İşte o kadar. Kendini Maradona mı sanıyorsun lan sen? Ayakların da benim. Burası benim lan. Karın da benim..."*

search for justice unable to be found in the existing system and thus trying to be reached through illegal ways in the absence of deterrence. All of these dimensions need to be taken into consideration in terms of free-floating violence, which is crystallized through this specific scene.

When Selim comes back, he does not forget to talk about his sexual experience like Nasır and Kırkbeşlik. To his surprise, "she turns out to be a virgin."[60] However, this is also unsurprising, in his view, since she does not have a boyfriend like him. Similarly to Captain Idris who shares his intimate sexual life or fantasy as the routine material for story-telling, Selim uses his homosocial environment to talk about his sexual experience with Nil. Thus, we can say that he compensates for the goal kicked against him, according to his understanding.

In the meantime, Çırak hesitantly approaches his leader to remind him that the morning has almost come. "What are they going to do?"[61] Kırkbeşlik suggests with a tired face that they should leave now. However, "how could they leave as if nothing has happened?"[62] Selim makes up his mind about how to end the night. "They are going to finish what they have begun. They are going to kill all of them one by one. Then, they are going to set the whole place on fire."[63]

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[60] *"Kızmış lan bu?*

[61] *"Usta, sabah oldu, ne yapacağız?"*

[62] *"Nereye gidiyoz lan? Böyle elini kolunu sallaya sallaya..."*

[63] *"Bir bok yedik, sonunu getirecez. Hepsini teker teker öldürecez bunların. Sonra da burayı yakıp gidecez."*

Repelled by Selim's plans so easily put into words, Kırkbeşlik can only say with fear and hesitation, "How can we do that?"[64] Right at that moment, Selim readily makes Kırkbeşlik face up to the reality: "We have beaten the hell out of them altogether. You smashed the woman's head on the counter. Patlak razored another one. After having already done all of this, are you now saying that we cannot kill one?"[65] Kırkbeşlik has nothing to say.

Attempting to carry out his own plans, Selim orders Çırak to loosen their ties so that he can hear their last wishes. "Because of you,"[66] could be the only words pouring out from Aliş, who looks helplessly worn-out. Directing his eyes at TGG himself, Aliş keeps repeating the same sentence: "All because of you! I said, let's go. I said the girls felt disturbed. All because of you!"[67]

While they are hearing their last wishes inside, Pelin is trying to creep towards the main street outside the bar where someone can see and help her. As the dawn is about to break, a man putting up the shutter of his shop sees Pelin's bloody fingers far around the corner.

Back inside the bar, none except Selim is decisive enough to end the night. With his broken leg, Nasır has already fainted from the pain. While Patlak passes out in one corner of the field, Kırkbeşlik is not energetic at all.

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[64] *"Nası yaparız lan?"*

[65] *"Ne demek lan? Hep birlikte adamın leşini çıkardık, sen kadının kafasını tezgahta parçalamışsın, Pörtlek jiletlemiş. Bunların hepsini yaptıktan sonra, şimdi adam öldüremeyiz mi diyorsun?"*

[66] *"Senin yüzünden!"*

[67] *"Hep senin yüzünden. Gidelim, dedim. Kızlar rahatsız oldu, dedim. Senin yüzünden!"*

Seeing that he has to finish it himself as usual, Selim intends to kill them one by one.

Right at this moment, one unexpected volunteer comes forward. Saying that he really wants to do it, Çırak takes the gun from Selim's hand. Pleased to hear that his apprentice is brave enough, Selim encourages him more to begin from whomever he wants. As Çırak seems to get ready to shoot Nail, TGG intervenes: "Now, you will kill us and go out as if nothing happened. And obviously, you don't have any problem with your conscience. You won't even lose sleep over that."[68] Çırak stops to listen. However, Selim is reluctant to waste time. As Çırak takes it slower and lets TGG go on, Selim doubts that his apprentice is only trying to gain time. By quickly grabbing the gun, he shoots the talking guy dead and silences him forever.

In the courthouse, we see the female defense lawyer demanding an interview with the judge about the case of Çırak. Trying to emphasize that his situation is different from that of the others, the lawyer notes that he did not rape any of the girls and was not there at the moment of the first murder, that he did not also stop Pelin from leaving the bar. "He is different from the others and his sentence should be different."[69] However, the judge's response reminds us of the story of a tree in African jungles: "No one heard or saw it,

[68] *"Sen şimdi bizi vurup elini kolunu sallaya sallaya dışarı çıkacaksın. Vicdanınla ilgili bir sorunun da yok anlaşılan. Uykuların filan da kaçmayacak."*

[69] *"Bu çocuk diğerlerinden farklı, kararı farklı olmalı."*

but you say so. We have a procedure. We have all the evidence in our hands. Accordingly, we will make a decision."[70]

Back in the bar, we find the group of friends in shock about TGG's death. Aynur could only ask the inevitable question: "Why are you doing all this? What for?"[71] Selim's answer is the summary of what the return of the repressed essentially means. Selim eventually makes his whole point clear and all the facts tacitly implied throughout the film are bluntly spoken out as an answer to Aynur's question:

> "But you haven't understood me at all, my dear. Why did I come to this bar so late? Because that stupid guy at the entrance doesn't let me in when I come at an early hour. He doesn't like my appearance or my behavior. Or he just doesn't like my way of talking. He immediately tells me to fuck off. Let's say we could enter into the bar. Then what happens? Just like the way you did and just like the way you stared at us, people more stupid than me stare stupidly at me. Don't they say, 'Where did this beast come out? We were having so much fun. We were enjoying ourselves.' Yes, they do. Didn't you say so? Yes, you did. Anyways... Where did we leave off?"[72]

Right at this moment, the police come before Selim goes on. Ordering Selim to drop off his gun, the police men end the night without more violence. And forth at the end of the trial, the judge asks Selim one last question, which is the same as Aynur's: "Why?" Selim gives a completely different answer in

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[70] *"Kimse duymamış, kimse görmemiş ama öyle diyorsun. Usül belli. Delil ortada. Bakacağız. Ona göre bir karar vereceğiz."*

[71] "*Niye yapıyorsunuz bunu? Niye?"*

[72] *"Ama sen beni hiç anlamamışsın ki güzelim Ben bu bara niye gecenin köründe geliyorum. Çünkü başka zaman gelsem kapıdaki hıyar beni içeri almaz da ondan. Şeklimi beğenmez almaz, hareketlerimi beğenmez almaz. Konuşmamı beğenmez. Farz-ı misal içeri girdik diyelim, sizin yaptığınız gibi, sizin baktığınız gibi benden öküz öküzler bana dik dik bakar. Bu hayvan da nerden çıktı? Ne güzel eğleniyorduk, ne güzel dalgamıza bakıyorduk, demezler mi? Derler. Demediniz mi lan? Dediniz. Neyse... Nerde kalmıştık?"*

the courtroom, saying that they wanted to be friends. The judge asks the judicial officer to pronounce the final judgment. Selim and Nasır are sentenced to life imprisonment while Kırkbeşlik and Patlak are condemned to six years of jail penalty.

While Selim and the others are taken into their custody accompanied by the soldiers, the prosecuting attorney stops them for a moment. All of them except Selim raise their heads toward him. The attorney especially waits for Selim to look into his eyes. Only after Selim in front of the group turns his head to that side, does the attorney lets them go on. Right at this moment, the judge approaches and tells him not to overstep the line by reminding him of legal responsibilities.

Unlike the gloomy atmosphere inside the courtroom, the weather is as bright and sunny as possible outside. Different from the gray mood throughout the trial, it is now full of green and hope. Holding a mobile phone in his hand, the prosecuting attorney talks to Nail in the middle of a long road. The attorney speaks and Nail only listens. Because of background music, we cannot hear what he explains.

While he goes on talking to Nail, we jump forward to a scene where a group of prisoners waits in a cell and one of them turns a mobile phone over in his hands, waiting for a phone call. Then, a prison commissioner brings in a pile of wooden and plastic clubs. As the same music goes on in the background, these prisoners enter into Kırkbeşlik's and Patlak's rooms sequentially. While beating the former to death with rubber hoses, they murder the latter with razors.

As for Selim and Nasır, the group of prisoners pins them against a wall and stabs both of them to death. Çırak is shown to have hung himself. In a sense, these prisoners put their own justice mechanisms to work and punished the guilty through their own methods of torture. From their points of view, these prisoners carry out justice, which has been left unsatisfied.

When the background music ends, the prosecuting attorney makes an offer by giving his mobile phone to Nail: "At the other end of this phone, there are people waiting for your final decision!"[73] However, Nail's reply is not what the attorney expects to hear: "Despite what happened that night, we are still trying to hold onto life. While trying to behave as if nothing has happened at all, I cannot make such a decision to kill them. We are not such kind of people. Let life decide it. Anyhow, it will."[74]

Without reacting to Nail's reply, the attorney gets into his car and drives away. However, he stops at the head of the road. We only hear a ringing tone. We understand that the attorney has taken the initiative and makes the final decision instead of Nail himself. He calls those resolute people at the other end of the phone.

Despite standing on the opposite sides, the attorney and Selim have one point in common: Both take the law into their own hands and commit violence in the name of justice. Selim believes that the whole system

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[73] *"Bu aletin ucunda sizin kararınızı bekleyen kararlı insanlar var!"*

[74] "*Biz o gece yaşananlara rağmen hâlâ ayakta durmaya çalışıyoruz. Bir yandan onlar hiç hayatımıza girmemiş gibi davranmaya çalışırken, bir yandan da onların ölüm kararını veremem ben. Biz böyle insanlar değiliz.Düşününce yani tekrar gözden geçirince yakınımızda olan şeylerin orada kalması gerektiğine inandırdı beni. Hayat karar versin. Verecek zaten."*

excludes him from the chance of being fairly treated and getting socialized. By punishing the victims accepted at Vesika Bar, he basically tries to take revenge of the injustice inherent in the system. At every instance, which seemed unfair to be said or done against him in the bar, Selim resorts to his own punitive mechanisms to bring justice.

Similarly, the prosecuting attorney feels unsatisfied with the final decision of the court and personally believes that justice has not been properly administered because of legal procedures. He does not hesitate to take the decision which will end the lives of the guilty for the sake of clearing his conscience. In both cases, the actors of violence do what they believe is fair and just. In both cases, they see it as a natural right to correct the wrong with their own methods. In both cases, violence is the main instrument in the search for justice.

Therefore, we argue that this specific example includes two key facts as regards to free-floating violence: There is not only a loss of belief in the idea that the criminal justice system brings justice and relief to victims, but also a challenge to the existing system in order to fulfill what is left incomplete or unjust.

Immediately after the attorney's phone call, the film jumps back to a scene where Nail and Nil kiss each other outside Vesika Bar one evening. We watch the couple first from up close distance and then from afar. Thus, we see not only the love in their eyes, but also see how they look from outside. Soon, we discover that this is a moment before the young couple hurriedly enters the bar at the very beginning of the film. And then, we notice

that there is one more person staring at the couple besides us. With a sandwich in his hands, this man seems not only physically hungry but also romantically and sexually hungry.

Oblivious of being watched from afar, the couple realize that they are running late. Hurriedly turning the corner to head for the bar, Nail stops for a moment to find out what time it is. By chance, the person that he turns to ask is the man who has been watching them with hunger and jealousy.

Even the question itself irritates him. Upon this harsh reaction, the couple quickly goes away towards Vesika Bar at the end of the road. Illuminated with red neon lights in the windows, the high-rise building glimmers in the middle of the dark night. When Nail and Nil enter inside and disappear on the horizon, the one who is left out in the cold is no other person than Selim. After the whole film taking place in the claustrophobic atmospheres of the bar and the courtroom, this scene at the end of the film gives us a unique insight into how the bar and the whole community look from outside from the perspective of an outsider.

We know through the introductory part of the film that Nail and his friends are not leading materially comfortable lives free of problems as Selim and his gang think. Drinking beer and listening to popular rock music, Nail's group obviously lives an ordinary and modest social life. By taking into account their age and the fact that Nail is still a virgin, we can even say that this group might not be as sexually experienced as Selim and his friends.

Still, the excluded Selim and the others as the outsiders equate the lives of those included people with the bright neon lights of the bar. It is mainly

because, unlike Selim, Nail can enter Vesika Bar without having any problems with the bouncer or feeling strangely stared at. Therefore, it can be said that the bar's door filters out the undesired type and functions like a border, which reverses the balance of advantage against Selim and his friends.

In this respect, we should realize that understanding exclusion and, specifically, spatial exclusion goes beyond a discussion focusing only on such factors as being employed or unemployed and being rich or poor.

Therefore, when considered together, *Gemide* and *Barda* basically provide us with three interlocked rings so as to create the chain of free-floating violence. We will call the first the exclusionary ring where social exclusion stands at a core point. In both films, the psychological state of mind is reflected through the use of places such as ship and bar and through such opposites as inside and outside. On the same axis, consumption culture appears as the factor putting pressure on the socially excluded such as the crew watching the shop windows in Laleli from afar or Selim and his friends unable to enjoy the bar.

The second is the ring of *arbitrariness*, referring to the main stories of both films originally inspired from the realities peculiar to Turkey: illegitimate use of state violence and the arbitrary practices of justice and as a result, arbitrarily resorting to brutal force by individuals in the absence of deterrence.

Finally, the third is the ring of *homosociality*; collectivity and hierarchy come to the fore as the critical points, which turn the course of events in

Gemide and *Barda*. Both for the ship's crew and for Selim's gang, homosociality plays a key role in affecting their potential for violence and revealing their oscillation between conscience and violence.

These three main rings will be the signposts on the path leading us to the bottom of free-floating violence throughout this study. In the following chapters, we will go deeper into the subtopics of each ring and grasp the underlying mechanisms by giving concrete examples from *Gemide* and *Barda.*

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXCLUSIONARY RING: A SPIRAL OF DEPRIVATION AND EXCLUSION

In an attempt to get to the bottom of free-floating violence in the films of *Gemide* and *Barda* so that we can track down the mechanisms behind the big violent picture of Turkish society particularly from the 1990s onward, we will look deeper into the exclusionary ring on the chain of free-floating violence in this chapter.

By doing that, we first must examine the main features of social exclusion and look at the definitions and discussions regarding the concept itself. Contrasting it with the concept of poverty, we will try to explain why and in which respects we need the term "social exclusion."

Following this, we will basically refer to the term "deprivation" in order to stress the multidimensionality of the exclusionary process. Discussing social exclusion under two subcategories such as material deprivation and social deprivation, we will not only be able to go into the role of income inequality in the exclusionary process but also to be able to consider the elements leading to alienation in social life and relationships.

In terms of the social deprivation dimension in the exclusionary process, there will be a point where we link the matter to "deprivation from consumption in a consumer society," which basically stands at the center of the stories in both *Gemide* and *Barda*. In order to be able to understand thoroughly this specific type of deprivation, we will look at the symbolic meanings of consumption and the consumption paradox.

Only after this we go back to social deprivation and this time elaborate upon exclusion from space or spatial exclusion, which is one key element discussed in the analyses of both *Gemide* and *Barda*. Thus, we will finally be able to gain insight into the suspense between the attributed meanings of consuming space and being deprived of such a symbolic consuming-space activity. This insight will clarify our minds along the way leading to free-floating violence in *Gemide* and *Barda*.

Multidimensionality and Dynamism

The notion of social exclusion and related concepts such as vulnerability, marginalization and stigmatization has become central to studies in different social science disciplines since the 1990s. Trying to see the multiple and the long-term consequences of neoliberal reforms by drawing the big picture, each and every work on the concept has a "social exclusion" definition of its own. Even though the focus of each work could be on a different aspect, there is one common word used to refer to social exclusion in all of them: "process."

In parallel, when we go deeper in order to understand the logic behind the increasing emphasis on the concept social exclusion for the last two decades, we see that poverty, on its own, rather based on economic or distributional reasons fails to embrace the cases of being pushed out of social life due to non-economic reasons.[75] Therefore, social exclusion should be

[75] Fikret Adaman and Deniz Yükseker, "Editors' Introduction: Special Issue on Poverty and Social Exclusion in Turkey." In *New Perspectives on Turkey: Special Issue on Poverty and Social Exclusion*, eds. F. Adaman and D. Yükseker, no. 38 (Spring, 2008), p. 20.

understood in a discussion within a multidimensional concept, which includes not only the disadvantages and unequal circumstances brought about by poverty. In other words, exclusion caused by poverty appears as one key dimension of social exclusion among the others.

Looking at the studies that draw attention to the distinction between social exclusion and poverty, we see that different authors come to the same conclusion from different ways in their definitions of social exclusion. For instance, in *Understanding Social Exclusion*, Burchardt, Le Grand, and Piachaud come up with such a definition that "an individual is socially excluded if he or she does not participate in the key activities of the society in which he or she lives."[76]

These "key" activities include consumption activities (the capacity to purchase goods and services), production activities (paid work, education), political engagement (involvement in local or national decision-making mechanism) and social interaction (integration with family, friends and community).

The elements of this definition specify the multidimensional nature of social exclusion and, obviously, its reach goes beyond income-based factors. And unlike income poverty, this definition also interprets social exclusion as a process with the productive, political and social aspects. Therefore, it is not incorrect to say that poverty is seen as a distributional outcome, whereas

[76] Tania Burchardt, Julian Le Grand and David Piachaud, "Degrees of Exclusion: Developing a Dynamic, Multidimensional Measure." In *Understanding Social Exclusion*, eds. J. Hills, J. Le Grand and D. Piachaud (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 30.

exclusion is a relational process of "declining participation, solidarity, and access."[77]

In their work *Poverty and Exclusion in Global World*, Bhalla and Lapeyre also classify the dimensions of exclusion under two categories such as economic and social. According to this classification, the economic dimension concerns mainly the questions of income and access to goods and services while the social dimension covers three main aspects: (a) access to public goods and services; (b) access to the labor market; and (c) social participation.[78]

As is clearly seen in this division of exclusionary process into economic and social aspects, it is implied that having a job does not necessarily prevent an individual or a group of people from being socially excluded. Therefore, although there is a close association between economic stratification and the phenomenon of exclusion within society, it seems clear that in principle social exclusion can occur between groups that are not significantly distinguished from one another economically.[79]

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[77] Christopher Heady and Graham Room, "Patterns of Social Exclusion: Implications for Policy and Research." In *Poverty and Social Exclusion in Europe*, ed. Matt Barnes (Northhampton: Edward Elgar, 2002); quoted in Fatoş Gökşen et al. "Impacts of the Tax System on Poverty and Social Exclusion: A Case Study on Turkey." In *New Perspectives on Turkey: Special Issue on Poverty and Social Exclusion*, eds. F. Adaman and D. Yükseker, no. 38 (Spring, 2008), p. 164.

[78] Ajit S. Bhalla and Frédéric Lapeyre, *Poverty and Exclusion in Global World* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), pp. 17–18.

[79] Brian Barry, "Social Exclusion, Social Isolation, and the Distribution of Income." In *Understanding Social Exclusion*, eds. J. Hills, J. Le Grand and D. Piachaud (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 13.

The fact that social exclusion cannot be reduced to one single factor or dimension such as poverty also supports the argument that the areas of exclusion may be multiplied from the labor market to education opportunities, from access to healthcare to political rights. In that respect, the excluded may belong to different vulnerable groups such as the disabled, the elderly without relatives, street children, and the like.[80]

In an article entitled "Social Exclusion in the Slum Areas of Large Cities in Turkey," Bediz Yılmaz points out to the employment structure in which informal job opportunities are largely available to the officially unemployed. In this view, unemployment can only partly shed light on income poverty, just as having a job does not suffice to prevent social exclusion.[81]

In parallel with this line of argument, social exclusion here is defined not only as a multidimensional but also as a structural process. According to this argument, social exclusion embraces both uncertainty of labor and employment and the breakdown of social bonds and the weakening of primary solidarity. As unemployment and unstable work, which are major underlying factors of social exclusion, contribute to a decline in the process of citizenship-building, the relationship between individual and society turns

[80] Fikret Adaman and Oya Pınar Ardıç, "Social Exclusion in the Slum Areas of Large Cities in Turkey." In *New Perspectives on Turkey: Special Issue on Poverty and Social Exclusion*, eds. F. Adaman and D. Yükseker, no. 38 (Spring, 2008), p. 31.

[81] Bediz Yılmaz, "Entrapped in Multidimensional Exclusion: The Perpetuation of Poverty among Conflict-induced Migrants in an Istanbul Neighborhood." In *New Perspectives on Turkey: Special Issue on Poverty and Social Exclusion*, eds. F. Adaman and D. Yükseker, no. 38 (Spring, 2008), p. 214.

fragile and open to going through a breakdown. Therefore, we can say that these two dimensions of social exclusion create a vicious circle by strengthening and triggering each other.[82]

Until this point, we have looked at various definitions of social exclusion, which emphasize the multidimensionality. When we now go back to the starting point where we realize that every definition – from the most general to the most specific – stresses the process dimension of the concept in one way or another, we can clearly see that multidimensionality is not completely unrelated to the process dimension.

For instance, in an article entitled "From Violence to Justice and Security in Cities," Vanderschueren argues that poverty itself is not a cause of urban violence. Rather, the exclusionary processes active in the unequal distribution of resources in urban contexts have a strong impact on violence levels.[83] In this sense, this argument confirms the significance of the process dimension in discussing the multidimensionality of social exclusion in relation to free-floating violence.

Considering the concept on the axis of our study, we would like to argue that it is crucial not to see social exclusion as an endpoint in the nonreversible process of being placed at the margins. As a process of

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[82] Ajit Bhalla and Frédéric Lapeyre, "Social Exclusion: Towards an Analytical and Operational Framework," *Development and Change 28,* no. 3 (1997), quoted in Fatoş Gökşen et al., "Impacts of the Tax System on Poverty and Social Exclusion: A Case Study on Turkey." In *New Perspectives on Turkey: Special Issue on Poverty and Social Exclusion*, eds. F. Adaman and D. Yükseker, no. 38 (Spring, 2008), p. 164.

[83] Franz Vanderschueren, "From Violence to Justice and Security in Cities," *Environment and Urbanization* 8, no. 1 (April, 1996), p. 98.

cumulative disadvantages which has a variety of degrees and dimensions, social exclusion stands at a critical point in that it is followed by the examples of free-floating violence in the last instance, depending on the inner dynamics of the society and the country.

In other words, we argue that the different kinds of interpersonal violence observed in today's society can be seen as interconnected manifestations of the deeper socio-economic and institutional changes that took place during the past two decades. Thus, even though the consequences of free-floating violence cannot be described as fortunate or fair, the emphasis here is placed upon the conscious or subconscious reactiveness of the vulnerable against the exclusionary processes. Through this emphasis, an agency is at the same time attributed to the deprived of social inclusion.

Treating the notion of social exclusion as a process is also based on its advantage such that it allows us to avoid strict boundaries. At this point, we should also highlight the need to focus on inequality, inmiseration and vulnerability as processes (rather than states or conditions) that are cumulative, dynamic and relational.

Moreover, the temporal aspect of social exclusion prevents us from disregarding the experience of changing situations, of precarious conditions, of being periodically excluded and included.[84] Furthermore, this dimension

[84] Paul Littlewood and Sebastian Herkommer, "Identifying Social Exclusion: Some Problems of Meaning." In *Social Exclusion in Europe: Problems and Paradigms,* ed. Paul Littlewood et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 29.

helps us when we compare the theme of social exclusion in *Gemide* of 1998 with the one in *Barda* of 2006.

Critically, this point refers to the dynamic nature of the exclusionary processes and of the dynamic change in the circumstances of those excluded, which also could be interpreted as the blurring of boundaries separating the included from the excluded in the post-1990s period.[85] However, we should note that "dynamism" here is not used to refer to the existence of a social mobility possibility. It is the openness to change which takes different forms. In other words, it refers to the exclusionary process as something, which evolves not upward and downward but backward and forward. Leisering and Walker note the inherent character of modernity in a similar way to inspire us:

> The dynamism of modern society resides in novel institutions that display an intrinsic propensity to continued and unlimited change. It is this propensity, and not change as such, that we refer to as dynamism.[86]

As regards to the examples in *Gemide* and *Barda*, the fact that the possibility of social mobility vanished during the post-1990s period provides us with one underlying reason behind the increase in the cases of eruptive and free-floating violence at the crossroads. With relevance to this matter, David Byrne lays stress on the evidence that the shift from industrial to post-

[85] David Byrne, *Social Exclusion* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999), p. 65.

[86] Lutz Leisering and Robert Walker, *The Dynamics of Modern Society: Poverty, Policy and Welfare* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 1998), p. 4.

industrial social structures involves a closure of mobility opportunities and that such closure is central to any consideration of social exclusion.[87]

The significance of this possibility basically arises from the fact that "mobility is a powerful means by which people drive forward their ambitions in life. And the promise of mobility allows 'open societies' to maintain a system of firmly established structural inequalities. The optimism about macro-dynamics, the belief in societal progress, translates at the micro-level into the belief in individual progress."[88] Therefore, we can argue that this loss of belief in individual progress can be defined as the loss of transformative hope regarding the problems of the chaotic world order and the future particularly from the symbolic year of 1989 onward.

In the lack of transformative hope with social exclusion on the stage, the conception of violence turns into an anonymous action of no origin or no substance. The emptiness behind the non-existence of "violence caused by specific collectivities or polar opposites of ideological origin," has been filled up with a type of impolitic violence and such examples as high school murders, serial killers, lunacies on the third page of newspapers, fanaticism and maybe even terrorism.[89]

In this respect, we can say that social exclusion appears as the key process through which transformative hope becomes lost and social mobility

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[87] Byrne, pp. 66–67.

[88] Leisering and Walker, p. 5.

[89] Özgür Taburoğlu, "Küresel Sapmalar: Endüstri Sonrasında Sınıf, Politika ve Şiddet," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no.92 (Spring, 2002), p. 143.

turns into impossibility. Here, we should also emphasize that there is not one single or uniform experience of social exclusion all over the world.[90] Therefore, the importance of specific contexts and circumstances should be taken into account as well.

Having discussed the multidimensional, dynamic and accumulative nature of social exclusion through comparison with poverty, we can now go deeper into how the exclusionary process developed from the 1990s onward and what the social exclusion experience refers to in real life. In parallel with the definitions above, we will take the issue under two subcategories: material deprivation and social deprivation.

The main reason for the use of deprivation is that the term itself carries the same multidimensional connotation as social exclusion. Deprivation includes not only differences in income but also the lack of access to basic social services, the lack of universal state security protection, along with the severe corruption, inefficiency, brutality that generally hit the poor hardest, and the lack of social cohesion.[91]

Given all these with reference to Johan Galtung's work on "structural violence," which includes psychological hurt, alienation and repression into understandings of violence, deprivation itself comes onto the stage as a form of violence.[92] In urban contexts just as in *Gemide* and *Barda*, this type of

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[90] Ibid, p. 144.

[91] Vanderschueren, p. 94.

[92] Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1996), p. 72.

structural violence is importantly related to the emergence of free-floating violence in consciously or unconsciously reactive forms. We are of the opinion that this critical relation explains in the best way why we will look into social exclusion through the term deprivation and in two categories such as material and social deprivation.

Material Deprivation

Neoliberalism and Globalization:

Taking its start during the 1980s and accelerating particularly from 1989 on, the wave of neoliberalism and globalization has brought about structural changes around the world in one way or another for about two decades.[93] Even though the extent of the impacts and the extensions varied from one country to another depending on the development level, fragility and stability of economic, political and social structures, no country could escape from the rules of the new world order, which would cause the 1980s and 1990s to be accepted as "two lost decades for the poor" all over the world.[94]

The state's resources are depleted by the strain under the pressures of globalization, and the political will and the social mobilization necessary to instigate a climate of change are absent. Hence, the structural tendency toward polarization threatens to evolve into a potentially explosive situation

[93] Neşecan Balkan and Sungur Savran, eds. *The Ravages of Neoliberalism: Economy, Society, Gender in Turkey* (New York: Nova Science, 2002), p. 20.

[94] Javier Auyero, "The Hyper-Shantytown: Neo-Liberal Violence(s) in the Argentine Slum," *Etnography* 1, no. 1 (2000), p.105.

of social exclusion.[95] Parkinson and Bianchini describe these processes in the following terms:

> Rapid changes in the economic environment caused by internationalization and industrial and corporate restructuring have transformed the character of local economies. They have brought a more fragmented labor market, a decline in manufacturing and a rise in the service sector, high levels of structural unemployment, an increase in insecure and low paid employment, a shift in the balance of male and female employment and a growing gap between the highest and lowest household incomes.[96]

When it comes to the social costs of neoliberal reforms, they essentially arise from the fact that the dimensions of inequality between and among members of society from the 1980s onward do not remain limited only to the imbalances of economy.

Going far beyond the distribution of income, the neoliberal process has also affected educational and social systems by giving rise to a heavy reliance on market forces. Neşecan Balkan and Sungur Savran support this view by stating that the dismantling of non-market social services and their replacement by privatized or commercialized services is one of the hallmarks of the neoliberal strategy in all countries.[97]

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[95] Çağlar Keyder, "Globalization and Social Exclusion in Istanbul," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 1 (March 2005), p. 124.

[96] Michael Parkinson and Franco Bianchini, eds. *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 1.

[97] Balkan and Savran, p. 16.

Inequality of Opportunities:

Stressing the fact that getting educated is one crucial participatory process affecting the development of individuals, Rothschild argues that equal access for all to this process allows not only inclusion but also recognition and respect by society.[98] Therefore, we can deduce that the system works in a way to fix one person to a specific spiral of circles and life standards, so to speak, from the cradle. This literally corresponds to the disappearance of a social mobility possibility.

The concept of human capital helps us in explaining the role of education in the process of social exclusion. In contemporary modern societies, the human capital is defined as individual skills based on abilities; education and training that an individual possesses that affect the probability of participation in the economic, civic and political spheres of life.[99]

From this perspective, education or schooling increases productivity as it equips individuals with skills and knowledge. As productivity is reflected in earnings and rates of labor market participation, education offers an important means of social mobility, particularly for the poor.[100]

However, in an age when state action has fallen into disfavor and market forces have seized power, all the steps take us to the closure of the

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[98] Emma Rothschild, "Adam Smith on Education and Instruction," Centre for History and Economics Working Paper, Cambridge: King's College, 1998.

[99] John Hills, Julian Le Grand and David Piachaud, eds. *Understanding Social Exclusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 8.

[100] Balkan and Savran, p. 18.

social mobility possibility, especially with privatization of education. At this point, Briceno-Leon and Zubillaga's argument is quite meaningful in drawing attention to the gap between promises and frustrations: "...globalization is democratic and egalitarian in spreading expectations, but it is inequitable in providing the means to satisfy them."[101]

From here, we can directly jump to the argument that not only increasing economic expectations are combined with decreasing economic opportunities, but also feelings of mistrust in the state spread among the people due to "state inaction" in today's neoliberal world. We should consider this reality particularly for developing countries such as Turkey and Argentina the social policies of which best can be characterized as chaotic, overlapping and fragmented.[102]

In a way to support this argument, Buğra and Keyder stress the fact that "deep-seated feelings of mistrust towards the state might explain this absence where people simply do not believe that anything can be achieved by relying on government intervention."[103] Regarding the policy environment in Turkey, it is noted that the promotion of social inclusion through social

[101] Roberto Briceño-León and Verónica Zubillaga, "Violence and Globalization in Latin America," *Current Sociology* 50, no. 1 (January 2002), p. 28.

[102] Auyero, p. 109.

[103] Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder, "The Turkish Welfare Regime in Transformation," *Journal of European Social Policy* 16, no. 3 (2006), p. 212.

assistance schemes based on universal rights is not an issue of priority at all.[104]

Turkey in the Post-1990s

The extensions of the global changes in Turkey show one-to-one correspondence to the big picture. For more than two decades now, the "free" market has been held, in Turkey as elsewhere, to be a panacea to all troubles afflicting economy and society.

The transformations in question, as Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder clearly state in the article "Turkish Welfare Regime in Transformation," have manifested themselves through two distinct channels in the particular case of Turkey. First of all, there has been a significant decline in formal employment opportunities as a result of the post-1980 reorientation of the country's development strategy away from a protectionist regime with heavy state intervention and public sector employment, towards an outward-looking, market-oriented one.

This strategic reorientation has taken place along with deregulation that has allowed outsourcing and subcontracting practices on the one hand, and privatization of state-owned enterprises on the other. The outcome has been a sharp decline in employment in the formal sector. Stable jobs with social security, in both the public and the private sector, which had long constituted

[104] Ibid., p. 212.

channels for the full social integration of at least some of the rural-urban immigrants, have become mostly inaccessible.[105]

Therefore, the practical results reached at the end of these two decades shows that, as Balkan and Savran write, "rather than panacea, the functioning of the 'free', unobstructed market is itself a spring-well of problems that society has paid dearly for in terms of macro-economic stability, impoverishment of the peasantry, the ever growing centralization of economic power in a handful of corporations, the insecurity flowing from contingent work, growing income inequality and destitution of the poor resulting from the dismantling of social services."[106]

At the functional level, all indicators suggest that income distribution has seriously deteriorated over the last two decades of neoliberalism by making the inequalities of opportunities inherent in the system much more unbearable.

In parallel with this unequal accessibility, an article titled "The Privatization of Education in Turkey"[107] by Fatma Gök deserves attention in that she refers to the irreversible change in the functioning of educational rights in the post-1980 period by stating that no attention was paid to the extremely unequal income distribution and the social and historical context

[105] Ibid., pp. 219–220.

[106] Balkan and Savran, p. 20.

[107] Ibid., pp. 93–104.

of provision of education in Turkey. Gök also warns against the long-term effects of the process speeding up from the 1980s onward:

> In Turkey, the neo-liberal policies adopted after 1980 have worsened the existing inequality of educational opportunities and yielded the provision of education over to market processes. Education should provide freedom in all respects. However, under such conditions, it is not possible to provide an environment of freedom to raise the adults of the future. A system that perceives students as customers cannot enhance creativity, develop critical abilities and provide the environment necessary for free thinking.[108]

When we take into account that social exclusion among adults is linked, in a first instance, to low levels of education and their effects in the labor market, we can put forward the opinion that adults raised in an environment deprived of equality and freedom will have difficulty maintaining a positive and optimistic view of life especially when they are the disadvantaged.

The fact of a huge regional disparity of incomes in Turkey is also a considerable point. Arguing that this is a greater catastrophe than the issue of unequal income distribution, Balkan and Savran give Süleyman Demirel's bitterly realistic comparison between the East and the West as an example: "The standard of life in the West of Turkey was comparable to Belgium while that in the East was more like Bangladesh."[109] This element, which speeds up migration from the eastern part of the country to the west and mainly to Istanbul, leads to a series of problems originating from deprivation and exclusion on the part of the new migrants because of the changing circumstances in question.

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[108] Ibid., p. 103.

[109] Ibid., p. 17.

In terms of the disparities and the dualities in Turkey, the city of Istanbul stands in a core position among all the other cities. This deserves special attention. Wacquant points out that the post-industrial cities of the north have witnessed "opulence and indigence, luxury and penury, copiousness and impecuniousness" booming right alongside one another during the last two decades.[110]

In the same line of his thought, we realize that the terms can be similarly considered in the particular case of Istanbul to explain the coexisting extremes of poverty and wealth paralleled by the gaping inequalities between increasingly larger metropolises, smaller cities, and rural towns.

Looking into the effects of the 1980s and the 1990s on the transformation of Argentina, Javier Auyero, for instance, argues in his article in favor of the critical approach adopting the metaphor of the dual city to describe the changes caused by increasing economic polarization and to stress the dual character of turn-of-the-century metropolises in both advanced and Third World countries:

> Despite its many conceptual and empirical flaws, the image of the dual city has the 'virtue of directing our attention to the new inequalities' (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991:16) that, provoked in part by the elimination of millions of manufacturing jobs and by state retrenchment, not only characterize post-industrial cities like New York but also Third World cities such as Buenos Aires.[111]

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[110] L. J. D. Wacquant, "Urban Marginality in the Coming Millenium," *Urban Studies* 36, no. 10 (1999), p. 1641.

[111] Auyero, p. 94.

Setting out from this metaphor, we can consider Istanbul to be a real example for the city of dual character. In this respect, Çağlar Keyder's article "Globalization and Social Exclusion in Istanbul" is crucially to the point for us. Drawing attention to "the shock of rapid integration into transnational networks and markets and the emergence of new social groups since the 1980s" in Istanbul, Keyder explains that the globalized spaces of commerce and leisure emerged along with secluded residential areas on the outskirts of the city.[112]

With all these in our hands, we can jump to the conclusion that what has turned Istanbul into a major city of high tension and violence is not only growing disparities between the two poles of the society, but also the increasing proximity of these two once distanced worlds in physical space. Therefore, Istanbul can be considered as a compact city that embraces the gap between the East and the West of Turkey within its boundaries.

When we go back and consider the sufferings of this neoliberal and global age as a whole, the coexistence of extreme wealthy and poverty together with the closure of social mobility possibilities bring us to the point where a positive and optimistic view of life is nothing but impossibility for the materially deprived. On this axis, what happens in the social dimension of the exclusionary process will be our next station to complete the circle.

[112] Keyder, p. 124.

Social Deprivation

In the definitions of social exclusion stressing upon the social dimension of the exclusionary process, the breakdown of social bonds between the individual and society occupies a central position. In this context, social exclusion occurs where "the community doesn't work" or it "just doesn't exist" or where "the fabric of community is falling apart."[113] Obviously, in this case, there is no mechanism which compensates for the harshness of income disparities or the gap between the life standards of the very poor and the very rich.

In a society where the sense of a whole community no longer works, each social circle creates its own community the boundaries of which are demarcated by the life standards of members. In a society where social mobility possibility no longer exists, each social circle also functions as a gated site which excludes non-members from participating.

In Bourdieu's words, these kinds of spaces work on the *club effect* that comes from the long gathering (in the chic neighborhoods or luxury homes) of people and things which are different from the vast majority.[114] It is called the *club effect* because it functions like a club founded on the active exclusion of undesirable people.[115] Not only interestingly, but also

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[113] Janie Percy-Smith, ed. *Policy Responses to Social Exclusion: Towards Inclusion?* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000), p. 6.

[114] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Site Effects." In *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu et al. trans. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson et al. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 128.

[115] Ibid., p. 129.

significantly, this term shows one-to-one correspondence for the case in the Vesika Bar of *Barda*.

Furthermore, this indicates that social deprivation is not unrelated to spatial exclusion. On the contrary, space is understood to be a key element in discussing participation and inclusion. As Bourdieu points out, the distribution of social groups in the physical space reflects their distribution in the social space.[116] Therefore, social groups are not homogeneously distributed throughout urban space, because space is already subject to segmentation and stratification.[117]

In that respect, we should note that space carries a symbolic meaning of control and power, which is highly relevant in studying social exclusion in relation to free-floating violence. This point also deserves attention when we take into account that space itself plays a critical role in adding to the atmosphere of the stories in both *Gemide* and *Barda* as the titles refer.

In looking at social exclusion in terms of social relationships, we should remember to touch upon the point that the process of exclusion requires an act by an agent or agents. In other words, it is "something that is done by some people to other people."[118] All the inequalities inherent in the system, which directly affect life standards and social circles, create a categorization towards each other in the minds of people who live within this system. Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that segmentation and

[116] Ibid., p. 127.

[117] Yılmaz, p. 226.

[118] Byrne, p. 1.

stratification of space we have mentioned above is also a direct reflection of this categorization in the minds of people.

When these two pieces – the community falling apart and the space being segregated – are put together, there appears one single way-out offered in the post-1990s world for the materially deprived, spatially excluded and distanced away from decision-making or participatory processes in society: consumption. In the absence of a social mobility possibility, the activity of consumption is offered as a mechanism so powerful as to make us believe that the exclusionary process can be reversed or at least the burden of being socially excluded can be lightened.

At this moment, we should note that it is not particularly the socially excluded who are given promise and hope by the consumption culture. As a way of life, a consumption activity by itself has a significant range of meanings attributed to it in today's global and neoliberal world. In that respect, we are of the opinion that consumption should be discussed in relation to the exclusionary process in two steps.

Without grasping the essence of what consumption signifies in people's minds and in their social relations with each other, we will fail to see the very Gordian knot in the social dimension of the exclusionary process: deprivation from consumption in a consumer society. By being linked to spatial exclusion, the struggle over appropriating and consuming space will be seen to have reactive motives behind it in this way.

Consumerism and Deprivation from Consumption

In today's post-1990s world where consumerism dominates so much as to play a defining role as a way of life, it is crucial to consider the symbols of consumerism in relation to exclusionary process and free-floating violence by asking such questions: What does consumption mean in a world where a social mobility possibility has already closed and a whole sense of community shattered? What gaps does it seem to fill and what paradoxes does it bring about?

In his book *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Ulrich Beck points out the increasing significance of consumerism as a key framework in risk society.[119] He notes that risk society does not mean a catastrophic version of society in which the distribution of "bads" will have replaced the distribution of "goods." What happened, according to his argument, is the change of industrial society into (industrial) risk society.

In this context, the support mechanisms that are traditionally associated with modernity, such as social class, family and community have been replaced by secondary ties such as fashion, economic cycles and markets. Predictability and certainty become things of the past, as a new set of risks is brought into existence at both the macro- and micro-levels.[120] In this respect, the term essentially complements our discussion of the exclusionary process in the first part.

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[119] Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (London: Sage, 1992), p. 130.

[120] Steven Miles, *Consumerism as a Way of Life* (London: Sage, 1998), p. 157.

Therefore, in risk society where we expect to encounter unexpected consequences in whatever we do,[121] we see that there are two main results at the expense of the individual. First, s/he is left open to the ups and downs of an increasingly insecure life experience. In Beck's words, the individual, as the consumer, consumes the risks others produce, don't want to pay attention to and don't want to pay for.[122]

Secondly, and in relation to the first point, individuality is increasingly subject to external forces in the absence of stable mechanisms of support, which leaves the individual increasingly vulnerable to personal crises. In a paradoxical manner, despite a stronger emphasis on the individual in today's individualized society, the individual experiences a less autonomous private existence, since s/he is subject to public criteria of individuality, depending on the secondary ties mentioned above.[123]

In Beck's thought, this originates from the emergence of an ego-centered worldview. So, even if the individual is offered a wide range of choices based on his or her free will, it does not come without an increased risk of uncertainty. Therefore, any failure to perceive on his or her part implies the inadequacies of the individual. In this sense, given the whole picture of risk society in today's world, it can be said that the individual is

[121] Journal of Consumer Culture, 'Interview with Ulrich Beck,' *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1, no. 2 (2001), p. 269.

[122] Ibid., p. 270.

[123] Beck, p. 127.

not only in need of security and stability but also in search of a (more autonomously) private existence.

The increasing importance of consumerism within this framework begins right here. Considering Ulrich Beck's "risk society" theory together with the disappearance of social mobility possibility, we see that consumerism appears as an arena which offers the individual the promise of a more private individuality.

Here, the question arises: Does consumption activity meet the expectations of the individual in the real sense? Or rather, to what extent does the individual find personal autonomy in the realm of consumerism? The next step will be to answer these questions below through a discussion of what consumption expresses in the social life of today's world.

In this context, the first point we would like to go into is the relationship between consumerism and power. Setting out from the (imposed) idea that consumption provides everybody with a sense of control; we can note here that consumerism as a way of life includes social processes far beyond the direct control of specific social groups. Accordingly, it is based on the feeling that as consumers we are all gaining some semblance of authority over the everyday construction of our lives through consumption.[124]

The crucial aspect here, in our thought, is the emphasis on the fact that not necessarily tangible benefits but perceived feelings especially are involved in the essence of consumerism. Just like Carter points out,

[124] Miles, p. 25.

"consumerism not only offers, but also continually fulfills its promise of everyday solutions... to problems whose origins may lie elsewhere."[125] Therefore, the empowering nature of consumerism is not solely and concretely restricted to the young and the rich, but potentially and mentally influences the lives of everybody as we are all equally encouraged to believe that anything is possible.[126]

Understandably, the equal potential influence and the constant stress upon "possibility" take on a new significance in the absence of social mobility possibility in real life. The two widely-popular advertising slogans to be considered in this regard are used by the companies Nike and Adidas, "Just Do it" and "Impossible is Nothing," respectively. To our way of thinking, these can be seen as two well-known examples instilling and perpetuating the belief that everybody can be a winner in a consumer society and that everyone can be given what they need.[127]

At this point, Mike Featherstone's argument that links the empowering nature of consumption to its identity-conferring nature is particularly worth mentioning. Featherstone draws attention to the idea that we can be whomever we want, as long as we are prepared to consume.[128] In the eyes of

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[125] Erica Carter, "Alice in Consumer Wonderland." In *Gender and Generation*, ed. Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 213.

[126] Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991), p. 69.

[127] Miles, p. 150.

[128] Featherstone, p. 70.

people, this idea turns consumerism into such a powerful framework that it can be used for the construction of their identities.

Therefore, when we take into account the mushrooming of standards such as "good style" or "good taste" defined as the aestheticization of everyday life by Featherstone,[129] we can see how simple consumption items turn into the objects, each of which represents a different standard and carries a symbolic meaning in social life. The construction of an identity is, in this case, achieved through *what* a person consumes.

The point that the symbol of an item goes beyond its function leads us to thinking more carefully about the identity-constructing role of *why* a person consumes that particular item rather than what s/he consumes. For instance, young people do construct their identities through peer group relationships in which the consumption of what are deemed to be appropriate consumer goods is significant.[130] Furthermore, we can think of the examples, ranging from why one person chooses to drink this certain brand of beer in certain social circles to for what purpose another one buys a particular yellow wristband, for instance.

In this regard, the identity-constructing nature of consumerism centering on these *why* and *what* questions is closely related to an effort and a need to become part of a community. This is essentially understandable in

[129] Ibid., p. 72.

[130] Miles, p. 153.

terms of the fact that support mechanisms based on solidarity were replaced and a whole sense of community in the traditional sense disappeared.

In this context, the consuming experience represents a bridge that links the individual and the society in a psychosocial way.[131] It is basically because, even in cases in which a consumption activity physically looks like an individual action by itself, its meaning conveys a symbolic message in the collective sense.

In parallel, we can consider the cases in *Gemide* and *Barda* directly in relation to this aspect of consumerism. For instance, Selim and his friends step into the Vesika Bar at a late hour to drink beer and to become part of that bar community in *Barda,* while the member of the ship crew joins the community collectively consuming porn in a beer house in *Gemide*. Therefore, as Pierre Bourdieu points out, consumers' consumption habits should not be seen as the mere product of social structures, but also as an interaction between the individual and the society.[132]

When we go back to the sense-of-community dimension of consumerism, there appears one critical consumption space before us which stands at the center of social life in metropolitan cities in today's world: shopping malls. In this context, Lauren Langman's assertion that late twentieth-century shopping malls provide "pseudo-communities" illuminates our path. In Langman's view, malls are not just places to buy goods but

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[131] Ibid., p. 5.

[132] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 172.

spaces of fantasy, a "new dream-like order of commercial reality." with the powerful myth of social cohesion and material abundance to which they appeal.[133] Basically, this fantasy involves the idea of a world in which everyone belongs to a single community, brought together through the harmony of shopping.

From this perspective, shopping malls provide consumers with a sense of community that is difficult to find in the outside world. By frequenting a shopping mall, the individual becomes part of a community of consumerism and is recognized as a legitimate citizen of contemporary society.[134] However, it is not only the romantic idea of belonging to a community that is found in shopping malls.

When we specifically go deeper into this fantasy, we at the same time move into the multidimensionality of consumerism through shopping malls. In the fantasy of a shopping mall, an identity-constructing process is also involved. In terms of this aspect, Langman introduces the term *malling* as follows:

> Malls then are places to purchase the goods of gratification and/or to be something, to realize fantasies located outside of the usual constraints of time and place. Malling thus exists as dialectic between doing something and being someone, a fantastic someone whose selfhood brings recognition and gratification.[135]

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[133] Lauren Langman, "Neon Cages: Shopping for Subjectivity." In *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*, ed. R. Shields (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 54.

[134] Miles, p. 61.

[135] Langman, p. 48.

Even though Langman uses this term to particularly refer to the whole functioning of shopping malls, we should emphasize once again that the same dialectic between doing something and being someone exists in the essence of consumerism. As a consumption space, a shopping mall embraces all the consumption paradoxes.

In this context, we should go into the fact that these consumption spaces are both controlled and isolated. They are controlled in that everything from temperature to shop window displays are managed with precision. Furthermore, their isolation from the larger environments of the city and its street life entails separation from our ordinary spatial contexts and their usual meanings.[136]

According to our way of thinking, this adds to the idea of being a space of fantasy. Not only can people escape from their everyday problems through the physical and mental stimulation of shopping, but by becoming part of consumer culture they begin to feel part of something real, when arguably that experience is not real at all.[137]

Looking at the other side of the coin, Mark Paterson draws our attention to the fundamental paradox involved in the whole system of shopping malls at this point: "Such spaces of desire and fantasy, of collective community, must rely on isolation and control so that the environment is regulated and security guards eject undesirables – non-consumers, or those

[136] Mark Paterson, *Consumption and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 192.

[137] Miles, p. 61.

unlikely to consume, such as the homeless or troublemaking teenagers."[138] Therefore, we see that the whole idea seemingly founded on promise and freedom is baseless.

Furthermore, we see that equality in encouraging everyone to believe in the possibility of anything remains only on the discourse level. So, this shopping mall example is crucial in two ways. First, it shows that consumption is not only enabling but also constraining. Secondly, it makes us realize that consumerism is not only about consumers, but also about those excluded from consumption, especially in the cases of gated consumption spaces such as shopping malls or the bar in *Barda*.

These aspects bring us to thinking more carefully about the consumption paradox, in which the structure and agency question occupies a key place. From here, we finally hope to come to the consumption-deprivation relation and find answers to the questions we have already asked.

If we move forward from the point that consumption both constrains and enables, we can say that this paradox represents an underlying influence on how people conduct their lives because it appears to provide a sense of stability in what is essentially an unstable world.[139]

In parallel, we should note here that consumerism mirrors the underlying tensions characteristic of the relationship between structure and agency in today's world. At the center of this tension stands the idea that

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[138] Paterson, p. 192.

[139] Miles, p. 157.

while, on the one hand, consumerism appears to offer individuals all sorts of opportunities and experiences, on the other hand, they as consumers appear to be directed down certain predetermined routes of consumption.[140]

Therefore, the paradox of consumerism basically lies in the fact that it offers a fantasy of personal freedom through economic means and yet retains a dominant order above the individuality. This shows one-to-one correspondence to the case of shopping malls or of a consumption item such as a yellow wristband the symbolic meaning of which determines its popularity and its purpose.

In other words, while we are already in need of security and stability, we are also in search of individuality and a sense of community in a specific consumption space. (That was the point where we began to discuss consumerism as a defining framework.) In the end, we realize that we cannot get them all at the same time. So, in most of the cases, we end up in a situation where we have abandoned our demands for autonomous individuality while enjoying the comfort of security and forgetting the troubles of everyday life in a shopping mall, for instance. In other cases, where we do not want to play the game by the rules, the underlying tension rises to the surface. However, we should stress upon this: There is a sense of freedom involved which is far from autonomy. That is what makes consumption paradoxical.

[140] Ibid., p. 147.

On this axis, we should also refer to Zygmunt Bauman's point that consumer freedom has moved in – first perhaps as a squatter, but more and more as a legitimate resident. In his view, consumerism now takes over the key role of the link which fastens together the life worlds of the individual agents and the purposeful rationality of the system.[141] This argument is significant in drawing our attention to the difference between the imposed or promised idea at the beginning and the experienced reality in the end.

In order to go into another dimension of the consumption paradox, we have to stress once again the point that the freedom of the individual is constituted in his or her role as a consumer in contemporary society. Obviously, modern consumption has opened the possibility of choice to increasing numbers of people. However, what adds to its paradox in terms of freedom is that the system constructing the "free" individual generates massive oppression inasmuch as those who are excluded from making such choices become disenfranchised and oppressed, in Bauman's argument.[142]

Crucially enough, this argument turns our attention into a different aspect of the underlying tension between the individual and the system in the consumption field, which is potentially eruptive: to be both seduced to consume and excluded from it. Thus, we come to the point that the discussion of consumerism should include not only the seduced but also the repressed in parallel with Bauman's differentiation between these two.

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[141] Zygmunt Bauman, *Freedom* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 807.

[142] Ibid., p. 810.

According to this differentiation, the "seduced" are those members of society for whom consumption becomes a major arena of liberation while the "repressed" are those who simply do not have access to the necessary resources to become involved in what such a society has to offer. Considering those voiceless and repressed "consumers" in urban settings, who are unable to participate in the excesses of a consumer culture,[143] we can certainly say that consumerism cannot be all things to all men and women. Rather, it protects those with resources from those without.[144]

Here, we should also emphasize that the use of the notion 'repressed' to express the psychological state of mind is significantly relevant in terms of implying the potentially violent return of what is repressed. Thus, it supports our basic framework arguing that the exclusionary dimension of consumerism is one crucial link closely related to the emergence of free-floating violence examples.

In terms of highlighting the consumption-deprivation relation in the post-1990s' consumer society, we should turn to Bauman's following words one last time. This excerpt explains very well why consumption should be today considered as one key process through which individuals are included or excluded in contemporary society:

> It is one thing to be poor in a society of producers and universal employment; it is quite a different thing to be poor in a society of consumers, in which life-projects are built around consumer choice rather than work, professional skills or jobs. If `being poor' once

[143] Miles, p. 68.

[144] Bauman, p. 810.

> derived its meaning from the condition of being unemployed, today it draws its meaning from the plight of a flawed consumer.[145]

Thus, Bauman not only discusses consumption in relation to poverty and social exclusion but also points to a discontinuity, which makes yesterday different from today and makes it worthwhile to go deeper into today in this regard.

In an attempt to look into the exclusionary ring on the chain of free-floating violence, we have focused on the concept of social exclusion and its dimensions, which can be linked to free-floating violence experiences. Bearing in mind that such concepts as poverty and consumption have been theoretically and practically in our lives for years – just like violence has been since the beginning of human history – we stressed the change and the transformation in the global and local sense from the 1990s onward. In this way, we can draw attention to the multi-dimensionality of social exclusion covering not only poverty but also social deprivation, for instance.

Furthermore, we discussed the changing role of consumerism by discussing its symbolic meanings and its increasing degree of significance. On the axis of consumption-deprivation relation, we went into the notion of space and what a consuming-space activity and spatial exclusion could mean for a materially and socially excluded individual in today's consumer society with no bonds of solidarity.

In this respect, we realized that globalization and consumption have one feature in common. They both equally provide everybody with the promise

[145] Zygmunt Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), p. 1.

that anything is possible; however, in both cases, this equality remains on the discourse level because inequality dominates every aspect of life strongly despite all the fantastic ideas founded on victory or possibility in consumerist world.

When it comes to looking at this picture in terms of the emergence of free-floating violence, it was critical to stress the tension not only between structure and agency, but also between being seduced and repressed at the same time. Bearing in mind the multidimensionality of *free-floating violence* in question, we argued that this underlying tension is potentially eruptive and lies at the bottom of this new phenomenon, which free-floatingly rises to the surface and ends up in violence at an unpredictable moment.

As we pointed out, we do not argue that whoever is materially and socially excluded or is deprived from consumption will commit acts of free-floating violence. Taking the social-realist stories of *Gemide* and *Barda* (based on a true story that took place in 1998 in Ankara) at the center, we looked into the characteristics and dimensions of a new type of violence, which we have defined as *free-floating violence*.

Therefore, according to our argument, the exclusionary ring is only one critical ring, which completes the chain. By itself, this single ring does not make a whole chain and does not suffice to explain the multidimensionality of the complex path taking us to the emergence of free-floating violence. On the axis of *Gemide* and *Barda*, we have two more rings to discover in order to be able to solve the intricacy of free-floating violence.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ARBITRARINESS RING ON THE CHAIN OF FREE-FLOATING VIOLENCE

In order to outline the distinctive aspects of the conjuncture that defines the context in which free-floating violence occurs, first the exclusionary dimension closely related to the post-1990s experience was understood by essentially focusing on macro-level changes and their micro-level extensions in our ordinary lives. This historical background helped us to see the nature of free-floating violence that is distinctively *reactive*.

Building upon all these, we will now go into the arbitrariness ring in which we will discuss the central examples of arbitrariness concerning the state-justice-society triangle in Turkey. Thus, we aim to gain insight into the underlying mechanisms which contribute to the emergence of such a new type of violence in a *free-floating* and an *unpredictable* manner.

The significance of considering this ring specifically as to the case of Turkey lies in the fact that we set out from the concrete events of free-floating violence inspired by the inner dynamics of Turkey as well as the structural changes. That is exactly the reason why we intend to build the arbitrariness ring on the exclusionary dimension in the previous chapter. Preceded by the historical context of the post-1990s, our discussion of the arbitrariness ring will proceed basically on two lines.

In the first half, we will look into how the state positions itself in its relationship with the society in Turkey and how the state control and power

are established over the individual in the society through specific examples from the newspapers. These questions are crucial to bring us to the point where the presumed legitimacy of state violence rules not only in the acts of state institutions but also in the minds of ordinary people. In this respect, we will elaborate upon how the legitimacy of violence as a means of social order in the hands of the state leads to the normalization of violence and lawlessness in the society on the way to the emergence of free-floating violence.

In the second half, we will focus on what happens on the part of the individual and how the individual perceives his/her relationship with the state itself. As the actors of this new type of free-floating violence, to what extent are individuals inspired or do they feel justified in their social relationships by the presumed legitimacy of state violence?

By seeking an answer to these questions, we intend to call attention to the arbitrary nature of the relationship between the state and the society in Turkey, which potentially prepares the ground for the emergence of free-floating violence in daily lives.

The Back Side of the Coin: The State

Legitimacy of State Violence

When we look at the definitions of the state in regard to violence, we find out that the use of violence is such a taken-for-granted means of establishing power and control in the hands of the state that it is considered to be characteristically inherent in the nature of the state.

German sociologist Max Weber's definition of the modern state, which is the most-referred to and discussed in the studies related to state violence, is worth mentioning in this regard. In his view, three main dimensions particular to the essence of a state are territoriality, legitimacy, and violence.[146] From this definition, we can deduce that state violence is not considered as being unauthorized but goes hand in hand with its legitimacy. In other words, violence when carried out by the state is usually legal since law is a monopoly of the state.[147]

This "legitimacy of violence" issue brings us to thinking about the question what distinguishes legitimate violence from the state's illegitimate use of violence. Or rather, what makes it possible to see any kind of state violence as non-problematic even when state bullets inflict injury and death

[146] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 154.

[147] Richard Quinney and A. Javier Treviño, *The Social Reality of Crime*, (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2001) p. 315.

in just the same way as terrorist bullets?[148] These questions are important to ask in order to understand the cases in which the idea of legitimacy derived from the state spreads like a disease and prepares the ground for the rationality of violence.

With respect to the second question, Thomas Hobbes' view on obedience touches directly upon this point. Accordingly, the state's power to use violence enters into most people's thinking about obedience primarily through the reassuring thought that it provides a sanction against someone else's violent behavior.[149]

Therefore, we can say that the relationship between the state and the society is based on the needs of social control and order. For this sake, violence by the state is accepted to be a quite different activity from unauthorized violence.[150] In other words, the general idea that it is not violence at all rules in the minds of obedient citizens.

The practice of executing offenders of particular crimes is one example of state violence that we take for granted. For instance, in the exercise of capital punishment, the state is defending the order by killing an

[148] Philip Elliot et al. "'Terrorism' and the State: A Case Study of the Discourses of Television." In *Media, Culture, and Society: A Critical Reader,* eds. Richard Collins et. al. (London: Sage, 1986), p. 275.

[149] Manfred B. Steger and Nancy S. Lind, *Violence and Its Alternatives: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 27.

[150] Ibid., p. 26.

individual who has threatened it and at the same time warning others that if they commit similar acts they will be dealt with in the same manner.[151]

Here, we should not overlook a point which is critical to answer the second question: The state's monopoly position of power is not only in using legitimate violence, but also in deciding what becomes defined as an act of violence. Therefore, even though the scale of violence committed by the government might be greater than interpersonal violence, what usually come to mind when we think of violence is images of muggers, rapists and teenage gangs on city streets rather than examples of structural or political violence.[152]

This perception can again be linked to the idea that the state protects us from those criminals. In essence, state violence refers to all forms of violence committed by the government. We can say that it includes actions by police and military forces or all forms of politically authorized violence.

However, if we go back to the legitimacy issue, we should say that the state's legitimacy for the use of violence is not restricted to the scope of public force. In other words, even if the police and the military are the main instruments of the state, this does not mean that only public force uses physical violence. As in the cases of private security, private force can be

[151] Peter Iadicola and Anson D. Shupe, *Violence, Inequality, and Human Freedom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), p. 263.

[152] Ibid., p. 261.

resorted to, yet their legitimacy derives from the state, according to Weber's argument.[153]

This point is basically related to the problematic situation in which the boundaries of legitimacy expand and violence is given the green light to as a prevalent means of resolving conflict and gaining power. In parallel, Cruz argues that the normalization of violence requires a system of norms, values or attitudes which allows, or even stimulates, the use of violence to resolve any conflict or relation with another person. This value system may pervade behavior in all spheres of life.[154]

Relating it to the arbitrariness ring on the chain of free-floating violence, we will elaborate upon what this value system corresponds to in the case of Turkey below. However, before that, we should discuss the effect of state violence on the normalization of violence in interpersonal relationships at greater length.

In an article about urban violence, Ailsa Winton dwells upon the normalization of political and structural violence by pointing out that the state has an important influence on cultural constructions of violence.[155] In her view, as a consequence of political violence, cultural constructions of violence as normal have been maintained and transformed in a range of

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[153] Weber, p. 155.

[154] Jose Miguel Cruz, "Psychosocial Impacts of Urban Violence in San Salvador," *Pan American Journal of Public Health: Special Issue on Violence* 5, no. 4/5 (1999), p. 297.

[155] Ailsa Winton, "Urban Violence: A Guide to the Literature," *Environment and Urbanization* 16, no. 2 (2004), p. 167.

contemporary urban contexts.[156] This directly (and unsurprisingly) brings us to the result that an increasingly complex web of institutions, groups and individuals is involved in the perpetration of everyday violence.

From a similar perspective, Ümit Kıvanç refers to the broadening of the scope of the concept "legitimate violence." According to his argument, it is natural that the more widespread and diversified legitimate violence is in the tradition of the state and the society, the more inherent violence is as a general "manner of relationship" and "way of solution." Even the existence of death penalty per se is an example strong enough to support the idea that a person can be killed when necessary.[157] Therefore, the legitimacy of state violence strengthens the belief that violence can be rational depending on the circumstances.

On this axis, Michel Foucault states his view on the strong harmony between violence and rationality: "The most dangerous thing about violence is its rationality. Violence is certainly terrible in and of itself, but the deep source of violence is the form of rationality we use... There is no incompatibility between violence and rationality."[158] Here, it can be said that the concept of legitimacy used to describe a type of violence strengthens the rationality behind an act of violence.

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[156] Ibid., p. 169.

[157] Ümit Kıvanç, "Türkiye'de Şiddet Kaynağı olarak Devlet-Toplum İlişkisi," *Cogito*, no. 6–7 (Winter-Spring 1996), p. 417.

[158] Michel Foucault, *Dits et ecrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 38–39, quoted in José Vicente Tavares-dos-Santos, "The Worldization of Violence and Injustice," *Current Sociology* 50, no. 1 (2002), p. 127.

Tradition of Institutionalized Impunity

There seems to be one missing link in the whole picture. It is not necessarily the existence of state violence that enables the emergence of a value system which stimulates the use of violence to resolve any problem in daily life. It is at the same time the absence of the law, which strictly defines the limits of legitimate violence, and thus guarantees the neutrality of the state in administering justice and resorting to violence. Ümit Kıvanç calls this the *institutionalization of arbitrariness* in referring to examples in Turkey.

From a similar perspective, Asma Jahangir refers to the same problem as *institutionalized impunity* in a report for Amnesty International, entitled "Turkey: The Entrenched Culture of Impunity Must End."[159] According to this report, the gaps in the legal structure remain and provide escape for those who master the art of taking full advantage of a weak and incapacitated system. Such escape routes are informally recognized, which gradually leads to institutionalized impunity.[160]

Linking this key point to the main focus of our study, we can say that arbitrary justice plays a determining role in the emergence of free-floating violence basically in two ways. Firstly, the logic of "vendetta" justice, which takes its root from the state's partiality in the practices of violence, remains indelibly fresh in the societal memory of the population through everyday experiences. This results in the perpetration of the same logic in the

[159] Asma Jahangir, 5 July 2007. *Turkey: The Entrenched Culture of Impunity Must End*. Available [online]: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_18863.pdf [20 April 2009].

[160] Ibid., p. 1.

mentalities of ordinary citizens, who attempt to practice violence in the name of the state because they are not pleased with the situation or believe that the state was supposed to do the same and they have the right to take the initiative.[161]

Secondly, the prevalent arbitrariness in the relationship between an individual and the state is transferred from generation to generation, which feeds feelings of insecurity and mistrust of the state in the end.[162] This directly leads to a "climate of lawlessness" in which the practice of taking justice into their hands gets rampant in the social encounters between individuals or groups, just like we see in the cases of *Gemide* and *Barda*.

We will illustrate these two dimensions with specific examples from the newspapers in the second half where we will look at the front side of the coin, the individual, and how s/he perceives the whole arbitrariness on the part of the state. However, before that, we would like to exemplify the events of arbitrariness by the state or its main instruments, which directly leaves its mark on the perception and the social behavior of the individual within the society.

As an answer to the question of whether random eruptions of violence in Turkey have increased in the post-1990s period or they are just more visible through the news in the mass media, Murat Paker states that both are true, and gives a detailed explanation in the following words:

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[161] Akın Atauz, "Mahmutbeyköy, Devlet, Adalet ve Şiddet," *Birikim*, no. 34 (February 1992), p. 38.

[162] Kıvanç, p. 413.

> The spread of violence in Turkey was essentially delayed. Large parts of the society have been exposed to state violence since September 12, 1980. We are informed that an estimated one million people were put in jail and underwent torture for political reasons. And during the 1990s, because of the state's struggle with terrorism, thousands of unresolved murders occurred and villages were burnt down. In short, more than four to five million people – have been directly or indirectly traumatized from the 1980s on.[163]

Apart from these thirty years of state violence, the fact that the actors committing those acts of violence have not been punished yet is one critical element behind the spread of free-floating violence in terms of encouraging others to do the same, according to Murat Paker's opinion.

Likewise, Asma Jahangir points out to the 12 September 1980 coup in terms of the legacy of impunity: "Thousands of people were tortured, many died in custody or were forcibly disappeared, over 100,000 people were tried in military courts in proceedings that violated fair trial principles, and 50 people were sentenced to the death penalty and hanged."[164] In addition, Jahangir attracts our attention to a provision in the 1982 Constitution, which represents the ruling culture of impunity in the post-1990s Turkey on its own.

This provision, which is still in the Constitution despite all the debates, gives immunity from any form of prosecution for all crimes committed by the leaders of the military coup, all military officials, public officials and authorities from 12 September 1980 to 9 November 1983 after a general election had taken place.[165]

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[163] *Radikal*, 3 April 2006.

[164] Jahangir, p. 1.

[165] Ibid., p. 2.

In the light of this general framework drawn by Murat Paker and Asma Jahangir, we will mention certain specific events of arbitrariness in the recent years of Turkey in order to clarify the gloomy picture more. In one instance on the January 21 of 1992, three persons were killed by the police in Mahmutbeykoy immediately after two of them attempted to rob a jewelry store. The problematic aspect is that they were "captured dead" by the police instead of being taken into custody. We have another piece of information adding to the gravity of the situation: There are witnesses and proof stating that they were killed after having surrendered.[166]

In another instance on August 20 of 2007, a Nigerian refugee named Festus Okey was detained by the Beyoglu police in central Istanbul and dead while in detention. Even though a period of eighteen days passed after his murder and the body lied at the morgue during this period, neither the Ministry of Internal Affairs nor the Security General Directorate made a declaration concerning the issue.[167] It was finally confirmed on 7 of September that Okey had been shot by a gun carried by police officer C.Y., but that Okey had been carrying cocaine and had been carrying a false ID card.[168] In this specific event, it is possible to find the main factors behind the mentality leading Boxer and Kamil in *Gemide* to think that the life of a

[166] Atauz, p. 39.

[167] *Radikal*, 7 September 2007.

[168] "Police Cover Up in Okey's Death." Bianet, 13 September 2007. Available [online]: http://bianet.org/english/human-rights/101739-police-cover-up-in-okeys-death [10 March 2009].

foreign woman is not worth enough to put Turkish police into action, we should add.

In another tragic instance on October 7 of 2007, Ferhat Gerçek was left permanently paralyzed after being shot by police after a dispute over the sale of a legal left-wing magazine, *Yürüyüş*. Seven police officers face trial for "wounding with intent as a result of excessive use of force" but flaws in the investigation may mean that the perpetrators will never be brought to justice.[169]

In a related and equally tragic example, 29 year old Engin Çeber was arrested along with others on September 28 of 2008. With a press release, they protested the continued impunity of the Turkish authorities in the case of the shooting of Ferhat Gerçek, which had happened one year earlier. Çeber was alleged to have been stripped naked, kicked and beaten repeatedly with wooden truncheons during the course of his detention in prison custody. Transferred to hospital on 7 of October, Çeber died from a brain hemorrhage on the afternoon of 10 October.[170] Çeber's was one of the two cases in which police officers faced prosecution.

Another case was the death of 26 year old Feyzullah Ete, who was sitting in a park when a policeman kicked him in the chest for drinking in a public place. Feyzullah died of a heart attack. The police officer, Ali Mutlu,

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[169] "Teenager Shot by Police." Amnesty International, 9 February 2009. Available [online]: http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=11444 [10 March 2009].

[170] "Turkish Government in Landmark Apology over Death After Custody." Amnesty International, 20 October 2008. Available [online]: http://amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/good-news/turkish-government-landmark-apology-over-death-after-custody-20081020 [11 March 2009].

was sentenced to twelve years in prison for the murder. However, the sentence was reduced to five years for good behavior and after a year inside, Mutlu was released on appeal.[171]

As a critical aspect of these examples of police violence, we should remember to consider the change in the Law on Police Duties and Authorities made in June 2007. Seriously criticized by the human rights organizations, the new legislation allows police officers to stop and search people at any time in any place, to take finger prints and photos of everyone and store them, and to use disproportional force.[172]

Combined with the reported cases of excessive police violence a few of which have been mentioned above, the new police law can be said to openly encourage and even guarantee the arbitrary practices of justice and violence by the police. Therefore, the critical aspect of the change is that it redraws the boundaries of legitimate violence.

Furthermore, the arbitrariness spreads among the members of civil society, who are basically not a part of the state, to such an extent that it prevails in their manner of approaching one another. Just like a policeman can detain a high school couple walking hand-in-hand,[173] a public bus driver with no authority can shout "This is not a place to make love!" at a boy for

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[171] "Torture still a routine practice for Turkish police," *Russia Today.* 13 July 2009. Available [online]: http://russiatoday.com/Top_News/2009-06-11/Torture_still_routine_practice_for_Turkish_police.html/print? fullstory [11 March 2009].

[172] "Police Regaining Vast Powers." Bianet, 30 May 2007. Available [online]: http://bianet.org/english/english/96821-police-regaining-vast-powers [25 April 2009].

[173] Kıvanç, p. 413.

putting his head on his girlfriend's shoulder and harshly slap his face because the young boy puts his head on the girlfriend's shoulder.[174]

In this respect, it is important to discern and underline the significance of the strong "blood kinship" between state violence (together with institutionalized impunity and arbitrary justice) and free-floating violence rampant among the individuals or the groups within the society.

The Front Side of the Coin: The Individual

In order to look into how the individual perceives and handles the prevalent arbitrariness in his/her relationship with the state, we will discuss concrete examples of violence on the part of individuals or groups, depending on whether violent act is motivated by a prior history of personal hostility or not. This criterion is significant in revealing the underlying mechanisms behind the *arbitrariness* aspect of free-floating violence.

To concretize this, we should remember two of the specific examples already mentioned. When compared to the news of Ebru, who killed her rapist by shooting him in the genital organ and announcing that the justice had been served done,[175] the act of the public bus driver slapping the passenger in the face stands in a different place. Even though both are the acts of violence by ordinary people with the same purpose (to right "the

[174] *Milliyet*, 31 May 2009.

[175] *Hurriyet.* 25 January 2009.

wrong" and do justice), we are of the opinion that they should be seen as the two different faces of the same coin.

In Ebru's story, the feelings of insecurity in a climate of lawlessness combined with the mistrust towards the ongoing procedural justice and led her to resort to a desperate act of violence in an attempt to ease the conscience. Therefore, Ebru took the role of a vigilante as a result of *personal* experience and her case bears all of the hallmarks of a "typical" vigilante activity in this sense: "the pursuit of criminal deviants, the righting of a criminal wrong by violent and informal means, the leaving of a warning for others who might possess similar criminal dispositions."[176]

As for the second example, the public bus driver assumes that he fulfills the wishes of the *community* by thinking that his opinion is shared and he is expected to take action. Against a passenger with whom he does not have any dispute or personal hostility beforehand, the driver interferes in the couple's privacy. Therefore, we can say that he acts like a branch of the state by going beyond the scope of his professional responsibilities.

Even though there has been no crime or violation of law directly or indirectly against any person, the driver, encouraged by the predominant arbitrariness, attempts to maintain order by his own personal understanding of what is right or wrong. Regarding the perception which triggers this kind of "vigilante justice," the definition of vigilantism is quite explanative:

> Taking the law into one's own hands and attempting to effect justice according to one's own understanding of right and wrong; action

[176] Les Johnston, "What is Vigilantism?" *British Journal of Criminology* 36, no. 2 (Spring 1996), p. 220.

> taken by a voluntary association of persons who organize themselves for the purpose of protecting a common interest, such as liberty, property, or personal security; action taken by an individual or group to protest existing law; action taken by an individual or group to enforce a higher law than that enacted by society's designated lawmaking institutions; private enforcement of legal norms in the absence of an established, reliable, and effective law enforcement body.[177]

In this respect, we realize that the use of the term "vigilantism" is helpful in terms of drawing attention to the effect of state inefficiency and the absence of impartial law as the factors behind the rise of "vigilante justice," which complements with the discussion in the first half. So, it is also significant in bringing us to the role of the link between state and society in the emergence of free-floating violence in the post-1990s' Turkey as is seen in the events of lynching or individual attacks.

Before going into the role of the locking-together of state-society in Turkey,[178] we should underline in bold strokes that the aim of this chapter is definitely not to reduce state-society relationship to a one- or two-dimensional fact. However, particularly in terms of free-floating violence, the link between state and society is so multi-faceted that a thorough understanding is only possible through looking into the details of each and every dynamic influential over Turkey from the 1980s onward. From the state of emergency to martial law following the 1980 coup, from the war on the Southeast to the discourses on national security and reactionary threats, every traumatic aspect must be covered.

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[177] Available [online]: http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Vigilantism.

[178] Zeynep Gambetti, "Linç Girişimleri, Neoliberalizm ve Güvenlik Devleti," *Toplum Bilim*, no. 109 (Summer 2007), p. 31.

Here, we should state that it goes beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss every dimension separately. Our attempt should be considered an introduction into the nature of state-society relationship in Turkey and as a general insight into the arbitrariness ring in terms of crucially contributing to the emergence of a new type of free-floating violence.

State as a Role-Model

The monopoly of legitimate violence as the most distinctive characteristic of the state occupies a central position in the discussion of the link between state and society. This is closely related to the fact that the increase in the enactments of justice by civilians obviously signifies the state's loss of power and monopoly, in a situation where the state's inefficiency and the culture oriented by hyper individualism[179] prevail.

At this point, our argument is that the state emerges as the main role-model for civilians in such acts of taking justice into hands. Accordingly, the fact that the characteristics of the state determine the attitudes of its citizens leads not only to normalization of violence, but also to a process in which citizens take over those characteristics from the state. Therefore, the state's monopoly right on the use of violence is transferred over to citizens.[180]

It is basically another way of stating that the state's discourse overlapping with the discourse of violence reproduces violence in social relations among individuals. As a relevant example supporting this statement,

[179] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 26.

[180] Gambetti, p. 9.

we should look at the crime statistics of Turkey in 1993 and 1996 released by the General Directorate of Security.

When compared to the statistics of the preceding years from 1988 on, the crime statistics show a striking rise first in 1993 and second in 1996. The crime rates, which had remained at moderate levels until then, doubled in every category from auto theft to unresolved murders, from kidnapping to assault, from political killings to rape, from terror to fraud in 1993. After a period of stagnation in 1994 and 1995, an upsurge in the crime rates is again observed in 1996.[181]

According to Arus Yumul, even if the role of economic problems and high inflation cannot be disregarded, we should look carefully into the state's discourse and the series of violent events, which have left deep marks in the minds of people in these years, in order to understand the rise in violence.[182] The unresolved assassination of Ugur Mumcu, the Sivas massacre resulting in the death of 37 intellectuals when the Madımak hotel in Sivas was set fire to by a mob of radical Islamists, the Basbaglar massacre in which 33 villagers were killed and the village was burnt down and the dissolution of the HEP (The People's Labor Party) can be mentioned in terms of the tragedies of 1993.[183]

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[181] *Hurriyet*, 2 January 2000.

[182] "Türkiye'de Suç ve Şiddet." In a television programme *Neden* moderated by Can Dundar. 31 October 2006. Available [online]: http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/ntv/metinler/Neden/20061030.asp [20 April 2009].

[183] *Hurriyet*, 2 January 2000.

As for 1996, we can list the most dramatic events, such as the murder of the journalist Metin Goktepe while in police custody; the Guclukonak massacre, in which eleven people were killed after a minibus was attacked and set on fire; the dissolution of DEP (The Party for Democracy); the government's decision to limit the prisoners' rights and attempt to move them into isolation cells; the death of twelve prisoners from a 65-day hunger strike; the beating deaths of twelve prisoners in Diyarbakir Prison; and the Susurluk accident indicating the link between politics, organized crime and the bureaucracy.[184]

When considered together with these series of events with the state in the leading role, the doubled crime rates indicate one clear-cut fact: The discourse of violence and the absence of law not only lead to the normalization of violence and mistrust of the state, but also the state's loss of its monopoly right on the "legitimate" use of violence in the end.

In this case, the state's function of maintaining order is at the same time transferred to civil society together with the monopoly right. Therefore, when we come back to the individual practices of violence for the sake of "justice," we should note this point: Even though it is possible to see certain agency of society involved in such acts, it is also possible to read the devolution of the state's monopoly right and authority as a fact that leads to the "state-ization" of society. Accordingly, "people" act as if they are the

[184] Ibid..

state. They appropriate and resignify the state function of dispensing justice and resort to violence for this sake.[185]

In parallel with this line of argument, Ümit Kıvanç interprets it as the *integration* of society with the state. By aligning themselves along national objectives and glorifying the arbitrary-killing acts of the police with enthusiasm, civil people not only show agreement and approval to those deeds, but also mimic the state.[186]

Lynchings

In respect to the "mimicry of the state," we will refer to the recent events of mob violence in Turkey. Before giving specific examples, we should note that it is not possible to find statistical data on the subject of lynching practices in Turkey the most important reason of which is that the concept "lynch" itself is not defined as a crime in the Turkish Criminal Code.[187] In this sense, we will refer to the news through the mass media as the prime source of information.

In one of the most remarkable instances, five members of the Solidarity Association of Families of the Detainee and Sentenced (*Tutuklu Hükümlü Aileleri Dayanışma Derneği*-TAYAD) distributing leaflets about the isolation and hunger strikes in F-type prisons were nearly lynched by a crowd consisting of nationalists in Trabzon on 6 of April 2005. The events

[185] Gambetti, p. 12.

[186] Kıvanç, p. 417.

[187] Ahmet Özgür, "Türkiye'de Linç Olgusu: Farklı Grupların Linç ve Toplumsal Şiddet Konusundaki Düşünceleri," (MA thesis, Ankara University, 2007), p. 55.

were sparked off when several people, alleged by leftwing activists later to be plainclothes policemen, shouted out in the town that the group had "burned the Turkish flag" and were "members of the pro-Kurdish guerilla group PKK".[188]

While five members were arrested for the reasons of provoking people against security forces and arousing social indignation,[189] the governor of Trabzon made a press statement blaming the responsibility on the protesters. The same governor would repeat the same line of thought one year later with these words: "Whoever damages peace and order takes the consequences. I advise these young children to enjoy life."[190]

In parallel, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a statement declaring that the sensitivity of the people was of utmost importance. "When the national sensitivities of our people are touched off, the reaction will be different. May no one take advantage of this sensitivity," Erdogan added.[191]

In another similar instance occurring approximately one year later, four university students faced a lynching attempt during Victory Festival celebrations in Istanbul on 30 August of 2006 when they held up banners and

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[188] "Lynchers Go Free While Lynched is Condemned." Bianet, 27 December 2006. Available [online]: http://wwww.bianet.org/bianet/kategori/english/89562/lynchers-go-free-while-lynched-is-condemned [20 April 2009].

[189] "Linçten Kurtulanlar Tutuklandı," *Ntvmsnbc*. 7 April 2005. Available [online]: http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/317780.asp [21 April 2009].

[190] *"Halkımızın huzurunu bozan cezasını çeker. Onlar da genç çocuklar. Tavsiyem, bu yaşamdan zevk almaya baksınlar."Radikal,* 27 June 2006.

[191] *"Halkımızın milli hassasiyetlerine dokunulduğu zaman, bunun tepkisi farklı olacaktır. Ancak, bunu da lütfen kimse istismar etmesin." Milliyet*, 8 April 2005.

chanted slogans to protest the government's decision to deploy troops to Lebanon.[192]

Immediately after the incident, Celalettin Cerrah, Chief of the Istanbul Police Department, made a public statement showing approval of the lynching attempt: "The protesters are unfortunately university students. There is strong reaction to these kinds of people. Our citizens interfered with the situation and reacted, which was nice and necessary."[193]

On the axis of these two lynchings, which can be considered representative of the seventy-five cases in 2005 and 2006,[194] we should say that lynching itself carries different characteristics from the nature of a simple fight erupting among a group of people. As an outcome of the general understanding and perception of society, lynching attempts are not only thought of as a social control mechanism by society, but also met with tacit and open approval by the state officials occupying key positions in the bureaucracy.

Concerning the role of the state's consent, we should point out that all of these lynching attempts are essentially based on political grounds such as holding banners of protest, chanting slogans or burning Turkish flags rather than any personal hostility in the past. Thus, the "sensitivity of our people"

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[192] "Türkiye'de Linç Kültürü mü Oluşuyor?" *Ntvmsnbc*. 5 September 2006. Available [online]: http://arsiv.ntvmsnbc.com/news/384069.asp [3 May 2006].

[193] *"Bunlar maalesef üniversite öğrencisi. Bu tipteki kişilere büyük tepki var. Vatandaş müdahale edip gerekli tepkiyi gösterdi. Güzel bir tepki..."Sabah*, 31 August 2006.

[194] Özgür, p. 55.

discourse adopted by the state officials relies on the convergence between the ideology of the lynchings and the national objectives of the state. The unwillingness of the police organization to prevent lynching attempts and inability of pinpointing the events as organized lynching acts also support this argument.[195]

About the psychological effect of the state's attitude on citizens, Murat Paker firstly stresses the fact that the diffusion of responsibility is the key mechanism behind mob violence and it is always easier to get involved in acts of torture in large groups where individuals feel relatively anonymous. Apart from this, there is a highly convenient ground for such lynchings in Turkey because of the common perception that the actors get away with impunity, in Paker's view. On top of it, when the officials show their approval, aggression and violence begin to be seen as a drive not to be restrained but, on the contrary, to be released.[196]

Under these circumstances, it can be seen as natural that lynchings do not remain restricted to the cases in which "national sensitivities of people are touched off." Individuals in groups *personally* faced with a "threat" or a "criminal act" take collective action to bring justice instead of asking the police to take care of the situation or waiting for the judge to punish the criminal. We will mention two specific examples, among many others, in this regard.

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[195] *Radikal*. 14 September 2006.

[196] Siren İdemen, "Tehdit Algısı ve Omurilik Tepkisi," *Express*. October 2006. Available [online]: http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim/makale.aspx?mid=228&makale=Murat Paker ile Söyleşi: Tehdit Algısı ve Omurilik Tepkisi [10 May 2009].

The first instance occurred in the capital city of Ankara on 31 August 2005. Acting upon the complaint of the girl G. about being harassed by someone on the street, the enraged relatives took to the streets with knives and clubs in their hands to find the person. Upon the girl's pointing at Şık Başkaya who was sitting at a cafe, the group of around twenty relatives lynched the 34 year old married man with three children to death. There are eyewitnesses claiming that the same girl had made similar complaints about different people in the past and Başkaya was sitting in the cafe during the incident in question.[197]

In the second instance, Mustafa Erdal, who killed one of the leaders of an Islamic community known as the *Ismailağa Cemaati* is lynched to death in the mosque by the members of the religious community.[198] Despite the statements of the eyewitnesses, early public statements made by the officials of the Istanbul Police Department insisted that Mustafa Erdal had committed suicide. Until two days after the murder, nobody was taken into custody. However, the autopsy report disproved the public statement of the police by declaring that Erdal had been lynched.[199]

These two specific instances manifest that lawlessness and arbitrariness lie in the essence of social relationships between individuals in Turkey. Furthermore, the lynchers' reckless disregard of others in society points to a state of overconfidence led by the assumption that their action was

[197] *Hurriyet*, 31 August 2005.

[198] *Radikal*, 4 September 2006.

[199] *Radikal*, 5 September 2006.

rightful and legitimate. Therefore, we can say that the actors do not suffer from any feelings of shame or embarrassment for killing a person.

In parallel with the main argument of this chapter, it cannot be denied and should be underlined once again that the state's discourse and approval play a pivotal role in the emergence of free-floating violence in society. However, at this point, it is also crucial to remind that the arbitrariness ring should not be considered independent from the exclusionary ring in which we have discussed the disappearance of traditional support mechanisms and the emergence of an egocentric worldview in the context of neoliberalism.

Touching upon both dimensions at the same time, Murat Paker draws attention to the consequence that people more easily become aggressive as follows:

> In the traditional society, there were general rules and principles governing social life and binding all the members of society. With the breakdown of these social control mechanisms in the neoliberal age, we have also lost the traditional frames of reference to be used in social relationships. So, the individualized person begins to create his/her own rules from the very beginning. In this case, the tendency to see the opposite person as an object increases since feelings of empathy are absent.[200]

In this respect, we would like to note that not only lynchings, but also individual acts of violence on the third-page news should be looked at from this perspective. As a mirror of the picture in the post-1990s Turkey, the acts of violence both in *Gemide* and *Barda,* which can be described as free-floating and arbitrary, should be considered in the same regard.

[200] *Radikal*, 3 April 2006.

In *Gemide*, in which Captain Idris and his crew attack a group in the city center and kidnap a woman in the group by assuming that they have stolen their money, we see the foreign woman being kept and raped in the ship for days. Furthermore, while trying to find a way out of the trouble, they decide to throw the woman into the sea by tying a sandbag to her feet. The line of thought at a moment of hesitation clearly reveals the mentality behind crimes and misdemeanors of every scale in Turkey: "Nobody inquires after a foreign prostitute... Noone can find her, man! You think this sea is purely clean? Who knows how many dead bodies lie below in layers? What do you think all these fish eat? Half of them feed on human flesh, man!"[201]

As for *Barda*, in which a group of men capture another group of young people in a bar, the film, based on a true story of violence in the capital city of Ankara, portrays the rule of arbitrariness ranging from social life to judiciary process. In an attempt to "right the wrong" done against them by the young people, Selim and his friends beat the men in the group with rubber hoses all night long and rape and torture the women.

As opposed to Selim's way of taking justice into hands, we also see the prosecuting attorney giving the order to kill Selim and his friends in the prison. Therefore, we can say that the rule of arbitrariness gains ground together with individuals' dissatisfaction with the justice of the state's organs and desire to play the game by their own rules.

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[201] *"Gavur bir orospuyu kimse aramaz....Kimse bulamaz oğlum, sen bu denizi temiz mi sanıyorsun? Kim bilir kaç kişi var aşağıda marul gibi. Bu balıklar ne yiyor sanıyorsun. Yarısı insan etiyle besleniyor."*

In an attempt to look into the arbitrariness ring on the chain of free-floating violence, the nature of the relationship between the state and the society in Turkey was discussed. Setting out from the point that the state defines the characteristics of the society, we have first examined the dimensions of the state's nature, which play a determining role in the emergence of free-floating violence between individuals or groups in Turkey.

In this respect, we found that the boundaries of legitimate violence by the state are arbitrarily drawn in the absence of an impartial law in Turkey. In a chain reaction, arbitrary uses of police force are also complemented with arbitrary practices of justice, which results in the acts of taking law into their own hands on the part of the society.

Interestingly enough, we realized that individuals do not act very differently from the state while bringing justice. According to their own understanding of what is right or wrong, members of society consider it legitimate to beat, to attack or even to kill a person. Not only the state's discourse overlapping with the discourse of violence, but also the culture of impunity was discussed in terms of the mechanisms underlying behind the spread of arbitrariness on the part of society.

By deliberating upon the blood kinship between state violence and free-floating violence among the members of the society, it was seen that the rule of arbitrariness led by the inner dynamics of Turkey should be considered together with the effects of the neoliberal age on the role of state and individual. Thus, the significance of the arbitrariness ring preceded by the exclusionary ring obviously comes into the picture.

Through linking these two rings together, a step further was taken on the way to the emergence of free-floating violence. On the axis of the analyses of *Gemide* and *Barda*, we have one more ring to look into to complete the chain.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE HOMOSOCIALITY RING: A SOCIAL SPACE OF DUALITY AS HAVEN AND PRISON

In our attempt to draw attention to the emergence of a new type of free-floating violence in the post-1990s Turkey and to analyze the leading factors behind this phenomenon, we have now come to the third ring on the chain which cannot be considered separate from the preceding two. Even though we have stressed upon this point before, the locking together of these rings deserves a special emphasis particularly in discussing the role of homosociality in the acts of free-floating violence such as the ones in *Gemide* and *Barda*.

It is basically because the increasing significance attributed to homosocial settings is explained mostly by referring to the global changes in the post-1990s, which we have discussed in the section on the exclusionary ring, in terms of their effects on the traditional gender roles. Therefore, we first have to understand why homosociality occupies a crucially complementary position in this study.

Afterwards, we will look into the definitions of homosociality, which give us hints about the functions of a homosocial setting in the daily lives of men. Only after this will we begin to discuss homosocial relationships through two main mechanisms: collectivity and hierarchy. Solidarity and collective responsibility will be the points to be dwelled upon in respect of

the collectivity dimension while competition and struggle for power and status are the ones to be looked at as part of the hierarchy dimension.

Thus, we will be introduced into the nature of homosocial settings as social spaces, which function not only like a haven but also like a prison cell where men are locked up together. By emphasizing this duality inherent in the basis of homosocial bonding, we will try to see in which ways collectivity and hierarchy can be considered in connection with the acts of free-floating violence committed by the ship's crew in *Gemide* and Selim's gang in *Barda*.

As can be understood from this basic framework, the focus will be on the role of male homosociality rather than a general discussion of homosociality. Apart from the greater meanings attributed to homosociality by men than by women, the male homosocial groups as the actors of violence in both *Gemide* and *Barda* have been the main departure points for us to concentrate solely upon male homosociality.

When we come back to the question of how homosociality ends up taking a critical position as a socialization space in men's lives, the effects of the transformation process in the post-1990s period on the traditional gender roles should be underlined once again. Accordingly, in an environment where more and more formerly all-male institutions are losing their homosocial character and the dominance of men over women is more and more questioned, homosociality seems to be more significant to men than to women and is seen as a form of resistance to gender equality.[202]

[202] Michael Meuser, "Homosociality." In *Men & Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*, eds. Michael Kimmel and Amy Aronson (Santa-Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 397.

In this respect, the changes in the division of labor should be taken into account as well. Together with increasing visibility and active participation of women in working life, men's monopoly of the breadwinner role has been challenged and the maintenance of masculine hegemony threatened.[203] The resulting perception in men that the internalized domination of men within the society has begun to crumble can be directly seen as an element related to the phenomenon of violence in general.

As an answer to the statement that men beat their wives in public spaces without any feelings of shame in today's world differently from the past, Murat Paker points at the transformation process and the changing position of women in the last two decades in Turkey. Noting that whoever loses his/her power tends to be more violent, Paker also mentions that men's violence against women used to be seen as more legitimate by more women in the past. As this kind of violence is questioned more and perceived to be less legitimate, men think they need to do it more publicly to show that their authority has not been shaken at all.[204]

When it comes to the relationship between power and violence, we should refer to Hannah Arendt's views on the issue. According to Arendt's argument in her work *On Violence*, it is not only psychologically but also politically true that impotence breeds violence. However, politically speaking, it is not enough to say that violence appears where power is in

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[203] Hilal Onur and Berrin Koyuncu, "'Hegemonik' Erkekliğin Görünmeyen Yüzü: Sosyalizasyon Sürecinde Erkeklik Oluşumları ve Krizleri üzerine Düşünceler," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 101 (Fall 2004), p. 36.

[204] *Radikal*, 3 April 2006.

jeopardy, in her view. "It should be added that loss of power tempts men to substitute violence for power and violence itself results in impotence."[205]

Even though political situations are beyond the scope of this discussion, the main argument that links potential loss of power to violence on the rise supports our general framework. In this sense, we can also say that men's search for homosociality takes on new meanings as opposed to the increase of heterosociality in relationships depending on the changes mentioned above.

However, in spite of the whole challenge, the taken-for-granted behavior patterns cannot be eliminated but reproduced through socialization spaces in which the hegemonic structure is maintained through dominant forms of masculinity without any exposure to questioning.[206] The function of homosocial settings comes to the stage right at this point. In order to better understand what a homosocial setting provides men in this epoch, we should now turn our attention to what the definitions of homosociality show.

What is Homosociality?

Each definition highlights a different aspect of the concept homosociality. In order to outline the main features of a homosocial setting in a thorough manner, we will first begin with a general definition from Jean Lipman-Blumen's work, which introduced the notion of homosociality into gender studies in 1976.

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[205] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1969), p. 25.

[206] Onur and Koyuncu, p. 39.

Accordingly, "homosocial" is defined as the seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference for the company of the same sex. "It is also distinguished from 'homosexual' in that it does not necessarily involve (although it may under certain circumstances) an explicitly erotic sexual interaction between members of the same sex."[207] Therefore, we can say that the essence of male homosociality is based on the absence of women.

At this point, we should underline that only the physical absence of women is not enough to make a social space homosocial. This results from the fact that homosociality has a physical and symbolic connotation.[208] Meuser notes that both connotations must be found to be able to call a group homosocial. A group of men can fail to constitute a homosocial sphere if, despite the physical absence of women, women and their expectations are present on a symbolic level.

In this sense, it is also possible to look at the matter from the opposite direction. If the physical co-presence of members of the same sex alone does not suffice to constitute a homosocial sphere, we can also talk about a situation when the physical presence of one woman or a few women does not harm the homosocial character of an all-male setting. This will be the case if

[207] Jean Lipman-Blumen, "Toward a Homosocial Theory of Sex Roles: An Explanation of the Sex Segregation of Social Institutions," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture and Society* no. 1 (1976), p. 16.

[208] Meuser, p. 396.

the woman becomes "one of the boys."[209] In other words, the critical point is that the symbolic order of the male majority and their patterns of communication and interaction are preserved.

From here, we can come directly to Lipman-Blumen's argument that male homosociality is both a cause and a symptom of male dominance:

> The different institutions of our society – the family, the labor market, athletics, the judiciary system, the political world – all act in an integrated and reinforcing way to maintain a male homosocial world in which only men are included and allowed access to the various resources of a society. Thus they perpetuate their control over the entire social system and maintain segregation of the marketplace as well as all other significant domains of social life.[210]

Adding to Lipman-Blumen's view that homosociality promotes clear distinctions between women and men through segregation in social institutions, Sharon Bird takes a step further and argues that homosociality also promotes clear distinctions between hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities by the segregation of social groups.[211] When considered specifically to the two social groups in *Barda*, this point brings us to thinking the concept heterosociality as opposed to homosociality.

According to Bird's definition, heterosociality refers to nonsexual attractions held by men (or women) for members of the other sex. When we have taken into account the fact that "homosocial interaction, among

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[209] Gary Alan Fine, "One of the Boys: Women in Male-Dominated Settings." In *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*, ed. Michael Kimmel (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987), p. 135.

[210] Lipman-Blumen, p. 24.

[211] Sharon R. Bird, "Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity," *Gender and Society* 10, no. 2 (April 1996), p. 121.

heterosexual men, contributes to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity norms,"[212] it goes without saying that excessive heterosociality is seen to threaten men's heterosexual and masculine credentials. Accordingly, men who have close but nonsexual relations with women are potentially both homosexualized and feminized by this, while homosociality is heterosexual and masculine.[213]

This comparison is quite to the point when we think of the differences between Selim's group and Nail's, and their perception of one another. As one typical example of male homosocial relationships, Selim's group boasts about how sexually potent they are while making mockery of the young men hanging with young women in the opposite group. In the dialogues among each other, Selim and his friends always refer to the physical weaknesses of Nail and the other young mens' and to the uselessness of their male organs. "The girls in that group, in fact, need masculine and strong guys like us," Selim and his friends believe.

Apart from the nature of their homosocial bondings, we bear in mind that Selim and his friends are positioned as the socially deprived and the spatially excluded ones opposed to the young who are the members of the bar community. Therefore, in respect to Selim's and his friends' feelings of jealousy of and hostility towards the young men, the circumstantial aspects of

[212] Ibid., p. 121.

[213] Michael Flood, "Men, Sex and, Homosociality: How Bonds between Men Shape their Sexual Relations with Women," *Men and Masculinities* 10, no. 3 (April 2008), p. 345.

the situation derived from exclusion and deprivation have not been disregarded.

In addition to their treatment of the young as inferior and less masculine, the behavior patterns of Selim and his friends bear all the other characteristics of a homosocial community in terms of the inner dynamics. One, among the others, is the association between sexual experience and masculine status in homosocial settings.[214] According to this dimension, achieving sex with women is a means to status among men. The fact that men's narratives of their sexual relations are in storytelling cultures formed by homosociality can be related directly to this dimension.

As an example from *Gemide* in this regard, we can give the persistent attempts of Ali, the least masculine-looking member in the ship's crew, to have sex with the foreign woman. Similarly to Ali's case, we see Kırkbeşlik in *Barda* getting into a serious quarrel with Nasır from his group because his failure to have sex with one of the women is being joked about.

Therefore, the meaning of power and status attributed to sexual experience turns sexual potency and lack thereof into a minefield, which is intolerant of mockery or jokes. Furthermore, in both cases, the feelings of resentment left behind the surplus of unsatisfied desire do not disappear but lead to more violent attempts in the end. In *Gemide*, Ali desperately holds a knife against the woman's back to keep her silent while "doing his business." In *Barda,* Kırkbeşlik pounds Sevgi's head on the countertop and rapes her in an effort to compensate for his earlier failure.

[214] Ibid., p. 346.

We are in the opinion that this state of persistence in reaching "the ultimate aim" should not simply be seen as a result of obsession or failure, but as a direct consequence of the association between sexual experience and masculine status in homosocial settings. Therefore, it is clear that homosociality mediates men's heterosexual relations through the presence of an imaginary male audience for one's sexual behavior.[215]

At the same time, the understanding that sees achieving sex with women as a means to status brings about the sexual objectification of women, which perpetuates the belief based on the superiority of men over women in homosocial bondings. According to Bird's view, objectification is the opposite of identification with women, which helps remove the symbolic distance enabling men to depersonalize the oppression of women.[216]

In this context, Lipman-Blumen's point that male homosociality operates as an "exchange system" in which women become "resources" and men seek resources from each other is crucially relevant. Accordingly, the acquisition of a beautiful woman is a resource that heightens the status claims of a man vis-a-vis other men and provides him with a sexual resource as well.[217]

The exchange of women as "resources" among men in homosocial communities is seen both in *Gemide* and *Barda*. At the moment when Boxer admits having lied, he tells the captain about what triggered him to do so:

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[215] Ibid., p. 348.

[216] Bird, p. 123.

[217] Lipman-Blumen, p. 16.

"Being upset by the words of a prostitute directed at my potency that night, I swore on fucking the most beautiful woman here."[218] This begins the story of *Gemide* in which the foreign woman was kidnapped and raped or attempted to be raped by more than one member of the ship's crew.

Similarly in *Barda*, Nasır and Kırkbeşlik rape the young women by taking turns after the whole violence begins in Vesika Bar. It is important to note that they act upon the order of the leader of their homosocial group, Selim do not show any intention to rape any of the young women until the end. Instead, he directs his friends about what to do and when to do it.

After being introduced into the basic characteristics of male homosocial relationships through several definitions of homosociality and specific examples from two films, we will now look into two main mechanisms – collectivity and hierarchy – and their (potential) roles in the course of acts of free-floating violence. Again, *Barda* and *Gemide* will be the reference points that we turn to in order to illustrate our arguments.

Collectivity

The functions such as the maintenance and the reproduction of masculine hegemony make the atmosphere of a homosocial setting highly valuable when considered the challenges and the questionings mentioned above. In this case, it is also unsurprising that men perceive the homosocial association

[218] *"Çok kızdım abi. Ben de buranın en güzel kızını sikmezsem bana da Muhammet Ali demesinler dedim abi."*

as relaxing and secure because it supplies them "with resources, skills, solidarity and power."[219]

Apart from the perception of the transformation process as an external threat and its binding effects on homosocial communities, collective processes also serve to consolidate the bonds and to strengthen the feelings of solidarity between the members of a homosocial group. There is a variety of collective male practices that can be included in this regard.

As one example, we can cite homosocial spaces such as strip clubs, where men "collectively enjoy the display of female bodies and bond as audience, viewers and masturbators."[220] They share not only a physical space, but a collective mentality by participating in an exchange of sexual images and fantasies. In *Gemide*, the pub where men gather to collectively watch porn and drink beer in Laleli exactly corresponds to this description of homosocial spaces with its function.

As another example of collective practices in homosocial settings, storytelling cultures in which men boast and talk about their sexual experiences or fantasies can be considered in terms of creating group excitement and group solidarity. Arguing that the presence of a male-centered environment is an important factor in the development of men's storytelling cultures, Michael Flood refers to the studies which have

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[219] Judith M. Gerson and Kathy Peiss, "Boundaries, Negotiation, Consciousness: Reconceptualizing Gender Relations," *Social Problems*, no. 32 (1985), p. 321.

[220] Thomas Waugh, "Homosociality in the Classical American Stag Film: Off-screen, On-screen," *Sexualities* 4, no. 3 (2001), pp. 275–91.

documented those in male prisons, male college fraternities, male rugby teams and in the royal navy.[221] Agostino's work on royal Australian navy ships relating the consolidation of bonds among male personnel to such practices[222] is particularly relevant in terms of the similarities of the findings to the atmosphere in *Gemide*.

For instance, in *Gemide*, Captain Idris shares the story of his sexual relationship with a woman to the crew, none of whom can know whether it is real or just a fantasy. Interestingly, the captain narrates the same story in the same manner each and every night, which turns it into a routine material for the sexual arousal of the crew. While the captain goes on with his narrative, we hear the others' sounds of arousal every time. Therefore, it can be said that the captain's story becomes the collective fantasy of the crew.

Furthermore, we can consider the cases in which men bond through collective involvement in coercive forms of sexual practice such as rape and sexual harassment. For instance, the collective sexual harassment of passing women by groups of men in cars, on the street or at sporting events, is one of the most commonly seen examples in this regard.[223]

Here, we should draw attention to the point that there is a two-way interaction involved in the situation. By emphasizing that collective acts of

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[221] Flood, p. 352.

[222] Katerina Agostino, "Masculinity, sexuality and life on board Her Majesty's Royal Australian ships," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 2, no. 1 (1997), pp. 15–30.

[223] Carol Brooks Gardner, *Passing by: Gender and Public Harassment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 197.

sexual violence feed male bonding, we should not overlook that male bonding facilitates men to collectively commit acts of sexual violence against women. In parallel with this argument, Peggy Sanday notes that collective rituals of male bonding among closely knit male fraternities, street gangs, and friendship circles foster the sexual assault of women.[224] Therefore, we should underline that collectivity not only cements bonds among men in homosocial relationships but also gives them the courage to use force and even to resort to violence.

Considering the fact that the tie between male bonding and violence in general has been already discussed, we would like to point out to a distinction: Collective action and feelings of solidarity can be seen as factors triggering sexual violence against women or other coercive forms of sexual practice in general. However, collectivity and group solidarity as the mechanisms of homosociality do not suffice to trigger an act of a free-floating violence without the exclusionary and the arbitrariness rings. Also, the role of collectivity should be taken into account in terms of how it affects the course of a free-floating violence act.

By going back to the encouraging effects of collective action in homosocial groups, we can look at the defining moments in *Gemide* and *Barda* from this perspective. For instance, when Boxer admits making up the whole story of being mugged, his emphasis is on having been humiliated when he was alone in the city center. About his act of kidnapping the foreign

[224] Peggy Sanday, *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), p. 15.

woman, Boxer was heard saying, "I wouldn't be doing it on my own, Captain!"[225]

Not only for Boxer, but also other members of the crew, their buddy relationships function as a refuge where their feelings of resentment are compensated by the reconstruction of their "damaged" masculinity. Just like Boxer knows that he would not be kidnapping and holding a foreign woman in the ship on his own, the captain suffers from the awareness of the fact that he can take the role of a father and a leader *only among his crew*. That is the reason why all four go ashore *together* to get their money back and take collective responsibility for the actions of other two.

Similarly in *Barda*, the collective actions of Selim and his friends do not remain restricted to coercive forms of sexual practice. After the barmaid Barbaros strikes a sharp blow to Nasır's leg with the wooden leg, Kırkbeşlik begins to beat Barbaros to death with the same leg. Handing the same wooden leg to Nasır, Kırkbeşlik lets him the final death blow. Thus torturing and killing a person turns into a ceremony in which a collective display of power takes place.

While looking at the front side of the coin and stating that feelings of solidarity and security in homosocial groups lessen the effects of deprivation and facilitate collective action, we should not overlook to see the effects of collective responsibility on the personal dissatisfactions of individuals in homosocial relationships.

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[225] *"Tek başıma yapamazdım abi!"*

For instance, in Çırak's case, even though he does not participate in the collective use of force, any beatings or rapes, he has to share the blame for the crime of others in his group. Particularly when Çırak reacts to the murder of the barman by putting a distance between him and the others, Selim's response is harsher: "What is this '*you*' crap all about? How could it be possible to talk about you but not us after all these? No such difference as you and me any more!" After this moment, Çırak reserves all his different opinions to himself.

Çırak's case stands as an example for the fact that individual departures from the norm are suppressed in homosocial settings.[226] The scene where Çırak crouches down in one corner of the bathroom and weeps tears of sorrow can be seen as an expression of this suppression. Therefore, we can say that collective responsibility and absence of individual divergences also turn homosocial settings into a prison cell or an iron cage in which particularly the ones like Çırak are locked up.

Hierarchy

Apart from the restraining aspects of collectivity, hierarchical structure is the other critical mechanism which makes it impossible to look into homosocial settings merely as habitually secure environments based on the sense of solidarity and friendship. When considered together with the demands of the homosocial bonds mentioned above, hierarchical structure intensifies the

[226] Bird, p. 130.

struggle for power and status, and brings along hypocrisy and trickiness towards each other at the same time.

At this point, the role of competition should also be included in the discussion. In homosocial relationships, competition is accepted to be a means for "establishing self both as an individual and as appropriately masculine."[227] Therefore, it can be said that being less competitive means risking loss of status and self-respect in male homosocial groups. Any individual departures from the norm of competitiveness should be suppressed in order not to be disadvantaged in the group.

In this sense, the meanings attributed to competition indicate that the positions in the hierarchical structure of male homosocial atmospheres are determined by one's readiness to compete. There is again a two-way interaction involved: Due to hierarchy already inherent in male homosocial relationships, competition begins to be seen as one opportunity to change the circumstances. However, in the end, competitiveness turns into a criterion which defines one's position in the hierarchical structure, higher or lower in rank and status.

For instance, in *Gemide*, Ali is at the bottom of the hierarchy among the ship's crew. As the least masculine-looking and the seemingly youngest one, he gets into a serious competition to have sex with the foreign woman. Led by a desire to play a defining role and to direct the case, Ali also jumps at the opportunity of turning the captain's weakness to his benefit toward the

[227] Bird, p. 127.

end of the story. We watch him complaining about the fact that the captain always gives orders and scolds them for their mistakes.

As for *Barda*, Çırak, who is obviously understood to be at the bottom of the hierarchy in Selim's group, is treated as inferior by the others. Unlike Ali in the crew, Çırak does not get into any competition to torture or rape the young. That is why Selim is surprised and pleased when his "passive" apprentice shows competitive courage to shoot the young dead one by one. By behaving obediently and carrying out all the orders without an open objection, Çırak seems to believe that he will be accepted as one "real" member of that male homosocial group. The exceptional case in which Çırak takes initiative is seen in his silently and secretly letting Pelin go.

From here, we can jump to the point that the hierarchical nature of homosocial relationships negatively influences the strength of friendly ties among men. The surface that seems to be based on solidarity and cooperation turns out to be fragile and wide open to tricks and lies. The tension between the captain and his closest friend Kamil upon a trivial criticism, the threats of "spilling the beans" in the dialogues between Boxer and Ali, the quarrel between Kırkbeşlik and Nasır, Kırkbeşlik's readiness to cast blame on Selim in the court are the examples to be given in this regard.

Considered on the axis of free-floating violence, hierarchy is not different from collectivity in that it leads to legitimation and normalization of violence in the minds of agents. However, hierarchy leads to the same end from an opposite direction. Unlike the mechanism of collectivity based on acting cooperatively in concert and taking collective responsibility, hierarchy

highlights the necessity of acting competitively and struggling individually for status and power. In both cases, it is seen that the functions enable men in homosocial groups to take part in or contribute to the course of acts of violence.

The main argument of this chapter has been that male homosociality with its functions and its symbolic meanings play a critical role in the course of free-floating violence events in *Gemide* and *Barda*. Apart from the attributed significance of male homosocial atmospheres in the epoch of change, group solidarity, sense of habitual security and collective responsibility have been discussed as the factors, which make men feel as if they are in a haven away from threats and questioning.

Positioned against these relaxing aspects, hierarchical structure and competitiveness have been considered as the ones which bring about hypocrisy and trickiness in relationships. According to our argument in this chapter, the suppression of individual departures from such norms and the demanding struggle for power and status turn homosocial settings into prisons.

The fact that personal dissatisfactions and individual divergences are avoided for the sake of the maintenance of masculine hegemony and in order not to be excluded from homosocial communities not always facilitates but sometimes requires homosocially bonded men to actively take part in, cooperate and remain silent during the course of a free-floating violence event.

Pointing out to the importance of discussing the homosociality ring in the third order preceded by the exclusionary and the arbitrariness rings, we should underline once again that homosociality, on its own, cannot be seen as a triggering factor in analyzing the underlying mechanisms behind acts of free-floating violence. Therefore, the discussion of the homosociality ring on the chain of free-floating violence does not mean at all that every homosocial community commits acts of free-floating violence or homosocial groups are the main actors behind the emergence of a type of free-floating violence.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

If asked to sum up post-1990s society in Turkey with one word, what would be our answer? Rather than the question itself, our answer is critical in terms of taking us to the heart of this study: "free-floatingly violent." The key point here is that the description refers to a new phenomenon with its distinction from being "simply violent."

Characterized as being unpredictable, apolitical and reactive, the phenomenon of free-floating violence cannot be defined within the limits of such known types of violence as honor killing, family violence or violence against women. It can take place any time and anywhere. There does not necessarily have to be a prior history of hostility between the parties. Moreover, its characteristics do not fit into cases of serial murder.

In the cases of free-floating violence, one person can attack a stranger in the middle of the street for no apparent reasons. Similarly, another group can capture a group of strangers and torture them for hours after entering their house by force in the middle of the night. Or a person can be kidnapped and attempted to be killed by a total stranger even though there seems to be no political or economic reasons behind the act.

These typical examples of free-floating violence, which actually happened in the last two decades of Turkey, were the main reference points for the basis of my argument that free-floating violence has emerged as one leading phenomenon in the post-1990s. However, instead of the stories of

free-floating violence on the third-page news, we have focused on two social realist films by the same director Serdar Akar as the points of departure in this study. The central mission of this study has been to grasp the underlying mechanisms behind the emergence of such a phenomenon as free-floating violence in the Turkey of the post-1990s.

The story of *Gemide* centers on a ship's crew of four, whose monotonous and isolated lives are ruined when they attack a group in the city center and kidnap a foreign woman in the group. As for *Barda*, which is based on a true story of violence in the capital city of Ankara, the film is about the encounter of two different social groups in a bar. After the outbreak of a fight, "the strangers" beat the group of the young men all night long, kill two of them and rape the girls.

The significance of discussing *Gemide* and *Barda* together with respect to the phenomenon of free-floating violence lies here: As a film produced in 1998, *Gemide* represents the social realities of 1990s' Turkey through the socially excluded and isolated lives of the crew, their understanding of the social world outside the ship and their perception of the state and the law. As a film produced in 2006, *Barda* stands as a portrayal of how the repressed object to isolation and exclusion unlike the ones in *Gemide*, and return with their demands in the millennium.

Considering these two films together has also enabled me to compare the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century in terms of the micro-effects of global and neoliberal changes on ordinary lives. This has been crucial, because the transformation process from the 1990s on has

played a defining role in the emergence of free-floating violence according to the findings of this study.

When compared and contrasted with each other in all these respects, the detailed analyses of *Gemide* and *Barda* have taken us to the chain of free-floating violence with three interlocked rings: the exclusionary ring, the arbitrariness ring and the homosociality ring. The order in which they are given is not random.

The exclusionary ring was considered to be the outermost ring related to the global and neoliberal changes in the post-1990s world. The discussion in the arbitrariness ring, which was in the middle, centered around the facts of Turkey on the local level. The culture of impunity and the loss of faith in the efficiency of law were discussed in this respect. The innermost homosociality ring focused on the inner dynamics of male homosocial groups such as hierarchy and collectivity.

The nature of the interaction between the rings in the form of a chain reaction is better understood in terms of their roles in the emergence of free-floating violence. All these rings, which seem to be unrelated to each other when considered separately, were found to underlie behind the main characteristics of the post-1990s phenomenon such as apolitical, reactive, random and unpredictable when considered as the inseparable pieces of the free-floating violence chain.

So, through this study linking three seemingly unrelated rings together, multidimensionality was understood to be on the basis of the phenomenon. It cannot be reduced to one single fact or reason. Even though

this study addressed the main mechanisms possibly leading to free-floating violence through a chain with three rings, it is important to note that the groundwork of the discussion in this study was founded on the stories of *Gemide* and *Barda*. Therefore, on the axis of other cases, the chain could have rings more than three.

In terms of the debates on violence in the post-1990s of Turkey, this study sets out from the pieces and brings them together. Just like one part is not enough to make a whole picture, one piece does not suffice to define violence in the post 1990s as free-floating. However, at the same time, the complex relationship between all possible factors should be taken into account as well.

In this respect, the study hopes to make a contribution to any future studies on violence in post-1990s Turkey, which will be described as free-floating or in different ways, if any. Moreover, the rings on the chain of free-floating violence in this study can be studied separately and in a more detailed manner as the main subject of other studies in terms of their strong relationship with violence in general.

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